

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

Jewel Ornament of Liberation seminar

Chapter 4: Transitoriness of the Composite

Present: The venerable Sangharakshita, Dhammadinna, Marichi, Punyavati, Sulocana, Joan Graham, Sue Lawson, Verne Barrett, Liz Bisson, Janet Martin, Kaye Roberts, Noel Lehane, Bonnie Quirk, Michelle Johnson, Marion Cohen Paloma.

S: In this study group we will be going through Chapter 4 of The Jewel Ornament of Liberation which is on the instruction in The Transitoriness of the Composite and I hope we will be able to get through the whole chapter. It is quite a substantial chapter as I expect you already know. And we will so what we usually do, we'll just have people going around the circle reading a Paragraph or shorter passage at a time and then we'll just stop and go into it as thoroughly as we can or as thoroughly as is necessary. Perhaps we could start with Marichi.

"The Instruction in the Transitoriness of the Composite

(d) 'The method are the instructions of spiritual friends.'

Since we have Buddha-nature as our driving force, as our working basis the precious human body which we have obtained from beginningless time in the course of generations, and as a contributory cause (of our development) the spiritual friends we have met, how is it that we have not already obtained Buddhahood? The fault lies in people like ourselves having come under the power of four obstacles by which the attainment of Buddhahood is prevented. They are: attachment to sensuous experiences during this life, to sensual pleasures in this world, to self-complacency and ignorance about the means of realizing Buddhahood. Who, then, dispels these four obstacles? He who listens to the instructions of spiritual friends and takes them to heart. They are summarized below:

There are four topics of instruction:

Concentrated attention to transitoriness and

To the vicious state of Samsara as a result of our own actions;

The development of benevolence and compassion;

And those factors which set up an enlightened attitude.

S: So, "since we have Buddha nature as our driving force, as our working basis the precious human body which we have obtained from beginning less time in the course of generations, and as a contributory cause of our development the spiritual friends we have met, how is it that we have not already obtained Buddhahood? This is quite a pertinent question in a way. We could perhaps step it down a bit and say, "How is it, when conditions are so good, when facilities are so abundant, how is it that we haven't made greater spiritual progress?" Here it is pitched in the highest possible sense, "How is it that we have not already attained Buddhahood?" It is as though we have done less than might have been expected of us. We have all these advantages, all these opportunities; but we have done so [2] little. And the particular advantages and opportunities are mentioned here. There are four of them. "Since we have Buddha-nature as our driving force." Buddha nature. In Sanskrit, that is usually (Buddhat?) That in the depths of our being we are as it were well not just as it were, we are literally Buddha already, but of course we don't realize that, we don't see that. I have mentioned more than once before that this whole, as it were, metaphysical way of looking at things and making such statements as "Thou are Buddha", as some of the Zen, or allegedly

Zen people do from time to time, isn't always very helpful; because very often it discourages people from actual practise because they understand the statement "Thou art Buddha" as an intellectual proposition, they think that is enough. "I'm Buddha already, what do I really need to do?" It tends to inhibit practice. But you notice there is a difference here in this case. This statement doesn't say "since we have' Buddha nature as our ultimate metaphysical constituent. So what do you think is the significance of that? That implied distinction?

Noel: We have the Buddha seeds within us.

S: Yes, it is not just an abstract metaphysical theory, it is a living thing, it is as you say a seed, seed represents actual potential, it is a sort of driving force. The fact that you are Buddha, as it were (out of time means that in time) and your experience is entirely within time, you experience that as it were abstract potential as a sort of living potential that impels you to grow and develop. So that if you simply make this statement that you are Buddha already in a sort of abstract metaphysical way that is of no significance at all. But if you make the statement, or rather - if you experience yourself as living and growing, well then in a way, yes, you are asserting that you are Buddha, do you see the distinction? The fact that you are here and now trying to grow is evidence of the fact that out of time, so to speak, yes you are already, in a sense, that towards which in time you are trying to grow and develop. In other words the significance of the statement as it applies to you metaphysically as you exist outside time is demonstrated in time by the fact that you are making an effort to grow at all. So that Buddha nature is not an abstract metaphysical (theory?) that you have, or which your present personality can claim as an already existent possession. Buddha nature is your driving force! it is what makes you grow and you know that you have the Buddha nature ultimately because you are trying to grow, that is the proof, that is the demonstration. Just as in the case of the little plant you know that it has the potentiality to be a flower, being a flower is, as it were, it's true nature because you can see it from day to day growing and growing and growing. It isn't that the plant [3] settles down and says 'I'm a flower I needn't bother to grow'. This is what you find with some of these Zen people... "I am Buddha so I don't need to do anything about it". The fact that you are Buddha is proved by the fact that you try to become Buddha.

Dhammadinna: Could this be concentrating on the thing rather than the process?

S: Right yes.

Dhammadinna: Making it 'something'.

S: Yes.

Paloma: What about people who are not consciously trying to become Buddha?

S: Well what about them?

Paloma: Well you said that the fact that we sit here and make an effort to become Buddha proves that it is within our nature already. But what about the people who aren't sitting here... like?

S: Well they don't have Buddha nature then do they.

Paloma: Well that is what ...

S: That is if we want to be quite logical about it but Buddha nature as our driving force ...
Yes? So can one say that then? That there are some people without Buddha nature?

Dhammadinna: It is that they haven't realized it, that they have the potential, it is not that they will never have it

S: Buddha nature here is defined as a driving force.

Sulochana: It is more a direction ... Maybe we find that these direction ...

S: So to further crystallize it what does one mean by this driving force? Is it necessarily conscious?

Noel: Is it connected with the arising of the Bodhicitta?

S: Yes, one can certainly say that in a more specifically Mahayana sense. Well, it really amounts to asking what is the connection between the lower evolution and the higher evolution. This is what one is asking, because the higher evolution by very definition must be a conscious process. What about the process of the lower evolution? It has brought you to that point where it is possible for the higher evolution to begin. That must be an unconscious process, the process of nature at large. You as a human being come to that point, or perhaps you are not a human being when you come to that point, but as a rational animal you come to that [4] point, you become self conscious and then the process of the higher evolution can begin. Buddha nature comes into play there as the driving force of that higher evolutionary process. In Buddhism traditionally speaking it is not said that the Buddha nature is the driving force of the lower evolutionary process; that connection is not made. There is as it were a sort of hiatus between the wheel of life and the spiral. So one can therefore say in traditional Buddhist terms, that if you are not making a conscious effort to evolve, Buddha nature in the sense of that driving force is not there. You have of course the potential to become aware of that driving force but one perhaps could not say more than that.

So we have the Buddha nature as our driving force, and this is the most important advantage that we have. That we are able to grow that we are able to develop, even to the fullest and highest possible extent of becoming enlightened human beings. This is the first great advantage and then the second ... 'as our working basis we have the precious human body which we have obtained from beginningless time in the course of generations'. The traditional Buddhist perspective sees this human body as having been acquired in the course of hundreds of lives in this or that animal form, in a more modern a more scientific perspective we can see it against the background of the lower evolution, that evolutionary process as ordinarily understood which has brought us to this point where we find ourselves as human beings, individualized, equipped with senses, with minds, with rational minds, with emotions etc. etc. Here we are with this wonderful piece of equipment. The text says "body" but I think we shouldn't understand that in a narrow sense, it is the whole psycho-physical organism. This is what we've got as a sort of instrument and very often we don't realize, the great advantage of that. What an advantage it is for instance to have a human body or human psycho-physical organism as distinct from that of an animal. You can do all sorts of things with this wonderful piece of equipment. Every bit of it is the product of millions of years of evolution. The eye,

the ear, the nose the tongue, the skin, all these things, the whole apparatus of perception, the memory recognition, thought, feeling, all these things have taken millions of millions of years to develop. This wonderful piece of human equipment, far more wonderful than any computer that we gawk at in the shop window (laughter) is just your very own psychophysical organism. This psychophysical organism, this precious human body is of such a nature that rightly utilized you can gain enlightenment with it. We can say gain enlightenment but that possibly can be taken too literally. It means [5] that this piece of equipment can be transformed even more wonderfully. It can be transformed into an enlightened human psychophysical organism. So you've not only got the potential, that is to say Buddha nature, but you have the means in the form of the actual equipment, the working basis to achieve this or attain it. And then as a contributory cause of our development we have got the spiritual friends we have met. We are not isolated, we are not alone. We are in contact with the tradition, we can read about the life of the Buddha, the lives of so many great Buddhist sages and teachers. We have our spiritual friends, our own Kalyana Mitras, people we meet at the centres, people we live with in our communities. All that spiritual help is there. So we have got Buddha nature as our driving force, the precious human body that is to say the psycho physical organism as our working basis, we have all this help and encouragement from spiritual friends. How is it that we have not already attained Buddhahood? I think this really requires pondering maybe, not quite in those sort of terms, of course the text is going to give its own answer. I mean it is all, as it were, cut and dried, we'll go through that in a minute.

I think we just have to dwell a little bit on the extraordinariness of the fact that we haven't yet attained Buddhahood. We've got the Buddha nature as our driving force, we've attained self-consciousness, self-awareness, we are thinking in terms of development, we are perfectly familiar with that idea, we are trying in fact to grow and develop. We've got all the equipment we need in the form of the human psycho-physical organism. That is all we really need. We don't need temples, we don't need buildings, we don't even need Scriptures, all we really need is a body and a brain, and we've got those that is our basic equipment and also to urge us on to prod us in the right direction we have got those spiritual friends, but we haven't yet attained Buddhahood ... we've been around the FWBO for months, even years but we haven't attained Buddhahood (laughter) so why is this? Or putting it in a less elevated key: how is it that we don't progress more rapidly?

So before we try to understand Gampopa's answer to this let us just as it were realize the terms of the question. Just sort of try to feel a little surprise at ourselves that we haven't done better! (laughter) It is extraordinary when you think ... You've got all the facilities, you have got centres, you have got classes, you have got retreats, you have got meditations carefully devised for you, you're led step by step through them ... communication exercises, besides that you have Mitratas produced for you, there is one out this very morning ... [6] priced 50p! (laughter) We've got all these facilities. You can go away on solitary retreats. You have got lots of books ... translations from the Pali, translations from the Sanskrit, translations from the Chinese and the Japanese, translations from the Tibetan and the Mongolian. You have got it all (laughter) ... nice little anthologies, you have got co-ops, you have got work which is the real Tantric guru to help you on your way but ...

Dhammadinna: We've got you. (laughter)

S: But we don't make all the progress that we might. Before asking ourselves why, we just have to recognize the enormity of this fact. Especially perhaps those who have been around

quite a long time. (laughter) You notice this sometimes that people have been around quite along time. You notice this, that people have been around one year ... two years, three years ... four years ... well even it goes up to eight years, nine years and they don't really seem to be getting very far. They don't seem to be getting anywhere at all sometimes. So we have to ask ourselves well why is this, why am I not making further progress? Or why am I not making more rapid progress because the facilities are there so clearly it must be up to us ... Gampopa is going to go into this. He says, therefore 'the fault lies in people like ourselves having come under the power of four obstacles.' It is not so simple as it looks, yea you have got Buddha nature as your driving force; yes you have your working basis in the psycho physical organism; yes you have your spiritual friends, but there are obstacles quite terrible obstacles. We come under the power of four obstacles by which the attainment of Buddhahood is prevented. They are 'attachment to sensuous experiences during this life'. There is a note: 'This could be freely translated as optimism' (this is Guenther at his most Guentherish probably) 'The assumption that determinate qualities will continue to exist unchanging and thereby provide a solid basis for what maybe called a philosophy of life. Optimism however is false to the immediately apprehended fact that all determinate things are transitory. The only way to secure peace of mind is to not fall victim to this common error. It may be noted that pessimism, the opposite to naive optimism, is just as erroneous'. So, 'attachment to sensuous experiences during this life,' then 'to sensual pleasures in this world' in other words. /note/; hedonism, or the elevation of a passing pleasure into an immortal principle. Hedonism as is optimism is equally false to immediate experience". And then, 'self complacency (self complacency is a term for the Hinayana egoistic Nirvana) and, ignorance about the means of realizing Buddhahood. We will be going into each of these in detail one by one. So I'm not saying much about [7] them. 'Who then dispels all these four obstacles. He who listens to the instructions of spiritual friends and takes them to heart'. You notice something here; you have got these three great advantages, the Buddha nature as driving force, the precious human body, and spiritual friends, but one doesn't realize Buddhahood immediately because of these four obstacles, but who dispels the four obstacles? He who listens to the instruction of spiritual friends and takes them to heart. So what does this suggest? The fact that one who listens to the instructions of spiritual friends is the one who overcomes the obstacles? What is the significance of this?

: Receptivity.

S: It is receptivity ...

Dhammadinna: Is it communication between spiritual friends when this being in contact with their driving forces?

S: Yes one could say that.

Sulochana: Is it blind spots that other people can see ...?

S: Yes ... yes this is very important. Well, you have got the Buddha nature and you have got the precious human body, but it's as though you need some sort of stimulus from outside. It's not easy just to get started just by yourself. You cannot always see yourself, your own weak spots. You cannot always see the qualities that you need to develop, you cannot always see yourself where you are going wrong, it might be easier for others, good friends, to see that. So in the end it is back to the spiritual friends and their instruction. So 'he who listens to the

instructions of spiritual friends and takes them to heart. They are summarized', that is to say the instructions below, 'there are four topics of instruction. Concentrated attention to transitoriness' (concentrated attention has a foot note: Bhavana, this is to bring into existence, this is what we usually translate as meditation, the bringing into existence of more skilful the more positive mental states) ah ... 'concentrated attention to transitoriness and to the vicious state of samsara as a result of our own actions. The development of benevolence and compassion and those factors which set up an enlightened attitude.'

'In other words, they are: (i) instruction in the development of concentrated attention to the significance of transitoriness and (ii) to the vicious state of Samsara resulting from our actions, (iii) of benevolence and compassion and (iv) in the formation of an enlightened attitude.'

S: Yes ... so clearly in this chapter it is the first of these that we are concerned with ... so do you see the sort of scheme, or schema. The fact that it's surprising that with all the advantages that we have that we haven't gained enlightenment already; then, the fact that we haven't gained it because of certain serious obstacles; and then, contact with [8] and instruction by spiritual friends, as the main means of overcoming those obstacles and realizing what potential [is] within us. And the instruction is comprised under four headings and the first of those topics we will be dealing with in this particular chapter.

All right then let's carry on then.

'Concentrated attention to the significance of transitoriness is the remedy for attachment to sensuous experiences in this life; similar attention to the vicious state of Samsara due to our actions removes attachment to sensual pleasures in this world; the development of benevolence and compassion is the remedy against attachment to self-complacency, while the factors which set up an enlightened attitude remove ignorance about how to realize Buddhahood. These factors are experiences, which start with taking refuge in the Three Jewels and lead up to concentrated attention to the meaning of the two types of non-individuality. They are also those experiences which you have on the five paths and ten levels of spirituality.

'Furthermore, some of them are the working basis, others the frame of reference and still others the method for the formation of an enlightened attitude; others again are the training in, the usefulness and the result, of the formation of an enlightened attitude. So there is nothing in Mahayana which does not fall under the scope of the formation of an enlightened attitude. Consequently all instructions therein originate with and depend on spiritual friends. As is stated in the 'sDon.po bkod.pa'i mdo' (Gandavyuha Sutra)

Spiritual friends are the birth-place of all good.

And,

Omniscience depends upon instruction by them.'

S: So ... you have got four topics of instruction by Spiritual friends and those four topics are antidotes, as it were, for the four obstacles previously mentioned. This Particular chapter is going to be dealing only with the antidote to the first obstacle. In addition to that it gives a

little summary of the other three and even a conspectus of most of the other chapters of the book. So we will just briefly go into that before we go back through the subject matter proper of this particular chapter.

So, 'concentrated attention to the significance of transitoriness is the remedy for attachment to sensuous experience in this life' which Guenther paraphrased as optimism. So the antidote to that then is concentrated attention to the significance of the transitoriness of the composite. Do you see how the one is the antidote of the other? Is that clear? One has to understand first of all what is meant by attachment to sensuous experiences during this life which is distinguished from attachment to sensual pleasures in this world. Lets refer to the notes and try to understand that distinction. "This could be [9] be freely translated by optimism i.e.: the assumption that determinate qualities will continue to exist unchanging and thereby provide a solid basis for what may be called a philosophy of life'. So, this is almost the more intellectual aspect of attachment to sensuous experiences. It is a sort of assumption that those sensuous experiences or that experience of life, will continue in the way that it always has done. It is not only reliable, but also relatively pleasant, and you can count on things continuing in that sort of way, hence the translation of optimism, and therefore you assume a certain solidity in your experience ... So you see what I mean? You often find this in ordinary life don't you, when things have been going on in much the same way, you sort of settle down, you take it for granted that things are going to continue in that sort of way. That is your optimism. It is not often an expressed optimism, an explicit optimism, it is implicit, you take it for granted that things are going to carry on like that. Things are going to be all right; that you will have a job. For instance I got a letter from an old friend of mine a few days ago. She said that the job that she had been working on for two years, it was the translation of a three volume text, which she assumed she would be able to continue working on until the whole thing was finished, which would take several more years, had suddenly been cancelled right in the middle, and this had been a terrible shock to her. This is the sort of thing that happens. We have the assumption that what we are doing is going to continue, that the set up is going to continue. Maybe you have no reason to think it won't, but the thunderbolt falls, something happens, it all comes to an end. It can be our family life, it can be our domestic life, it can be a relationship. We have presumed it was going to go on, that everything was going to be all right, but then something goes wrong, our optimism is shattered. That is optimism in this special sense . So attachment to sensuous experiences in this life doesn't mean so much attachment to specific forms of pleasure, that comes in the next obstacle. It is rather this taking for granted that things are going to continue in the way that they always have done.

Marichi: Is it something that has become a general form of sensual pleasure as in food, maybe as a child you have had food ...?

S: Yes, an expectation of food, that there always will be food. I mean there are people in the world who don't take it for granted that they will have another meal today, or a meal today at all. We have come to expect that almost as our right.

Marichi: Could you, then it seems a bit harsh, but could you then be, in [10] that situation, see that as being stuck in a pessimistic state rather than an optimistic state ...?

S: Well of course there could be a corresponding state, an opposite state where things have always been bad and you expect them to go on being bad ... (laughter) ... in a way well in principle there is no difference between optimism in that sense and pessimism in that sense.

Paloma: Is it being lazy, this attitude and not making an effort?

S: Yes indeed it is, well that is why it is an obstacle, it prevents you making an effort. So here maybe the emphasis is more on the world ... your world. You have this sort of false confidence which Guenther calls optimism. This false confidence that your world will continue intact. Whether it is the world of your professional life, whether the world of your personal life, even the world of your artistic life, the world of your health, the world of your family. You assume that this is going to continue intact, and of course very often it doesn't. So this is what is meant here by attachment to sensuous experiences during this life. It is not so much attachment to the sensuous experiences themselves it is attachment to this whole pattern of existence to which you have become accustomed and which you go on taking for granted, and on which you base yourself and your life and your expectations, until such time as something happens to shatter it. Of course with some people nothing much happens. One can see I think people whose expectations actually continue to be fulfilled. The obstacle is always there (laughter) and because nothing happens to disappoint their expectations, well, they [are] never shaken out of it. But they just remain sort of increasingly rather dissatisfied, even although things are going on more or less as they expected, even more or less as they wanted.

Paloma: There is also another side; that is, if you take it too literally you get a mistrust of people and situations and you think, "oh, it is not going to last", so I'd better not get involved, so you don't touch anything and you don't settle down anywhere ... you just run around all the time.

S: Yes ... so what is the middle way? Well what it really means is that you have to take risks. Yes? ... You have to take risks. Some people assume that things are going to continue as they always have been and they come to depend on that in an unreal way, but others may be so overwhelmed that situations, that worlds aren't stable that they refuse to commit themselves to anything. They may have had for instance, unfortunate experiences of certain kinds and that has put them off entering into that particular world. But you have to enter these worlds, you cannot [11] sort of refuse to enter into them. But you have to enter into them on a sort of provisional basis, you have to take a risk. Just like when you say hello to somebody; you are taking a risk because they might ignore you, and you might not like that. So if you think 'well that person might ignore me, and therefore I won't take the risk of saying hello', then you just remain enclosed in your own world, you see what I mean. There are people who have had so many painful experiences in different worlds that they are unable to take the risk any more. But you have to take the risk, you cannot shut yourself off completely. So you mustn't depend, that is your expectations must not be too rigid, but there is such a thing as a reasonable expectation. Well you have this reasonable expectation with the laws of nature, you expect them to go on working. You don't expect the law of gravitation to fail one day, we expect it to go on continuing; well, I suppose it could fail, I suppose it is conceivable, and well if you are married, every time you come home you don't wonder if there is a little note on the kitchen table saying "I've left". But you have to accept well at least in general that that particular relationship is not ultimate and everlasting. You have to keep at least a sort of reservation in your mind, at the same time still you work on that particular relationship while it lasts. I mean you might be going around to the centre every week, but who knows there might not be a centre standing there now, there might have been a fire during the night, during the week, but you don't think, "oh well, there might have been a fire during the week, there might not be a centre, perhaps it is not worth going". (laughter) You take the risk and

you go. There is a sort of reasonable rational expectation, as well as an unreasonable one. So what is being talked about here is the unreasonable expectation, the sort of solid conviction that things are going to go on as they have gone on. Maybe you don't express it, but the longer things go on undisturbed the more you get used to them going on in that way and the less you look for any disturbance in your particular world, and that amounts to an obstacle. I think we can see this happening in different ways, it happens as I've said in all our worlds, all spheres of life.

Bonnie: That taking risks ... that can be seen as experiencing it as adventure, sort of dipping into an adventure.

S: When you take a risk you must know you are taking a risk. That it may not come off ... and you are prepared for that, if it doesn't come off then it is not going to kill you, you can take it.

Marichi: But couldn't you have this expectation of continuity because [12] of your own confidence in yourself ...?

S: Well your confidence in yourself shouldn't give you confidence in the world. It should give you the confidence that even if the world collapses you can go on . Your self confidence would not necessarily guarantee that your world will continue.

Marichi: That is what this sort of optimism ...

S: Yes ... right ... your genuine self-confidence will give you the confidence that you will continue even if your world doesn't. That you will continue even if your world doesn't. Your career may go, your relationship may go, your family may go, your job may go, everything may go, but you have the confidence that you are still there and you can cope. You can manage, you can survive quite happily ... you won't go down with the wreck as it were. But when we do have too many assumptions and expectations about the continuity of our world, we do tend to become identified with our world and depend upon it for our security and well being, and then when our world collapses, we collapse too very often.

Punyavati: But that confidence in yourself has to be based on something doesn't it, like commitment?

S: It must be a genuine confidence. It mustn't be based on a false picture of yourself, as for instance the very 'strong' person etc., etc. It must be based on genuine individuality and genuine positivity and then whatever happens to you, you do survive.

So that is the first obstacle and the remedy to that is concentrated attention to the transitoriness of the composite: in other words, you remain aware that the particular situation in which you find yourself, your particular world, your particular life, is transitory, it can change any minute, any minute the pattern can change. So dwelling upon as it were the fact of transitoriness, the fact of change is the antidote, for attachment to sensuous experiences during this life in the sense that false confidence in the continuity of the present pattern, the present world. And it is so easy to forget that, you just to a certain extent take it for granted that things are going to be the way they always have been and you just wake up one morning and the pattern has changed, the world has changed and you become disappointed as though you didn't know that things are transitory. Of course if anyone had asked you you would have

said, well yes I suppose it is transitory, but you don't really mean it you don't really believe it. You act all the time on the assumption that it is going to continue. But, by its [13] very nature it cannot. It may ... but there is no reason so to speak why it should there is no necessity.

Marichi: It's a very tricky balance between being engaged, but not being so engaged that ...

S: Yes, yes.

Joan: I think I find that I've got to be engaged at the time and it is almost like I get the feedback afterwards that people, say, do the unexpected. That you are open to accept the fact that things change afterwards but at the time you have got to be wholeheartedly involved in it, but be open to what happens later on.

S: There is an old saying which we can change a bit ... (laughter) The old saying goes like this: 'Pray as though everything depended on God, but work as though everything depended Upon you.' So, in the same way when you are engaged in something work as though you are going to be involved in that forever, but think and meditate as though it was going to end tomorrow, yes? ... like for instance you are working in a co-op, you are working in a shop, all right work as though that were your life's work. You are in that as it were forever, you totally commit yourself to that, but in your meditation think 'well, work may fold up tomorrow'. (laughter) You need that sort of combination, that sort of bit of the Bodhisattva Spirit. Commit yourself to it as though it's the one and only thing that is always going to be there; but meditate in a deeper sense as though, well, you know it is not going to be there even tomorrow.

Marichi: So it's bringing all your attention to the present.

Joan: That sort of happens in meditation because you have got something very important on your mind but you are still working, letting go of it anyway. So that you can see that that is important but there is also a lot of space around it.

S: In the context of time it is all important, in the context of eternity it has no importance at all. You have to bear both points of view in mind simultaneously. It is like if you have got children, when they are babies you have got to do everything for them, but at the same time you have got to think well when they are grown up they will have to do everything for themselves and that is why you are doing everything for them now so that when they are grown up they can do everything for themselves. It is a bit like that. The fact that things are transitory shouldn't stultify you and at the same time the fact that they are transitory shouldn't bog you down.

[14]

Joan: Sometimes you can really appreciate something more if you get a sense that it won't last. You get a feeling of the value of it.

S: Well that is a bit different isn't it? (laughter) because you can sort of grab it thinking "I might not have it tomorrow, I'd better enjoy it today" sort of thing.

Dhammadinna: That is hedonism, isn't it?

S: Yes you could say that.

Paloma: What is hedonism?

S: Taking pleasure as the supreme value ... I was reading something the other day which said in the old days a young man was exhorted to work hard and save money as the value of that would increase, but the modern young man knows that a pound today will only be worth 75p tomorrow and that is an incentive to spending it today and therefore to Hedonism. So we are conditioned in this way by our very economic and social environment.

Paloma: It is greedy isn't it?

S: In a way it is greed ... in a way though it is sensible (laughter) because it may not be there tomorrow. (laughter) So why put it on a shelf and leave it there? It not be there. Why not enjoy it today, sometimes you can not help thinking like that, but there is a touch of greediness there it must be admitted.

Paloma: It depends maybe on what it is.

S: Of course ... yes.

Paloma: Because I've often had this experience that for instance when Lokamitra was here he gave this talk, I would liked to have talked to him but the Puja was in two minutes so I thought well, will I talk to him afterwards, and afterwards he was away so I missed it ... So maybe for such things you take the moment.

S: Yes ... seize the opportunity, it might not come again.

Dhammadinna: With the money thing though they are both greedy in a way because if you hold on to your money so that it accumulates ...

S: It is delayed hedonism (laughter).

Dhammadinna: It is the nature of the object unless you are giving it away.

S: Right yes ... (laughter) So I think this is clear then what attachment to sensuous experiences in this life means and how concentrated attention to the significance of transitoriness is the remedy for this. But this [15] [is] what we'll be dealing with in this whole chapter so I think we need not say any more about it now. And then attachment to sensuous pleasures in this world is also an obstacle so lets see what the note says again. 'Hedonism: The elevation of a passing pleasure into an immortal principle'. So let's consider this then ... attachment to sensual pleasures in this world according to Guenther's note the sort of characteristic feature here is that it is a passing pleasure ... that your mind is sort of ensnared that you are so intent on the passing pleasure that you leave out of account all other considerations, you see what I mean? This is what hedonism is, that pleasure is your highest value: if there is pleasure to be enjoyed then you want to enjoy it regardless of other considerations.

Joan: Is it that you loose awareness?

S: You lose your awareness yes ... or you have lost your awareness because it is your awareness that enables you to take into account the other considerations. Let's give an example; suppose that you are given the opportunity this evening to go out with friends and have a bit of a drink, etc., etc., but early in the morning you have a very important appointment which is important for your career, it is important you should have a clear head. It is important that you should be really on the ball. But you are so carried away by the pleasure of the moment, you just allow yourself to have a drink too many etc. etc. (I don't know whether this is the sort of thing ladies do, gentlemen certainly do). So you are not in a fit state the following morning and not able to cope with the situation in the way you should and need to for your own real benefit; so you have sacrificed that to the pleasure of the passing moment because you have lost your awareness you are unable to take the longer view. Pleasure is your highest value. So what is the longest view of all you can take? Enlightenment. So if you are unable, due to your devotion to pleasure, to take into account things as I have mentioned in the example, well you are unlikely to take into account that very long term perspective in which you're thinking of becoming Enlightened, and pleasures are of various kinds, there is sense pleasure in the crudest sense; there can be pleasure in the sense of the easy way out, taking always the sort option. It can be refined aesthetic pleasures which become ends in themselves.

Marichi: Well couldn't you then turn it into the immortal principle say of beauty?

S: Well if you are thinking of beauty not in an ideal sort of way, but if [16] you are dwelling upon the pleasure beauty gives you, and if beauty is important to you, not as it were for its own sake, but only for the sake of the pleasure it gives you, it will ultimately become self-defeating, it can become very stale.

Marichi: Ah, that is the distinction. It ceases to be ... it's a pseudo immortal principle.

S: Yes I think he is using it quite loosely here; it is when you invest it with a false value ... but do you find this with yourselves that you are carried away by the pleasure of the passing moment? You forget the wider perspective. Forget the longer view. Because sometimes, in the interest of your overall development, you just have to do what is more difficult even more painful in the present, and resist the temptation to yield to the more pleasurable. If you succumb to the pleasurable alternative whenever you are confronted with a choice, well, you cease to grow. So pleasure in this way, or as the text says attachment to sensual pleasures in this world becomes an obstacle. It is a very natural thing to turn in the direction of pleasure. I think one also has to be careful not to look at in a moralistic way or puritanical way. A plant grows ... yes? ... in response to what we can only call pleasurable impulses, it grows in the direction of light, it grows in the direction of warmth. This is what it needs for its growth and development. So in a way, yes, it is a healthy thing that an organism moves in the direction of pleasure, but when you have attained self-consciousness, you cannot take pleasure as the only value or the highest value. You cannot always go in the direction of the pleasure of the moment. You can even think in terms of a higher more refined hedonism, you go in the direction of what will be ultimately more pleasurable in a much higher sense. After all Buddhahood is not a painful experience (laughter). But you don't go in the direction of Buddhahood for the sake of enjoying it in an egoist sort of way. The pleasure of Bliss, that is bound up with that experience of enlightenment.

Joan: I think you have got to be quite active. I find I need to see what is happening because I

find merely not to get into the pleasure of it I can get quite blocked. I get kind of stuffy. Whereas if you can see what is happening and you are active you can still be kind of moving from that.

S: Yes ... I'm not sure exactly how literally we should take terminology here but perhaps, but perhaps one could make a distinction and say [17] pleasure is passive, whereas happiness is active. Pleasure is something that you want to sort of lie back and enjoy, it comes to you. It has an effect on you. You are passive. But happiness is something which you experience when you are active, which includes also when you are growing, when you are developing and sure there is pleasure in happiness. Obviously but not necessarily happiness in pleasure. And a human being needs to be active as well as passive, certainly to evolve means to be active as well as passive. So that to say that you live for the sake of pleasure or that pleasure is your highest value will mean that you are basically a passive person and how can a passive person grow and develop? I mean you can lie on the grass in the sunshine, you can experience the warmth of the sun. That is pleasure and it has its place; but that mustn't be the highest value; so just supposing you hear a child crying and you say, "oh why should I bother", and you go on enjoying the sunshine. Here you have sacrificed your altruistic instinct, let's say, to go and see what is the matter with the child, to the enjoyment and the pleasure of the passing moment. You should have made the transition then when you heard the child crying from passive pleasure to active happiness, because it is happiness to help others, at least to want to help others, to make the effort.

Dhammadinna: Is that why you always stress active participation in the arts?

S: It is partly that, that one does not adopt towards the arts a purely consumer like attitude which is dreadful ... I have got a very good passage in a book which I was reading and I read this out to Subhuti and he appreciated it. It is from the autobiography of Nikolai Berdyaev, has anyone heard of him? Some of the more intellectual of you might have done. He is a modern Russian, he describes himself as a religious thinker. He has written a lot of very influential books, and this autobiography which is very readable "Dreams and Reality", and he has written about music, if I can find that ... oh yes here we are. And the way that we enjoy it.

Sulochana: Was he in a camp in Russia?

S: Yes he was for a while but not for very long. He came to England in 1940. Ah yes here we are:

Music has acquired a very unusual and prominent place in our civilization. This prominence is a not unmixed blessing. [18] It makes it possible for the European bourgeois to pass quickly and without any effort unawares for the price of some twenty francs into the kingdom of heaven, and then to return with [the] same speed to the world of his petty, mean and unsightly affairs. Music itself is not admittedly to blame for this prostitution. Beethoven did not suffer and create to wile away the idle hours of the European bourgeois. Every true ..." etc. etc. "Art like all creative activity frees man from the weight of the common place even while departing the common place and carries him into another transfigured world The bourgeois has no desire for such freedom or such another world, he is a mere consumer in search of new impetus for the consolidation and expansion of his kingdom of the commonplace" ...

So that is quite a good version of this attachment to the world. (laughter) "an impetus for the consolidation and expansion of our kingdom of the common place". So this is the consumer like attitude to the arts, something that we just lie back and enjoy. Yes, that passive enjoyment does have its place; but that should not be the whole of your participation in the arts, there must be an active participation too, and that is why I often use this expression of an active participation in the arts that you don't merely participate as a spectator, or as a consumer.

Dhammadinna: That is quite difficult with music when only so many people can play an instrument, so one does tend to listen ...

S: But it isn't that one should be active as well as passive in relation to all the arts, but there should be at least an art in which you participate actively. I mean it can be something quite simple like dancing or writing, writing letters. I mean some people like to receive letters but they don't like to write them. I mean writing letters is an art. So you begin to see what is meant by attachment to sensual pleasures in this world being an obstacle. I think the main reason why it is an obstacle, as I have said, is that it's a passive attitude. Passivity is just the very antithesis of the following of the spiritual path. I make by the way a distinction between passivity and receptivity. I don't know whether I've mentioned this to all of you before, but receptivity means that well, you are not active in a way. You are active in the sense that you actively open yourself to the influence of higher spiritual forces. But when you are passive you are closed to higher spiritual forces; because when you are passive in the sense of passively enjoying pleasure, well this is self-orientated, ego-orientated. You are nourishing even fattening yourself. You are not opening your [19] self to anything higher in order to transform yourself as you are when you are receptive. So I think it is very important to distinguish between passivity into which one can very easily slide, which is the antithesis of the spiritual life, and receptivity which is an essential part of spiritual life. You can contrast receptivity and activity but you could also say that in a sense receptivity is a form of activity. Activity in a way also is a form of receptivity because you are not acting as it were from yourself, not acting to consolidate yourself. In a real action, action as a part of spiritual development there must be continuous receptivity, otherwise you settle down. There must be receptivity to what is higher.

Joan: Passivity is a sort of acquisitive state.

S: Yes, right you could say that indeed. But we often misuse these terms, passivity and receptivity, but they are quite different. They are quite antithetical, quite mutually exclusive.

Paloma: The difficult thing with receptivity is to find that when you are receptive you are vulnerable. Maybe I had a wrong conception of it the way you said it now, it sounds as though receptivity is something strong, as active is, where as passivity is more the weaker.

S: Well receptivity as I have said is receptivity to something higher. So the question arises since you mention vulnerability. In what sense is it possible to be vulnerable to what is higher? Will what is higher do you any harm?

Paloma: Well in a way yes, it is always very painful to hear truths about things. Like spiritual friends might point out something to you that you are doing in a certain way which is not good for you or not good for others and you are not seeing what you are doing. So someone

points it out so you might realize they are right and they are pointing out something to you so that is quite painful , you are vulnerable as long as you ...

S: It is not really you that is vulnerable, not you in the sense of the growing developing you ... it is only you in the sense of your weaknesses or to the extent that you are identified with your weaknesses or your past. You are not really vulnerable because you are being strengthened. There are parts of you that feel vulnerable because there are parts of you that feel threatened or able to suffer or to feel pain. But they are only to the extent that you are not being receptive. If you were wholly receptive there would not be any vulnerability because vulnerability suggests that you have something to fear from that other force as it [20] or other factor, but no! that is not the source of your suffering, that wishes you only well. The source of your suffering is in you.

Dhammadinna: It is the fixed parts of you that don't want to change.

S: Yes it is not that you are very tender and sensitive and the force is being a bit rough; no not at all. The force is being completely gentle and calm and considerate. It is your own weaknesses that are putting up resistance and therefore suffering. When I say that you are not really vulnerable this is what I mean; it is not that there is an objective fierce and sort of terrible power trying to effect you. So to the extent that it is a higher power it is completely gentle ... harmonious.

Paloma: I think what Dhammadinna said is very valid. It is the parts that don't want to change in you, they are the vulnerable parts.

S: Yes, but what I am saying is that they are not vulnerable to that higher power. They are vulnerable if you like to themselves. They are not vulnerable in the sense that they are exposed to some rough or insensitive treatment on the part of that higher power. The suffering they entirely create for themselves It is not that if that higher power were a little more gentle or a little more tactful you [would] not suffer. No, however gentle, however tactful you are going to suffer because the cause of that suffering is not with that higher power it is with you.

Paloma: I didn't think it was but ...

S: But the word vulnerable suggests that, you see what I mean? For I instance you say 'I am feeling very vulnerable please handle me gently'. However gently you are handled you will still feel hurt because the potential for hurt is there on your side in the fact of your own weakness or backsliding, not in the other Person.

Marichi: So any weakness or vulnerability is in effect your own ...

S: Well yes in this sense in this context. Of course when dealing with actual spiritual friends they may sometimes actually be clumsy, one cannot deny that. What I was speaking of refers more to as it were disembodied spiritual forces But sometimes actual spiritual friends may not be fully experienced they may mean well and try to help you but they may speak at the wrong time or speak a bit too strongly, that is a different thing. The vulnerability that you have in relation to the purely spiritual context of what is said is as it were your own responsibility, not the effect of any sort of clumsiness or as it were violence on the part of that spiritual force to

which you are trying to be receptive. Anyway I think the nature of these two obstacles emerges now, [21] doesn't it? Attachment to sensuous experiences during this life and to sensual pleasures in this world, then thirdly to self-complacency which Guenther says 'self-complacency is a term for the Hinayana egoistic Nirvana'. For further discussion see Chapter 7. Well perhaps we needn't take it as far as that, perhaps it is quite a misreading of the Hinayana Nirvana anyway. But self complacency and ignorance - oh that is the fourth one. Self-complacency, so now is self-complacency in this sense an obstacle to the attainment of enlightenment. What is meant by self complacency?

Sulochana: It Stops you from making any more effort.

S: But how does it stop you doing that? You are satisfied with the state that you are in. There is a different dimension here. In the first obstacle for example, you took for granted that your particular world would continue; you base yourself upon that. In the case of the second obstacle you take pleasure as your highest value. You seize the pleasure of the moment. You forget your own long term interests and here you are satisfied with yourself as you are, and what could be a greater obstacle than that. You say, 'Well I am all right, I am quite happy I am doing pretty well, I meditate every day', so you lose your sense of urgency of development. I think this is very very important or it is very important that we understand this obstacle as an obstacle. I think it is the sort of danger we need to be all the more aware of when things are going well. I think this particular obstacle is something that we need to be more aware of when we are as it were safely within the FWBO than when we are wandering outside. Because when you come into the FWBO that is when you make a proper job of it lets say well what do you do? Well at least you are coming along to a centre regularly, maybe you live in a community or maybe you work in a co-op and you naturally and rightly feel really glad that you have arrived in that sort of way. And you are getting on with a bit of meditation and you go to the occasional retreat, but if you are not careful what can happen is you just settle down in that. You have got away from the world, you are living in a pleasant environment perhaps, with people that you get on well with, reasonably. You are associated generally with people who have much of the same way of living and thinking as you, you have got shared values, and this is good, but the great danger is that you become complacent. Here I am, I am living in a community working in a co-op and I meditate every day, well nearly every day, and well here I am, that is that. I've arrived as it were. If you are not careful you can adopt an attitude of [22] complacency to an admittedly positive situation. It is not that the situation isn't positive, it is highly positive. It is not that you should necessarily be out of that situation, no, it may be well the best situation for you, but it is only an opportunity it is not an achievement. It is a base upon which you have to build and there is this danger that you become complacent. This is why I used to say in the early days that when the Friends becomes successful and big and maybe well known, that is when we have to be really careful, that is the really dangerous time for us, not when we are struggling to survive, because everyone is aware of the dangers of going under then, but not everyone is always aware of the danger of settling down when things are going well whether on the larger scale or the smaller individual scale. So when you feel happy in your community and happy in your co-op, then it is the time to say to yourself, "Aha, I must be aware of complacency. [I must] go on growing" and ask yourself "well is this particular situation helping me to go on growing? Perhaps I've been here six months or two years; is it the best thing for me to continue in this situation or do I need a change or do I need to just make more effort within the situation?" This is something I have really noticed in the case of practically all the communities and certainly some of the co-ops that have come under my personal observation, there is the tendency for every single person if

he or she isn't careful to just settle down in that agreeable sort of situation and not really be making a rigorous effort you take it for granted that well you are in a co-op, live in a community, you suppose you must be growing, "well I suppose I must be growing": well I suppose you are in a way (laughter) but it needs more individual conscious effort than that; so this is something that really needs to be taken notice of.

Noel: It brings us back to the first instruction again doesn't it?

S: Yes ... right you take it for granted that your world will continue, and your world will keep you all right, but it is just a somewhat more positive world than before.

Paloma: I think it is very difficult to actually become complacent because there is lots of irritation, even if you live in a community or go to a centre. I find it is very irritating contact with anyone else who isn't living in a community. I find that even in the community the contact is very irritating (laughter).

S: Well that could depend on temperament.

[23]

Paloma: Yes, well I find that even with the businesses and co-ops that are set up ... there is always irritation with all the other businesses outside the friends. It is always ... there will always be a struggle in a way.

S: Well irritation isn't a bad thing providing it stimulates you and doesn't just dissipate nervous energy. Simply fuming and fretting perhaps if you are a greed type you become complacent more easily, but perhaps if you are a hate type, not so much. Do you see what I mean? So in a way the hate type is less exposed to that particular obstacle.

Marichi: Isn't complacency different ... it can take different forms?

S: Yes the complacency can have a positive tinge as well as a negative tinge. But in a way, yes one can even be complacent about oneself as having to struggle with all these other inimical factors and people in the world. "Well here am I, I'm sort of struggling with them, I'm the one that is making an effort even. One can be complacent in that sort of way too. One is not necessarily growing because one is struggling in this sort of way, but as you said complacency can take many forms indeed.

Punyavati: If you are passive and get into that state, does that lead to self-complacency?

S: Yes, yes, I think that self complacency is something much more subtle and dangerous than that. I think you can be complacent even though you are active and making an effort which means that you have got out of touch with what you are actually doing. You are thinking of yourself as being a person who makes an effort and you have that fixed idea of yourself in a sense almost regardless of what you are actually doing. So you can have a false image of yourself as this sort of striving person, but you settle down in that you are complacent with regard to that. "What an effort I'm making, I'm always the one who is making an effort, I am always the one who is up early in the morning". That can become a subtler complacency. So that complacency is not very easy to escape. You don't necessarily overcome complacency just because you have become active rather than passive.

Tea Break

S: I was just wondering to what extent one can distinguish or should distinguish self-complacency on one hand and self-acceptance on the other. What do you think is the difference between these two?

[24]

Dhammadinna: Self acceptance gives you a basis from which to grow. It has to be positive appraisal of all your faculties and aspects. So it seems like awareness of your potential.

S: Well self complacency would certainly involve a lack of awareness of your potential for growth. Self complacency is sort of narcissistic, you are wrapped up with yourself, yourself as you are. You are selfish. This is why I think that it is said that the remedy for self complacency is benevolence and compassion.

Dhammadinna: I was thinking that there seems to be a link between self complacency and resentment actually. If you are not making an effort, you can often get resentful that other people are; and then there is the example you quoted where you are making an effort but you have a fixed idea of yourself. You think you are the only one making an effort and you get resentful. Whereas with self acceptance it would be based on metta for yourself and for others and on the understanding how people are making an effort ...

S: So it is important not to understand the rejection of self complacency as also involving or implying also the rejection of self-acceptance, because self-acceptance is a positive thing; you start by accepting yourself as you are here and now; accepting in the sense of extending metta (END OF TAPE) towards yourself, but seeing also the possibilities of growth beyond the present situation. So self-acceptance should never be confused with self-complacency.

You find that there are some people who have a sort of fierce dissatisfaction with themselves to such an extent that it is as much of an obstacle as self-complacency. They reject themselves to such an extent that they can not even make a start.

Marichi: So they haven't really a true knowledge of how they are.

S: Well they may be pretty bad (laughter) but the fact that you are pretty bad is no reason to reject yourself totally.

Marichi: But it is still lopsided because it is still seeing that the way I do such and such is bad, and that denies the energy behind it which could be turned to something else.

S: That is true, yes.

Dhammadinna: When we discussed this on the last seminar you made the point that you can be so concerned with your own growth that you don't actually grow; and being so concerned with your own growth can be self complacency, as you have a sort of obsession about it.

[25]

S: Yes, because your own growth also involves and requires a preoccupation with people and things outside yourself, yes? Just as you could say the plant when it grows is preoccupied

with the light and the warmth which is outside itself, it grows towards them that is how it grows. You don't grow just by constantly examining your own subjective mental states, and being obsessively or exclusively preoccupied with that ... you could say that reality consists of both subject and object; that is relative reality. You must be preoccupied with the object as well as the subject as long as, or to the extent that that distinction subsists. So this is why the antidote to complacency is metta and karuna or the development of the Bodhicitta itself which is concerned with other living beings and desire for their welfare and well being.

Dhammadinna: Could that not be tied up with what we talked about once before. The different levels of psychological, ethical and Spiritual?

S: Yes one could say that. In the psychological one is concerned only with one's own subjective mental states. With the ethical, other people and one's responsibility in relation to other people does come into view and with the spiritual comes into view the purely transcendental perspective, within which, both the subject and the object lose their distinctiveness as separate ultimate realities.

[Break in tape]

S: ... go so far as to say that people who are occupied with allegedly their individual development ... [27 - note page number 26 not used] ... within which both subject and the object lose their distinctiveness as separate ultimate realities. (break in tape) ... I would go so far as to say that people who are occupied with allegedly their individual development exclusively in terms of being preoccupied with their own mental states, are [not??] nearer to true development than those people who are exclusively occupied with the well-being of others in a purely social and political sort of way. Both are one sided. The first kind of person doesn't realize that in order to truly develop you must break the cycle of your own sort [of] narrow, narcissistic self-absorption and get other people into view. And the second kind of person doesn't realize that, well yes you have to get other people into view too, you also if you want to evolve and develop, or even to do any good to others, to take into account your own mental states as well. Because as it were from the stand point of Ultimate Reality, subject and object each are both equally near to Ultimate Reality and are equally far away. So there is no advantage in being concerned with the subject to the exclusion of the object over being concerned with the object to the exclusion of the subject. You have to realize that in genuine spiritual development both factors have to be taken into consideration, both aspects have to be taken into consideration. And you have to have a genuine concern for self, a genuine concern for others otherwise there is no development of self, and no benefit done to others. This is where the Bodhicitta comes in. Where the Will to Enlightenment, where both are taken into consideration, both aspects are present. "May I gain enlightenment for the benefit of all living beings". It is as though one says "may I gain enlightenment". Full stop. That is the alleged Hinayana Nirvana, the other says "May all beings be happy", full stop, that is just the social, economic, political, reformist attitude.

So certainly in the Mahayana, and Buddhism generally, really, you have both. You do justice to both the subject and the object, self and others, with a view to going beyond that distinction ultimately. So therefore the antidote to self-complacency is to the development of metta and karuna, benevolence and compassion. So we have got these three obstacles; no there were four obstacles, weren't there, so how did we miss one? There was attachment to sensuous experiences during this life, then attachment to sensual pleasures in this world,

attachment to self complacency and ignorance about the means of realizing Buddhahood. We didn't say anything about that, did we? So, there is this fourth obstacle. It is as though it is not enough to have Buddhahood as our driving force, it is not enough to have as our working basis the precious human body, it is not enough to have spiritual friends, there is [28] something else that is needed, actual instruction from one's spiritual friends. The spiritual friends should be spiritual friends in practice, they need to communicate with us, we need to communicate with them, we need to listen to them, we need to receive instruction from them.

So we have got therefore these four obstacles, and four topics of instruction which are the antidotes so to speak to the obstacles. Do you see that? So, there is attachment to sensuous experiences during this life, the antidote to that is concentrated attention to the significance of the transitoriness of the composite. And then there is attachment to sensual pleasures in this world. The antidote to that is the understanding of vicious state of Samsara as a result of our own actions. The obstacle of self-complacency, the antidote to that is the development of benevolence and compassion. And then the ignorance about the means of realizing Buddhahood, the antidote to that is all those factors which set up an enlightened attitude, which help us to develop the Bodhicitta and become a Bodhisattva in the sense of the ideal Buddhist. And so all these things are topics of instruction by the spiritual friends.

So, it says 'concentrated attention to the significance of transitoriness is the remedy for attachment to sensuous experiences in this life; similar attention to the vicious state of samsara due to our actions removes attachment to sensual pleasures in this world; the development of benevolence and compassion is the remedy against attachment to self-complacency, while the factors which set up an enlightened attitude remove ignorance about how to realize Buddhahood.' So this particular chapter is concerned especially with the first topic of instruction, that is to say, 'Concentrated attention to the transitoriness of the composite' as a remedy for the obstacle of attachment to sensuous experiences during this life. The others are mentioned just in summary. Then it goes on to say, 'These factors, that is to say the factors that set up an enlightened attitude, remedy for the fourth obstacle, are experiences which start with taking refuge in the Three Jewels, which is the subject of a later chapter, and lead up to concentrated attention to the meaning of the two types of non-individuality; they are also those experiences which you have on the five paths,' the subject of another chapter 'and the ten levels of spirituality,' the subject of another chapter. 'Furthermore some [of] them are the working basis, others the frame of reference, and still others the method for the formation of enlightened attitude,' another chapter. 'So there is nothing in Mahayana, which does not fall under the scope of the formation of the enlightened attitude. Consequently all instructions therein originate with and depend on spiritual friends. [29] As is stated in the Gandhavyuha Sutra: Spiritual friends are the birth place of all good. And, Omniscience depends upon instruction by them.'

So you see what the author is trying to do in this paragraph, he is just indicating the context of this particular chapter and its connection with some of the succeeding chapters. Do you see this? So we need not go into that in detail, because it would involve going into those subjects, we are concerned with just this particular chapter, which deals with the first of, or rather the remedy for the first obstacle, the first obstacle that is of the four obstacles which, due to which we do not obtain Buddhahood immediately, even though we are endowed with those other very favourable conditions. So if can at least get at least this obstacle out of the way, then we shall have made quite a lot of progress.

But before we go on to that, is there anything in this rather condensed paragraph that you want to ask about, any thing that isn't clear? Or anything that we have already done that isn't clear?

Kaye: Where it says "Similar attention to the vicious state of Samsara due to our actions", we didn't actually talk about that.

S: Yes, well this form of attention is a remedy to attachment to sensual pleasures in the world. It is the remedy for the hedonistic principle. The hedonistic principle being as it were that 'pleasure is the highest value, that everything else can be sacrificed to pleasure, pleasure of the passing moment.' So what is the antidote to that? Attention to the vicious state of Samsara due to our actions. So what does one understand by that ? What is this Samsara ?

Joan: The Wheel of Life.

S: It is the Wheel of Life, the world, it is conditioned existence, composite existence, transitory existence. So in what sense is it vicious? In what sense is it a vicious state?

: It is a state of suffering.

S: It is a state of suffering, but is it a state of unalloyed suffering?

Marichi: No.

S: No it is not unalloyed, it is just a state that is liable to suffering at any time. It is not that you are actually suffering necessarily moment by moment, though you may be. But at any moment you are liable to suffer. It is vicious in that sense, unsatisfactory in that sense. So if you become a little more aware, if you sort of raise your eyes beyond the purely hedonistic perspective, you realize that the pleasure of the present [30] moment can be immediately followed by something quite painful. In fact the pleasure of the present moment may be the cause of the pain and suffering of the succeeding moment. So, you should bear in mind the vicious state of the samsara in the sense that pleasure that you want is often inextricably bound up with pain which you don't want. That in bringing, in seeking pleasure you often bring upon yourself pain. Nobody really wants to do that. So reflecting in this way, you develop a sort of broader outlook, you extend your perspective, you see that even if you want pleasure, you have to go about it intelligently, you don't necessarily enjoy yourself more just because you grab wildly and blindly every pleasure at every passing moment. Sometimes you need to postpone. So, even though maybe your orientation is still quite hedonistic, at least you are developing your capacity to reflect, you are developing your awareness, and therefore you are developing your individuality. And pleasure is becoming less and less supreme value. Certainly the pleasure of the passing moment is becoming less and less of supreme value. In that way you grow.

We also didn't say very much in a general way about the instruction of spiritual friends being the means of removing our ignorance about the means of realizing Buddhahood. We saw that it wasn't enough that you should just have spiritual friends, those spiritual friends have got to actually speak, they have got to communicate. So what does this suggest? In a very broad way?

Noel: It suggests the importance of the Sangha.

S: The importance of the Sangha, but in an even broader sense it suggests that we are really dependant upon the instruction of others in the spiritual sphere, which suggests that we don't originate much of our own. We understand maybe quite a lot, but where did we get that understanding? It is not something that we have worked out for ourselves, maybe we understand the Four Noble Truths, understand the Twelve Nidanas, understand the distinction between reactive mind and creative mind, but where did all this come from? Directly or indirectly it all came from spiritual friends of one kind or another, from the Buddha downwards. There is very little that we have found out for ourselves. You see what I mean? This is I think being underlined here. That we really are dependent on spiritual friends living and dead for whatever we know about the Path of the spiritual life. We have not discovered it for ourselves, we have not found out all these things for ourselves. We were lucky enough to read about them in books, or hear about in lectures. Do you see what I mean? So we don't always appreciate this because we are quite conscious [31] that we know certain things, well maybe we do, we are not sufficiently conscious that we have not found out those things for ourselves, we have learnt them one way or another from spiritual friends. So we are dependent really on the instruction of spiritual friends, there might have been hundreds of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, there might be all sorts of highly developed spiritual people around, but that is not much use to us, there has to be an actual communication from them to us in one way or another, either by their present speech or by the fact that things that they have said have been recorded in books to which we have access, but we are very dependent on all that. There is hardly anything, in the way of general principles or methods that we have excogitated or found out for ourselves. So we need to acknowledge our dependence for instruction on spiritual friends, and admit that whatever we know, that whatever understanding we have about the spiritual path is not self-originated, it originated with others that are more experienced than ourselves. So when we realize that, well what is the appropriate positive emotion?

Dhammadinna: Devotion, gratitude.

S: Right yes, especially gratitude perhaps, but we don't always experience, realize that, you take up something like say the Songs of Milarepa which you thumb through. What are those songs, the out come of? They are the outcome of Milarepa's intense spiritual experience over a period of decades, they are the product in some cases of intense suffering, of real effort, and therefore they are really useful to us, really inspiring but we very rarely feel actually grateful to Milarepa for having sung those songs, and grateful for the fact that those songs have been transmitted to us via a long line of disciples who preserved them and wrote them down and printed them and published them and translated them. It has taken all that work to get those songs, those instructions of that particular spiritual friend to us. We would never have dreamt of those things otherwise, because they envisage perspectives that we couldn't dream of. But they are there for us, the instruction is available to the extent that we are receptive to it.

There is another point that could be made. The expression is used "these factors are experiences", the factors referred to are the Teachings aren't they? Or our understanding of the Teachings. We get these instructions from the spiritual friends, and they are factors which set up an enlightened attitude. But these factors are experiences - this underlines something quite important. It is not just enough to understand, what we understand has to be an experience, and it is then that we go for refuge and so on.

[32]

Marichi: Isn't that why perhaps you might take something like Milarepa's songs for granted, if you have some inkling of what you are reading, they do become an experience and you do feel in tune with the Songs. But they are not a real factor until that emotional connection ...

S: Well everything must eventually be transmuted into an experience and the greater the extent to which it becomes an experience, the more you will recognize its true value and therefore the more grateful you be for its having been made available to you.

So the importance of spiritual friends is emphasized, "all instructions therein originate with and depend on spiritual friends". But that has also got another significance perhaps, you think of things like Buddhahood, the Doctrine of the Void, Pratitya Samutpada, the Four Truths, but what does it all sound like? In a very general way? How do you sort of characterize it all, these teachings?

Marichi: You mean in that form?

S: In a very general sort of way.

Bonnie: Sounds like a lot of words.

S: Sounds like a lot of words, yes.

Voices: Lists, things, reminders.

S: Yes, but what I was thinking was that it sounds very abstract. Abstract in the sense that it is as though you can have these sorts of teachings these sorts of doctrines, these sorts of truths apart from the people who actually experience them. It is as though you have got the Four Noble Truths etc., etc., hanging in the void, but do you actually have the Four Noble Truths hanging in the void? What do you actually have? You have people seeing the Four Noble Truths, there is no Four Noble Truths apart from people who see the Four Noble Truths. Just as you don't have pleasure apart from someone who experiences pleasure, there is no knowledge apart from someone who has the knowledge, no truth apart from someone who realizes the Truth. So the great danger is that if you are occupied too much with Buddhist doctrine, you abstract the doctrines, the Teachings from the living experience of the individual human beings who saw so to speak the Truth of those doctrines. So you have got to as it were to trace all those things back to spiritual friends. Do you see what I mean? So in this sense also one can say that all instructions originate with and depend on spiritual friends, all these instructions in the case of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are expressions of their vision, what they see what they realize, what they experience, what they understand, these [33] instructions do not as it were exist in mid-air, without any sort of relation to individuals whose knowledge they represent.

Marichi: You cannot actually share somebody else's experience, can you? It has to become your experience as well. It is still relatively abstract even.

S: Well this raises quite a big question. Can you share somebody else's experience? Well what is an experience? One perhaps has to think of that too. Put it in very simple terms, suppose you see a beautiful flower in the garden, and you really appreciate the beauty of that

flower, its colour, its scent, the whole way that it grows, and suppose you. direct somebody's else's attention to that flower, does that person have the same experience of the beauty of the flower that you have?

No, you cannot say that they do. But is their experience completely different.

Marichi: You can't say that they don't either. (laughter)

Dhammadinna: There must be qualities that are similar. An appreciation of beauty, both have experienced that in their own way.

S: But maybe that isn't an all together satisfactory formulation, that they both experience in their own way. It isn't as though there is a thing out there called the flower in a way. It is almost as if you experience the flower, well you can experience the flower, you can appreciate the beauty of the flower because there is something in common, up to a point between you and the flower, and you can bring a third party into that, another human being, so that it becomes as it were a three way communication. It is not that there is an object called 'flower' which is an actual entity and you see it from this angle and another person sees it from that. Do you see what I mean? There is a kind of relationship which you have with the flower which another person can also have. Not that the other person is seeing the flower literally from the same point of view as you or even from a different point of view. I mean one really should not discuss the question in those terms at all. I remember there is a Japanese haiku that I remember reading sometime ago, which seems to throw some light on this, see if I can remember it ... it was translated into couplet form. It went something like this: "The guest was silent and the host was dumb, and silent too the white chrysanthemum". Yes? What does that suggest? What does that convey? Well obviously, there is a scene, there is this beautiful, probably potted white chrysanthemum blooming in the room, and it belonged to the hosts and a friend came to see the person who was the host, the guest, and the host didn't have to [34] say, 'oh look, what a lovely white chrysanthemum I have got', he didn't need to because the person who came had the same kind of sensitivity as the host, so nothing need to be said, and as soon as the guest came into the room, he saw the white chrysanthemum, I won't say in the same way as the host saw it, that is too clumsy, but there was the white chrysanthemum and because the two people are of much the same kind, let us say, of much the same sensitivity, they respond to the white chrysanthemum in the same sort of way. They understand that, that is understood between them, they don't need to say anything or to discuss the subject. And the white chrysanthemum doesn't say anything. What does that suggest? It almost suggests that the chrysanthemum is a sort of party to their understanding. It is not just a bare object. You see what I mean? You haven't got two sort of alienated awarenesses or two alienated subjects looking at an alienated object. I mean that is the basis of your discussion when you say, "do we see the flower?, does he see the same flower as me, therefore do we have the same experience or not?", well that is all a discussion on the basis of alienation really. But there is a sort of deeper sympathy within which you feel that you are a living being, that the flower is a living being, the host is a living being, the guest is a living being. The host is aware of the flower, the guest is aware of the flower, the guest is aware that the host is aware of the flower, the host is aware that the guest is aware of the flower and the flower is aware that is being aware of (laughter) by the host and by the guest. There is this undercurrent of sympathy between them all, that they really are in contact in a sense they are one, to use that much overworked word.

Marichi: That is the actual experience isn't it, it just happens to have these factors in it, of guest, host, flower.

S: Yes that is the actual experience ... it is not there is separate experience of an 'his' experience of it, his experience of it, do their experiences coincide. No, the experience is as sort of field which includes them all. The question of whether the one has the same experience as the other just doesn't arise. That only arises only within a quite alienated situation; a situation in which subject and object are alienated from one another almost completely, in other words the sort of scientific consciousness.

Marichi: But to come back to sharing your experiences. I can say 'an amazing thing happened to me yesterday', I then have got to somehow reset up the whole situation so that you can ...

S: You have got to create a common feeling. This is what happens. I mean for instance sometimes something wonderful did happen to you yesterday, [35] you meet a friend. You want to share it, you cannot just blurt it straight out, because you are perhaps not at that moment occupying a common field. That person might be thinking, might be worried about something else, and you might blurt out your wonderful experience, and it might just mean nothing at all to that person. You have wait until conditions are right, until you create it between your common field within which you can bring up that question or that reminiscence or that experience of yours and it can be shared then. And sometimes we are too impatient well even if we want to share sometimes our experience of Buddhism with people in an impatient premature sort of way without taking the trouble to create the field first, the field of sympathy and empathy. So it is an aspect of communication.

Bonnie: Can you link this up with Milarepa? This thing with the chrysanthemum. In reading Milarepa we are inspired by the experience and that in some way we are being open and respond to it and we meet within that field.

S: Well first of all you have to set up that field, as I have called it, with Milarepa so to speak, because you know quite well that if you are in a certain mood, you just pick up the Songs of Milarepa and read them they mean nothing to you. So it is important to set up that field by being receptive and tuning into that particular person, in this case Milarepa the author of the Songs. Just as if you want to share your experience with somebody else, you have to make sure that a common field exists between you. It is the same with Milarepa, in that case since he is as it were dead, you have to adjust your field to his, your wavelength to his. In the case of two living people who meet face to face usually the process is mutual. You adjust to each other, you tune your little sets and all that sort of thing until a common field is created between you. A field within which experiences in a manner of speaking can be shared. But often we are not patient enough to do that. And some people do of course tune into you more quickly than others, or more slowly.

Marichi: So in relation to the instruction from spiritual friends, you'd have to be prepared to tune into each other and work at that.

S: Yes, there is a lot of material about this in the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines, when it deals with the intervention of Mara and how Mara is constantly getting in the way of your spiritual development and especially Mara is constantly creating obstacles between the teacher and the pupil, between the good friend and the person to whom he is the

good friend. And rather comical examples are given, the teacher is ready [36] to teach the pupil, and the pupil isn't ready to learn. The pupil is ready to learn, the teacher isn't ready to teach. It is exactly the same thing. There has to be this mutual tuning in, this mutual creation of a common field within which true learning and true teaching can take place. A true as it were sharing of experiences. That is quite important, otherwise you are just at crossed purposes, even at loggerheads.

Marichi: And you may not realize quite how or why.

S: Yes, quite. And you may want to show someone, to go back to the original example, a beautiful flower in the garden, that may not be the right moment. They may not be in the mood, they may have just got their bank statement, or something like that (laughter) and be in a quite different sort of mood, and be rather thoughtful, and not in the mood to go and look at pretty flowers in the garden (laughter), you may be bubbling over with that, and wanting as it were to share. But you know sharing, this is the key word here, it is sharing, it is not imposing your experience on somebody else and as it were compelling them to have your experience; that is a different sort of thing. So for real sharing, the creation of the common field is necessary and if you create that common field, what we usually call sharing of experience can arise within that field quite naturally and spontaneously.

Marichi: It also involves a change of pace.

S: Very often, yes. And all sorts of things have to be adjusted between two people for communication and so called sharing of experience to be possible.

Bonnie: I think it creates a facility that has to be practised in order to become skilful.

S: Oh yes indeed.

Bonnie: I was interested in Milarepa because I ... in Australia where I am living, I am actually by myself with very few spiritual friends and I rely heavily on texts, and I have found since being over here this is the sort of thing that is all that I have done, because ...

S: Well maybe there is quite a bit of tuning in to be done because ... It is not just a question one person or two other people, but there is dozens and even hundreds perhaps, as one moves around. I think this is quite important this fact, or important to understand that often we are too impatient, and our impatience gets in the way. I have been talking about this lately, that is say this past year, in much more general terms, in the sense that friendships take a long time to build up. Have you ever noticed this. It is not something that you can (carry off ?). Of course [37] you do take quite quick likings to some people some times and you get on with them very well, very quickly with a minimum of delay. But even that is not friendship. That is just a promising start to a friendship, it isn't a friendship itself. Friendship is something that develops over a period of years and gets gradually deeper and deeper, as mutual confidence and trust grows.

Marichi: And anyway it couldn't be friendship until it has got this background of sharing.

S: Yes background of shared experience, even in some cases, although this is perhaps on a slightly lower level, shared memories. That gives continuity, and the more continuity in the

true sense, well the more individuality. So I think one shouldn't think that friendships can be rushed, they cannot be hurried. And within the context of the spiritual community other factors being equal your best friends will be your oldest friends, the people that you have known longest. I say other factors being equal of course assuming that you have had as regular contact with them as you have had perhaps with other people. You have kept up at least some kind of regular contact so that every time that you meet, you go just a little further, explore some new dimension, new aspect, and in that way get to know them better, and consolidate the friendship in a positive sort of way. And this cannot happen over a few months. You might like to like it to happen and sometimes it seems to happen in a sort of romantic way, which you must all know about, but sometimes you can get disillusioned and something will happen and then you realize that whoever you might have had this illusion of closeness to during that romantic period, but when you look back after it is all over, you realize well it was based on complete mutual misunderstanding ...

End of side A ...

S: ... you know something else, maybe of this kind, of that kind, but it wasn't friendship. Because friendship is almost something essentially that builds up over quite a period of time. I don't think that you can genuinely call someone a friend using the word in all seriousness if you haven't known them and seen them regularly perhaps if you are young for five or six years, if you are older eight or ten years. You can say you are working on your friendship, it has got off to a good start, it is a promising beginning. You cannot say more than that. But it is also a very positive way of looking at it, because it assumes well that there is going to be so many more positive developments for the future. It isn't [38] something that already is achieved and settled; that you're friends. No, there is a whole creative process ahead of you, becoming real friends with somebody.

Punyavati: You have to keep working at it.

S: You have to keep working upon it. You mustn't become complacent about your friendships, that 'oh so and so is your friend, that is that you can forget all about it'. No; someone once said, I forget who it was, 'that you should keep your friendships in constant repair'. Otherwise, if you are not careful, unless you are a Stream entrant, they can become a bit thread bare. One finds this. So one keeps them up, one keeps them alive in little ways. At least by a phone call, by writing a letter sometimes, sending a little present, these are the ways in which you keep up friendships, you keep friendships alive and flourishing. Don't take friends for granted. That is a form of self-complacency. So, in this as it were narrower sphere, as it were related to this wider one, accept that it takes time to share experiences too, in a manner of speaking. Don't take the expression shared experiences too literally. It takes time to set up that common field within which the sharing is possible. And it is not so much shared experiences, it is more like mutual experiences. So it is again a question of growing and developing, not grabbing and getting.

Marichi: ... a clear flow between you and your spiritual friends. It is not a big deal that somebody comes and gives you an instruction which you then swallow.

S: Right exactly, but this is how often people think about it. I mean on the day before yesterday, I had an interesting talk with Diana, who has come back recently from India, while in India and Nepal, she had the opportunity of seeing what some of these Tibetan Lamas are

doing, and having some experience of their various courses, and from what she said it is pretty clear that they just threw the whole bag of tricks doctrinally speaking and so on at the people, Westerners mostly, who came along to these courses, and it was quite clear that it was a very hit or miss affair, they are expected to swallow everything hook line and sinker, well then they have got it then, but there was no question of really, well even the teacher apparently who was taking the courses tuning into the people, getting to know them, discovering what their real needs were. She said, "that the metta bhavana practice was unheard of", "no one did it, no one taught it, no one seemed to know anything about it", "there were lots of very lengthy complicated visualizations which most people found quite impossible to do and quite complex breathing exercises [39] but nothing simple and direct or related to people's actual needs and actual stage of development" and she was quite astonished by this. And though she got a lot out of her trip, she seemed to me to be quite glad to be back home so to speak moving in circles where people practised simple basic things like the metta bhavana and the mindfulness of breathing, and she didn't feel ready for the complex visualization practices. But it did seem from what she said that some of the Tibetan lama-teachers were more concerned to sort of throw the whole encyclopedia of Tibetan Buddhism at you, than to set up this sort of field between you, you meaning the lama himself and the people attending the courses, and to get into real communication with you and just find out where you are at, and what you needed to help you to grow. That conception seems from what she was saying to be completely absent.

Marichi: Would that apply if you got into a more personal relationship ... if you survived this assault course, presumably you would then.

S: Well then it raises the question what is the purpose of the assault course. Presumably everything begins with communication, presumably that is what you start with. Otherwise you are in a purely abstract academic theoretical area, which from a Buddhist point of view, from the point of view of spiritual development, has got hardly any value at all. Rather you would be better off, probably, perhaps just having a quiet chat with the lama over a cup of tea. But they seem to think in terms of these large scale courses with this very elaborate sort instruction and practice, which seems relevant to the needs of hardly anybody. But they are grateful for what they are being offered and perhaps also they have got some misunderstandings about the very nature of Buddhism and the spiritual life.

Marichi: Perhaps it seems too mundane to travel half way around the world to be taught to count your breath.

S: Right, yes, perhaps you just want your money's worth, as it were.

Dhammadinna: It seems quite strange that in Tibetan Buddhism is built around these sort of Guru-Chela relationships, that that is quite central.

S: But I have got the impression myself that this has become highly structured and formalized, which means that the very essence of it has been lost. This came up the other day, I hope I am not digressing too much, but it might be of use, this came up the other day here at Padmaloka at lunch, because I had received a letter from an old friend of mine who is now in Darjeeling, and whom I knew formerly in Kalimpong [40] towards the end of my stay there. He appeared on the scene perhaps about three years before I left. He was a young Tibetan incarnate lama, well I say youngish, he was about my age, he was then in his late thirties, as I

was, and he became the Abbot of the local Tibetan Gelugpa monastery, the (?) monastery up at (?). And I knew him quite well. And I got a letter from him the other morning, because he had been over from Darjeeling where he now lives on a visit to Kalimpong, had gone down to see Dhardo Rimpoche, and in Dhardo Rimpoche's office he had met Phil Miller. Yes this was about two weeks ago. So we have some news of Phil Miller. And he got talking with Phil Miller because this Abbot or ex-abbot knows English quite well, and he was glad to get some news of me from Phil, and my address. So he wrote and he wrote to tell his story. So first of all he said that he always remembered me and was glad to be in contact with me again, etc., etc. But his story was that his brother had died some seven years earlier, leaving a widow and children, and he said as Tibetan custom goes, he had the responsibility of maintaining them, but he says, or he suggests that he took the responsibility too seriously, so he says unfortunately now I am now no longer an incarnate lama, no longer an abbot of the monastery, that I have fallen a victim to my passions, he said, and I have become truly the father of those children. He indulges in a few reflections on the nature of women which I won't repeat (laughter), but I got this letter, and I felt in a way quite sad about it, because he was clearly not in a happy situation. He wrote to ask if I could find him a sponsor for his son, I assume he means the son of his deceased brother and he is teaching English in St. Joseph's College over in Darjeeling, but anyway, the point is this, I happened to mention at lunch that I had got this letter and just told the little story, and mentioned that I had know him quite well, and that I had noticed that during the time that we had known each other that he seemed to have a sort of personal interest in me, which very few of the other Tibetan monks had. So several people who were present on that occasion, they expressed some surprise at that, in view, as you have mentioned, of the fact that the Guru is so important in Tibetan Buddhism. So they asked me about that. So I reflected on it and then what occurred to me was that actually in Tibetan society including religious society, people relate very much on the basis of their official even religious position. Some relate to you as the abbot, he relates to you as the treasurer of the monastery, he relates to you as a Geshe, a learned monk, etc., etc., just as in lay-life. And it is very rare that anybody sort of tries to enter into any sort of relation or communication as one individual to another. And so, this is something that we went on [41] to talk about, when I was in Kalimpong a lot of Tibetans were on friendly terms with me, but on friendly terms with me in a sort of official capacity, I was running a small vihara, they were also running viharas and monasteries, we got together to organize Buddha Jyanti celebrations and we did it very amicably and in a sort of happy friendly way, but there it ended, it wasn't as though they particularly wanted to get to know me as an individual. But a very few of them did, and this particular ex-abbot was one of them, and that is why I remembered him, because he was especially sort of friendly and outward-going towards me personally, leave aside the meetings that we organized together, leave aside the Buddha Jyantis that we celebrated together, he was definitely interested in getting to know me well, and wished me individually well, which was quite unusual I found among Tibetans. I met very very few Tibetans who were like that, including monks, and lamas and Rimpoches and whatnot; so it does seem as though, even though in the Vajrayana tradition the personal relationship with the Guru is stressed, it is as though it has become quite institutionalized.

Marichi: It is not actually personal. It is a relationship with a Guru but it is not with a person.

S: Yes, it is a relationship with a "guru", not with a person who within the field of communication and shared experience that you create emerges as it were as your guru. No, he is labelled a guru, and you are supposed to relate to him as a guru, and go along and make your three 'prostrations etc., etc. This is apparently how they function at Manjusri. One of the

community at Manjusri Institute I mean; one of the community members found someone from Manjusri wandering in Surlingham village the other day, believe it or not, got talking to them and they were sort of looking for me, or this particular person was sort of looking for me, he was sort of rather vague, he might have been looking for somebody else too, but anyway, he got talking to this community member, who invited him in for some lunch and he met me and had a little chat, he was a nice sort of person, but really rather vague, but anyway, in talking to the community member who invited him in and made the initial contact, he made the point

that, yes these lamas came to Manjusri and they gave instruction and you could have personal interviews with them, but you had to go through the traditional procedure, you couldn't just meet them and talk to them and he made quite a sort of point of this and the community member made the point that well with the FWBO it was not like that. It was as though, I got the impression, I hope I am not doing them any injustice, that at the Manjusri Institute a personal relationship with any visiting lama [42] would be quite out of the question, and would almost be considered wrong or impolite or discourteous or at least against the correct etiquette, yes he said, " the correct etiquette has to be followed". So it does seem as though the guru institution, one should even call it that, has been, or the guru relationship in a more genuine has been sort of institutionalized, someone is officially a guru, and you relate to him in that sort official way, whereas I always stressed in I think that which is the more genuinely Buddhist way, that you get to know another individual first, and you create a communication within that communication you discover naturally and spontaneously who has something to give and who is to receive. It is not something that can be prejudged and as it were made official and institutionalized. This is to distort it.

Marichi: There seems to be an enormous distrust of individual feeling, in that any feeling that you have is going to be craving, attachment or hate or something.

S: I think it is even worse than that.

Dhammadinna: It is not getting involved, it is not making a connection no human involvement.

S: It is almost a fear of the personal, the fear of the individual.

Marichi: But don't you think it is fear based on the fact that it could be unskilful, and it has developed into this institution. It is almost a sort of puritan ...

S: Well I think there is something to be said for the fact, that yes sometimes maybe someone spiritually experienced may have to be protected against people's foolishness and impertinence and so on. But I think that can be overdone, because he ought to be able to protect himself to a great extent, the Buddha certainly did, the Buddha refused to allow himself to be protected, but then of course you could say he was the Buddha. But then the guru is supposed to be the Buddha.

Marichi: Is this the same monastic system that you see ...

S: Or do you mean protected against women?

Marichi: Well there is that. Yes, it is almost (?) liable to be dangerous, therefore you set up a

system that protects you.

S: But then you could say that lamas should not be, women should not be dangerous for them. Well then you might say it is to keep up their reputation, you might say well this is something (?) supposing a lama, even a perfectly respectable (?) lama is closeted with a perfectly respectable woman, well this is supposed to be bad, according to some Buddhists, because [of] what people might say. So this is [43] true, people might talk without any grounds at all, but you mustn't give them it is said grounds for talking even if no grounds are actually exist. But I must say I completely disagree with this. Because I think that if you start going along in that sort of way, you become at the sort of mercy of public opinion, so, I think you have to take the bull by the horn and say all right, the lama has to be, you could say, to be exposed to these sort of possibilities. I mean if he is, or these sorts of dangers, if he is a real lama, he will be able to deal with the situation. And then you have to say, why are you so concerned about public opinion? What is that based upon. Well that 'nothing should happen, between the lama and the visiting lady, and it should be quite clear that nothing could happen because they didn't meet even privately', so, all right, what are afraid of happening? Well you are afraid of sex happening. So why are you afraid of sex happening between them?. Why are you thinking about that so much? (laughter) There is that point. Well clearly it is in our society you have got a sort of obsession about sex. So I think as I say you have to take the bull by the horns and say, don't bother about that. Maybe the lama did have sex with the lady, if he did, [he] presumably knows what he is doing. If he didn't know what he is doing and simply fell victim to his passions, well fair enough, we know now what sort of lama he is. So ... (laughter) so therefore.

Marichi: You don't , from the outside you don't know whether he is doing what he is doing for good reasons, therefore the situation is institutionalized.

S: So I think that you shouldn't have an institutionalized situation or an institutionalized lama, who has got an institutionalized reputation based simply upon his being protected from dangers of that sort. I must say I have come to the conclusion that I completely disagree with that whole sort of attitude. And I don't think that it can work. Because however careful you are as a lama, to avoid women, not to talk with them privately, if somebody wants he can always start up some rumour, it is impossible to satisfy the public, it is impossible to safeguard yourself against gossip so therefore I think it is better not to bother, and even to say, 'Well if people think that if you are a lama, if you say well if people think that I had sex with that lady, well never mind, it doesn't matter, I don't care. I am not concerned to keep up that sort of reputation and those who know me individually one can say, well they will know where I stand. My reputation shouldn't depend on there being an absence of gossip'.

Marichi: In fact your reputation will lie in your individual contacts.

S: Yes indeed, well with those people who know you individually as a [44] result of their individual contact. You know what the world at large says you are not concerned about that. And if you are over concerned well you can tie yourself in endless knots, because you can never in fact safeguard yourself against gossip, however careful you are, it is quite impossible. Because the nature of gossip is such, so once again you know one must give attention to the personal not the institutional. An institutional or institutionalized reputation has got nothing to do [with] real Buddhism at all; but this is what you know quite a lot of people are concerned to keep up. So this is why to come back to the original point I do feel

that in Tibet itself despite the Vajrayana tradition and despite the emphasis on the Guru and the personal relationship with the guru, because after all 'the Buddha is dead, but the guru is alive, you can have a personal relationship with him, but you cannot with the Buddha', the whole thing has become institutionalized. You have an institutionalized personal relationship with the guru, which is a contradiction in terms. You see, instead of entering into personal communication with someone whom you come to trust and therefore to receive teaching from, you hear, 'oh such and such lama is a great guru, ah all right, I'll go and get an initiation from him', so along you trot when he is having one of his big initiations, he doesn't know you from Adam, or Eve (laughter) but along you go, yeah, you get the Abhiseka, you get the Wong, and he doesn't know you at all perhaps. There is no question of personal relationship, but anyway he is your guru. So you go along and see him maybe six months later, and he says ... well he doesn't say 'who are you?', because it is much more formalized than that, but you tell him, you have told him that you are his disciple, because he does not know, he doesn't recognize you, so you know what a ridiculous situation. This is supposed to be personal!

Marichi: And of course it [is] set up so you cannot really tell whether he remembers you or not presumably.

S: That is true. His disciples might whisper in his ear 'So and so came to see you just over a year ago, at such and such wong,' 'oh yes', so then you come in, you shuffle in, make your prostrations, offer your presents, and you say, 'I got this initiation from you a year ago', 'oh yes, yes, yes', as though he remembers it all, but actually he doesn't.

Marichi: So the whole thing gets less and less real.

S: Yes, the whole thing gets less and less real.

Paloma: Isn't this a hindrance the belief in ritual, dependence on rituals and ...

S: So I am not saying that they may not have it positive side, within a [45] structure of organized Buddhism. I am not saying that. But what I am saying is that this is not a figure, a lama of that sort, a lama who functions in this way is not functioning as a guru in the real Vajrayana way and you are not having with him a personal relationship of pupil to guru, let us say, because the personal element is not there. And this is what I found in the greater part of Tibetan Buddhism in the course of my own contact with it and now what I hear about it, that despite the emphasis on the personal relationship with the Guru in theory, in practice it hardly ever exists. You don't even know, you don't get a chance to know.

Paloma: In that way, there is no chance of communicating the Dharma between the Guru and the disciple.

S: No, there is not, it also means and this is the most fatal thing, that the Dharma is not communicated. Yes. You know the words of the Dharma are repeated, the rites are gone through, you are given even wongs and initiations all in that sort of external institutionalized way. And this is what is going on in these courses, which Diana saw or attended partly, it is all routinized and institutionalized.

Marichi: There is no sense of Sangha.

S: Therefore there is no sense of Sangha also.

Noel: And it is detrimental both to the guru because if the guru always sees himself in that kind of institutionalized way, then surely that is a hindrance to his growth?

S: Well yes, assuming that he isn't a Buddha already, in which case he wouldn't be functioning like that. But yes, he is tied down to this official institutionalized guru role.

Dhammadinna: Is that the thing about expression of self-complacency

S: Well certainly you could say this is institutionalized self-complacency.

Bonnie: Sounds a bit like the Catholic Church to me.

S: Well with less excuse, (laughter) because the catholic Church does explicitly teach that the efficacy of the sacraments does not depend upon the virtue of the individual ministering priest. But, so you can receive the sacraments quite validly without the priest being a real priest. But you cannot have the Dharma communicated to you unless the guru is a real guru. In other words unless there is that personal relationship. The books you can read by yourself, from contact with a living person you expect more than just a repetition of what you have already read in the books. [46] You want, for want of a better term, something personal, something individual, something directly related to you.

Dhammadinna: It seems to [me] it is a psychological and social tendency to communicate with people through their positioning in worldly life.

S: Yes we mustn't just blame the Tibetans as though they are ones who do it.

Dhammadinna: And that, is that done in the Sangha, and that is in a way backing up another aspect of worldly life, to communicate through merely position.

S: Right, this is why you know in the FWBO also we emphasize that someone who does occupy temporarily as it were [a] position, whether say Chairman or secretary, must be very careful that he doesn't start relating to people just from that position. It is all right say in Council meeting, if you are Treasurer, you speak up as Treasurer, that is your job, and you say, " well this is all the money that we have got, we cannot spend any more", but it doesn't mean that you know when you are not in the Council meeting, you are relating to everybody as Treasurer, that would mean there was a serious weakness in you.

Marichi: Or even with an authority acquired while you have been Treasurer.

S: Yes you must be careful not to sort of carry that over as it were.

Dhammadinna: Quite difficult that.

S: It is very difficult. But still one must be aware of it.

Dhammadinna: It can creep up on one very quickly.

S: Yes that is why it is quite good that there should be some situations when say Chairmen cannot be Chairmen, and Treasurers cannot be Treasurers, that they function in a quite different way. This is one of the reasons why I mentioned some months ago, that when there are the Order Weekends held that whoever takes the Chair, I suggested that quite young junior Order Members should be asked to take the Chair, so that it doesn't automatically go to those who are already Chairmen, for obvious reasons. So you have got the practice now, I think now of quite often a junior, as it were, person, Order Member taking the Chair at the Order weekends and that is quite a good thing. And then those who are normally Chairmen and Treasurers and so on, they just occupy the same position as everybody else, which is a good thing. So one has to be always on one's guard against the individual identifying himself with his sort of organizational position. Of course again, one must be careful being a Chairman of an FWBO centre isn't just an organizational position. If one regards it as that, or feels it as that, well one is already on the wrong track. [47] In a sense it is organizational, in the legal sense, but basically it is a spiritual position, in the sense it involves a spiritual responsibility, an obligation to relate to people spiritually, which means as an individual. So, paradoxically if you are a Chairman, you have got to be more of an individual than someone who isn't. Which isn't easy.

Paloma: Where does tradition come into relating to gurus and disciples and all this, I ask this because I have read in a book by Rahula about the Sangha in the West. He makes this point just about we talk now, that tradition has a value but in the West especially in the West, one should, this whole idea of the guru and the disciple and all these rituals they have to be broken down because people in the West have other traditions than in the East than other ... their lifestyle is different so one has to adapt to it and even people coming from the East have to adapt to it.

S: I don't think it is just though a question of adapting from one convention to another convention. All right, conventions are all right, they have their place, they just are to make individuals relating smoother and more easy, but if those conventions block the real individual relationship, then they must be got rid of. So if you have got say, suppose Eastern conventions would block real human communication in the West, Eastern Buddhist conventions would block real communication in the West, supposing say a lama came and you had to make three prostrations and offer a white scarf, and then give him a tin of biscuits and a pound note just like they do in Tibet, that would really block your communication with him, so all right abolish all that, but nonetheless if you were to approach him in a very conventional western way, and shake him by the hand and discuss the weather, well that would also perhaps equally block real communication, so it isn't, what Rahula says shouldn't be taken as meaning you just switch from Eastern Buddhist conventions to western Christian or secular conventions.

Paloma: No, but there has to be found a completely different way for the West in the East because like from what Diana was saying in not just she, but also other people, they have had difficulties with these teachings and these places where Diana wherever Diana went because they were just thrown all these things at them and if they didn't respond well that ...

S: That is just too bad.

S: Yes, so it means that even in the East they are not communicating the Dharma if they don't break down ...

[48]

I think actually they are not. I think actually they are not. I think in the East, a lot of what goes on as Dharma teaching is not really Dharma communication at all. It has become very conventionalised, very stereotyped. In the east, something is kept up, the possibility of recovering the tradition is there, but if only there is a much more human and direct approach to it. I think in some ways this has happened in India with the Tibetan refugee lamas, they have been compelled to sort of come down from their thrones almost literally and just to come into closer and more human contact with people and some of them have been able to do that. But others quite noticeably haven't. I mean some lamas are able to relate to others as individuals, but certain others are just not able to do that. They depend entirely upon the position and status.

Paloma: But that isn't actually what Buddhism teaches.

S: Of course not.

Paloma: That means that there hasn't actually been Buddhism in the East for quite a while then.

S: Buddhism is present in the East in many areas I would say only in a purely cultural sense. The religious or spiritual forms are kept up, but the spiritual significance has been lost very often. I mean we see this with many Theravadins who come along, even to some of the centres, who come in, Bhikkhus wearing yellow robes, they really expect to be treated at once with great respect because they are wearing a yellow robe. There is no question of allowing you to get to know them and then showing respect spontaneously because you feel it on account of what you know. They regard themselves as bhikkhus by status. Just as in the past say in England someone was a lord, a member of the aristocracy, a member by status and expected to be treated in a certain way. It is the same in the ecclesiastical terms, but this is nothing to do with Buddhism. So therefore I have told people if Bhikkhus and lamas come along to our centres from the East, yes, receive them in a friendly cordial sort of way, but don't as it were treat them in accordance with the status that they claim for themselves. This is not in accordance with our principles. If they want to relate to us in a friendly human way, we are quite open to that. But if they insist on being received as, well, the great this or the great that, well we are just not interested in relating to them on that basis.

Paloma: It wouldn't be the great this or the great that anyway, if they insisted on it, being related to.

S: Yes, that is true, but usually I am afraid they do insist or they are [49] very surprised when they are not treated on that basis and not just in our case maybe, other people that they meet, and my own experience is that very often they say "oh well, people in the West don't have much faith, they are not very spiritually minded, they are very materialistic" that is how they explain it.

Paloma: But it is much more materialistic to insist on your title.

S: Well of course it is. But they unfortunately don't understand that.

Paloma: It is unusual though for, if someone walks along the robes and doesn't even

understand that one can go beyond the title and is reverential, that there is more important things than ...

S: I think it goes back to this first obstacle, this attachment to sense experience during this life, it is the world to which you have become accustomed. And I have seen myself in the East I have seen bhikkhus just ordinary bhikkhus come along and meeting people who weren't maybe Buddhist, if they weren't treated with the same respect that they were accustomed to receiving, that is to say people bowing down and making offerings, they literally became disorientated, they did not know how to relate in any other way.

Marichi: They didn't exist as people any more.

S: They didn't exist as people any more, no. They were literally as I say disorientated, and I noticed that at that the time, and I felt that this was a very bad sign.

Dhammadinna: It is a great block to the Bodhisattva Ideal, of going out and meeting people who aren't already Buddhists, it doesn't really matter about meeting Buddhists in a sense.

S: Right, you have got to be able to relate to people directly as people. That comes first. So, therefore I mean I personally take now a somewhat iconoclastic attitude towards these aspects of eastern cultural Buddhist tradition. When I was in India, I went along with all these things, I observed myself, I did not question them, I did not challenge them, I took the view that "I am new, I am quite junior, and much less experienced than these people". I went along with it all, but after many many years my feeling and my attitude is that they actually were all quite mistaken to the extent that they adopted that sort of attitude and as far as I am concerned now and as far as the FWBO is concerned we just do not go along with that, we want to have everything as it were on a genuine basis. Which must be the basis of individual contact and communication. If you want genuine Buddhism there is no other way.

[50]

Paloma: I remember someone saying at the centre that he had been travelling around India trying to come into contact with some gurus, some genuine gurus, and to find the Dharma and then he didn't realize that for years he had lived in Bethnal Green and it was right on his door step.

S: That is amazing.

Paloma: We are quite lucky ...

S: Yes indeed. And one should realize the opportunities that one has. That one has Buddhahood as one's driving force, a working basis the precious human body, and spiritual friends, so how is it that we are not attaining Buddhahood already? But anyway we have got a little bit away from the main theme, but never mind because that is, ah yes, we got away from it in this way, "all instructions therein originate and depend on spiritual friends" there is no such thing as an abstract intellectual instruction, there is no such thing as abstract or rather institutional sort instruction.

Dhammadinna: That leads to dogmatism.

S: That leads to dogmatism, yes, it is all between individuals.

Marichi: I was thinking as you were describing the Tibetan institutions that the precepts come in here somewhere and you don't actually feel the way the precepts suggest that you might feel which should try to push yourself in that direction and surely institutions grow out of that sort of thing?

S: Oh yes indeed. But institutions must be open ended as it were, and I think the basic criticism in the case of the say Tibetan institutions and other Buddhist institutions very often is that they become closed systems, that they are not open, in many cases.

Marichi: So why presumably is it that the individual act of communication, that shared field, can then start having a slightly fixed form.

S: Right, yes, well this is how the institutionalization starts. I mean at this stage it isn't negative, it isn't unhealthy because you cannot help doing things in a fixed regular sort of way, but you must constantly ask yourself, "well is this blocking communication or is it making it more easy?"

Marichi: Sometimes it just makes ... It is a useful example to yourself.

S: Right, yes, well little conventions are sometimes helpful. But they [51] mustn't become too rigid or too fixed. I mean for instance sometimes when people come to see me, they bring me a bunch of flowers, but supposing it was to come sort of a rule, that when you went to see Bhante you had to take him a bunch of flowers and supposed someone stopped you at the door and said, "oh you haven't brought a bunch of flowers, you cannot see him". Well that would mean that it had become an end in itself because the bunch of flowers is just meant to facilitate the human contact not to be a sort of substitute for it.

Dhammadinna: Your entry fee.

S: Right yes, but this is the sort of thing that happens. I remember when Dhardo Rimpoche first arrived in Kalimpong his mother was still in charge of him, because he was a quite young Rimpoche, and she used to do this. She used to examine everybody who wanted to see him and if they hadn't brought what she considered sufficiently good or expensive presents she wouldn't allow them in, you couldn't see him. They couldn't see him. But eventually he overthrew the maternal despotism and sent her off on pilgrimage for six months and changed everything around and after that she reverted to the position of being an ordinary nun. But until then she had governed everything. But one can see how easily, what shall I say, communication can assume a certain pattern, that can become a bit fixed, that can become a sort of convention and up to a point it still facilitates the communication, but then when it becomes too fixed it really blocks and gets in its way, it becomes a substitute for communication and you do not realize what has happened. You don't realize that you are not in contact any more, not in communication any more. And that is quite a sad thing. And this does happen in the Buddhist East. Something has been lost in many places and in many cases, over the centuries. So we don't want to go along with all that. We want in a way to go back to the beginning ...

Paloma: Who is the spiritual friend then? Because it says in this book, that "he who listens to

the instructions of Spiritual friends overcomes obstacles" ...

S: Well I think it is important to understand that you can't really have someone labelled as spiritual friend, you have to discover that they are a spiritual friend in the course of your communication, therefore I think start off by just wanting to be friends. I think that is best. You know within the say spiritual community as a whole in the widest sense, just get to know people, if you feel especially drawn to certain people, all right get to know them better, communicate with them, and then if they have more experience than you, if they are able to help you, it will [52] come across quite naturally in the course of your communication with them. It won't be necessary for one person to insist on being in a more teacher like situation and the other having to be in a more pupil like position. And also as I have mentioned it can change from time to time ...

[End of tape 2]

... because you have your ups and downs. In one situation you are giving and other person receiving, in an other they will giving and you may be receiving. It isn't a fixed and constant. It may be over the years you find that well such and such others members of the spiritual community in relation to you are usually giving to you rather than you giving to them. You tend to regard them therefore as spiritual friends, in I won't say a sort of fixed way, but that is more or less how they stand in relation to you. That is relatively constant.

Paloma: It shouldn't be constant ... if you are changing then there shouldn't be constant.

S: Well there is the possibility of you overtaking them. But then that means that you really have to pull your socks up. If it is a question of the Buddha, well you cannot overtake the Buddha, but you can at least you know come up to the same level.

Vidyasri: Well as you're changing hopefully they are changing.

S: ... they are changing too, so if they started earlier than you, other factors being equal, they'll always be a bit ahead. But still, you cannot rule out the possibility of some late starters overtaking those who started earlier. That is why I sometimes say to people who go along to the centres, especially to the Order Members and mitras who have been around for a long time, "Don't despise the newcomer", you may feel well this person is very raw and very new and very crude and doesn't know anything about Buddhism and doesn't even know how to sit cross-legged and all that, and you might sort of unconsciously look down on them a bit, but you don't know, in two years, in three years, that person may have gone far ahead of you. They may have outstripped you. So remember that in your communication with that person, your initial contact with them, think, well maybe you are in contact with a person who is going to be far in advance of you in a few years time, who in a sense might already be for all that you know, despite the fact that they are unfamiliar with the [53] with the way that we do things. So always have that sort of feeling when dealing with new people.

Dhammadinna: They may be less addicted to self-complacency than you. You might be a bit stuck.

S: And we have seen this, we have seen people coming along relatively later, and overtaking people who came relatively earlier, it has happened.

Dhammadinna: In a sense it ought to happen. In one sense.

S: In one sense, in another sense it ought not, because the people who came along earlier have had all these opportunities for a longer time, so they ought to be well on the way to Buddhahood.

Dhammadinna: But on the other hand newcomers ... there are more facilities, more experienced people ...

S: That is true, they get more of a lift initially, that is true. And they have got swarms and swarms of Order Members whereas formally you were lucky if you could even see a couple. Anyway I think we had perhaps better end there. That is sort of introductory and then tomorrow, we can start on the chapter proper ...

S: So can we can we continue going round this circle, starting with the in this chapter ...

"In this chapter we will deal with the development of concentrated attention to the significance of transitoriness as a remedy against attachment to sensuous experience during this life. Generally speaking it consists in the empirical fact that everything composite is transitory. The Buddha himself has declared: Bhikkhus, everything composite is transitory."

S: All right let's go into that. So there is one quite important point that is to be made here, which is that in Buddhism certainly in early Buddhism, certainly in the Buddha's own teaching as far as we can make it out, there is nothing which is of purely theoretical significance. Whatever is taught, even what appears to be doctrine, what appears to be philosophy has some practical bearing and is introduced or is taught at all for the sake of its practical bearing. So this particular sentence, says that we will deal with the development of concentrated attention to the significance of transitoriness, as a remedy against attachment to sensuous experiences during this life. In a sense the whole of the Buddha's [54] teaching is a remedy, a remedy for some human psychological cum spiritual ailment or other. And this is illustrated very clearly by the Buddha's well known parable of the man wounded by the poisoned arrow. Are you familiar with this? That a man was wounded in battle by a poisoned arrow and his friends brought a physician, but he wouldn't allow the physician to examine the wound and extract the arrow until the physician had answered a number of questions as to which caste he belonged to, whether he was dark or fair in complexion and other questions about the arrow, questions about the kind of feather in the arrow, etc. So the Buddha said that, "well if all those questions had to be answered first, all those purely theoretical questions which have no bearing on the actual practicality of the situation, well the man would have died of the poisoned arrow before they could be answered. So he points out that his own teaching is like a remedy, it is a means of extracting the poisoned arrow of human suffering, it does not deal with purely theoretical questions which have no bearing upon the extraction of that arrow. I think we have to be careful that we don't take the parable of the man wounded by the poisoned arrow in a too literal or one sided sort of way, because here the attention is only to suffering, which is certainly a most important aspect, but there is not only the aspect of relief of suffering, but also of positive growth and development. So in another context, the Buddha says that his teaching is concerned solely with the development, as we would say, of

the individual. So from that point of view also, expressed in those terms too, the Buddha's teaching is essentially practical. This is not to say that there is not theoretical or philosophical aspects, there certainly is, but there is no theoretical or practical aspect which is purely theoretical or purely philosophical, in the sense of not having any bearing at all upon the actual existential situation of the individual human being. So we can say that everything is a remedy, or everything is a means of growth in Buddhism, there is nothing of purely theoretical significance or theoretical importance. So it is not simply that this particular teaching here is a remedy against one particular obstacle, all the teachings are remedies against obstacles, all the different teachings are means of growth, all the different teachings are avenues to freedom, to vimutti. So it is important to understand that.

Then the text goes on to say, "Generally speaking it", that is to say the significance of transitoriness, "consists in the empirical fact that everything composite is transitory". We have to give a little attention to this word composite. It is the word that is usually translated as conditioned. Composite is more literal. It is [55] samskrita. Samskrita means put together. In a sense it means artificial. So everything that is put together is put together from previously existing things, it consists therefore of parts, so that which has been put together from a number of different segments can also be taken apart. So therefore whatever is of a composite nature is transitory. Everything which is made up of parts is subject to the disillusion of those parts. So the composite is inherently and essentially transitory. This is what we have to understand. Only the incomposite, or what we usually call the Unconditioned is not transitory because it is not made up of parts which can be separated from one another. So this is a very basic Buddhist distinction. I think we shouldn't take it in too abstractly philosophical sense, but it is a basic distinction, this of the composite and the incomposite, the conditioned and the Unconditioned. That you cannot expect the conditioned, you cannot expect the composite to be permanent. It must break up sooner or later. So that if you pinned your hopes on it remaining permanent, then of course you suffer, because you are disappointed. Just like a beautiful flower, it perishes. So if you have set your heart on that beautiful flower continuing to exist for ever, well you suffer when it perishes. And these are quite simple basic facts that in a sense everybody knows, but which everybody ignores. The truth of them doesn't really sink in. The Buddha himself has declared, "Bhikkhus, everything composite is transitory". I mean that seems to be the whole thing, the essence of the matter. That everything composite is transitory - sabbe sankhara annica - in the language of the Dhammapada.

I was going to say a little more about this word samskrita. The artificial is contrasted with the natural, which is Prakriti, Prakriti is nature or the natural. Samskrit or samskriti is the artificial. In the Sanskrit language is contrasted with the Prakriti as artificial speech, that is to say literary speech or the literary form of the language with the natural colloquial, vernacular form of the language. Do you get the sense of the distinction? Ordinary people speak Prakriti, educated people speak Sanskrit. So Sanskrit is the artificial, it is put together by the learned. Prakriti is what the unlearned speak naturally without thinking very much about it. So also in the Sanskrit language, sanskrit or sanskriti as in modern Indian languages means culture, because culture is artificial in comparison with the raw state of unpolished nature in contrast with barbarism and savagism and so on. So you get a sort of suggestion that what is put together, what is constructed is as it were artificial. In a sense [56] also the natural of course is composite. The natural in the ordinary sense is composite, but there is a sort of suggestion that underlying the natural even, which is in another sense is composite, there is something which is not put together, which is natural in an even deeper sense than nature itself is natural, which is the incomposite which is you could say is the not put together, the not

artificial or even the natural in a sort of transcendental sense, not natural in a sort of mundane sense. So in a way the spiritual life is the natural life, but not the naturalistic life. It is non-artificial, it doesn't depend upon artificial things, that is to say things which have been fabricated from parts.

So the Buddha himself has declared that "everything that is composite is transitory", that is the whole matter in a nutshell. But it doesn't help us very much. In fact we know that already. We didn't need the Buddha to tell us. In a sense. But it is not as though we really understand, so there is something more that follows. So let's go on to the next prose section and quotation.

"However, you may ask, how is transitoriness to be understood? The reply is that the end of every hoarding is spending, of every rising falling, of every meeting parting and of all living dying. This is expressed in a verse in the Udanvarga 1,20:

The end of every hoarding is spending,
Of every rising falling,
Of every meeting parting and
Of all living dying."

S: But the question arises even when one has understood that everything composite is transitory, the question arises how is transitoriness to be understood? What does that mean? Surely it is plain and clear enough already, every thing composite is transitory. So what is the purpose of this section of prose?

Dhammadinna: To give an illustration.

S: It is really to give illustrations. Because the bare simple statement isn't enough. You do understand it, but it doesn't really sink in. In order for it to sink in you have to sort of spell it out in full detail. This is why in some forms of Buddhism you have got all sorts of repetitions or what seems to be repetitions, but actually is not quite what are repetitions. For instance in the Abhidharma you have got a sort [of] whole enumeration of the different kinds of mental States, even different kinds of physical states, different kinds of phenomena, and you can go through [57] the whole list, and sometimes there are hundreds of subdivisions and you can say as it were mentally to yourself, with regards to each one this is impermanent, that is impermanent, and the next one is impermanent one is impermanent and so on, and in this way you drive the idea of impermanence deeper and deeper into your mind. Otherwise if you just say everything is impermanent, or everything incomposite is transitory you don't get a sufficient grasp of it, you have to spell it out as I said in full detail. So that you really do assimilate the idea. It is much the same with the metta bhavana on a quite sort of different level. It is not enough to just say "May all living beings be happy", you have to go through as it were all the living beings that you can think of all the living beings that you know and spell out your metta or develop your metta towards each one of them individually, separately one by one, and then you can generate some sense of metta towards all, but if you just say, well, "May all living beings be happy, may all living beings be happy", just a dim picture of this vast mass of people you probably won't generate much in the way of positive emotion, but if you think "May Rosie be happy, and may Mary be happy and Jimmy be happy and" etc., etc., well then it gets going a bit more. So it is like that with in the case of understanding the significance of transitoriness. If you, it is almost as though you have got to say, well, this book is composite, and therefore is transitory, this flower is composite therefore it is

transitory, the book is made up of pages, and the cover, and the flower is made up of petals and leaves and so on. So you have to sort of see it in detail, concretely, not just as an abstract general idea. So there is some approach made to that here, with regards to the actual nature of transitoriness itself specifically, that at the end of every hoarding there is spending specifically, that is what transitoriness means. That you save money, you collect money, you accumulate money, but what is the end of that? Do you go on accumulating that indefinitely? No, sooner or later you have got to spend either through your personal expenses or you have to give some to the tax man or you die and it goes to your heirs, but sooner or later the hoarding ends in spending and this is what is meant by transitoriness. That you cannot hang on to it indefinitely, even if you hang on to it to the very end of your life, it will be dissipated then, because you will be dissipated. And spending will take place. So the end of every hoarding is spending, sometimes of course people will go on hoarding and saving as though they could go [on] indefinitely, but that isn't so. And then of every rising falling. What do you think is meant here. Well, I suppose you could take it in purely physical terms, [58] that if you threw something into the air, it has got to come back sooner or later, however far you rocket something into the stratosphere, I suppose it has got to come back sooner or later.

Paloma: It means growth, the plants they grow, then they die, Spring, Summer, Autumn.

S: So there is no indefinite rising, we are even told that if something leaves the surface of the earth and goes in the direction of infinity so to speak, it will eventually come back to its original starting point. I don't know whether the latest critics now question that, but this is what one used to be told at school. So not only does everything that rises falls, but it as it were comes back from the opposite direction, which is an even stronger argument you could say. But rising and falling metaphorically, rising in the world, you can rise politically and fall politically. Even if you die at the height of your success, well the fact that you die means that you fall just enclosed in a marble tomb and that is that. That is your fall, you don't go on rising indefinitely. And then every meeting ends in parting, well I think this is something that people know only too well. I mean this is an inescapable fact of human life, that you may like certain people very much, you may enjoy meeting them, enjoy spending time with them, but sooner or later you have [to] part, you cannot stay together forever, yet some people try to, some people, and I have seen this myself, I have seen two people so bound up with each other that one couldn't go around the corner to make a phone call without taking the other with him, and this is what you see, people like to almost remain glued together, you know, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, but sooner or later this meeting is followed by a parting, you cannot stay together indefinitely. Something, some factor in the external world if not within one or the other of you will virtually force you apart. And if your whole security depends upon being together all the time, well then of course you suffer. So meeting cannot but be followed but by a parting. Of course a parting can be followed by another meeting, and that meeting will be followed by another parting, that is usually what happens and you just have to accept it. And enjoy the meeting and enjoy the parting too - accept them both in the same sort of philosophical spirit. But if you expect that there can be a meeting which can continue indefinitely and never followed by a parting ever, well you are just suffering from delusion or else you are on your honeymoon. (laughter) But this is what we see, but it is so difficult for people to accept that meeting is followed by a parting, it seems incredible, but that is the way [59] it is. And then all living dying. I think that when you are under thirty five it is very difficult really to think that you are going to die one day, because your sense of your own life and health and vigour and energy is so strong that even though in a sense you know that you are going to die, you cannot really feel it very strongly it is rather a vague idea, rather unreal,

so you don't take it very seriously, and you don't plan your life at all in the light of the fact that you are going die one day. I don't think that you start seriously taking the idea of death until you are about thirty five, that is to say at about the half way mark, and when perhaps you start feeling that you've crossed the brow of the hill and you are starting to go down on the other side, ever so slightly. Then it starts dawning on you, well perhaps it is not going to last forever, perhaps there is such a thing as death, waiting for me at the end. But before that perhaps you couldn't really form any clear or vivid or real idea about it. It is just something that you have heard of, that you don't really believe in, which means perhaps that your self-consciousness isn't as fully or sharply developed as perhaps it should be in a human being. So the end of all living is dying, so transitoriness means this. It is just these basic simple facts of life, nothing philosophical, nothing abstruse, nothing abstract, nothing highly metaphysical. The fact that everything you hoard will one day be spent, will one day be dissipated everything that rises whether literally or metaphorically will have to fall one day, that everybody that you meet you will sooner or later have to part from however dear they may be to you and that you yourself however alive you may be now will just one day have to die. So this is what is meant by transitoriness. So if one wanted to look at this a bit systematically, one could say that the end of every hoarding is spending applies to external possessions, the end of every rising is falling applies to one's position in life, socially politically in relation to other people, that every meeting parting applies to ones personal relationships with those who are near and dear and of living dying, well that applies just to oneself alone and separate. So reflecting on or understanding the significance of the transitoriness of the composite doesn't mean delving deeply into Buddhist philosophy and metaphysics, it means just facing and comprehending these quite simple facts of ordinary everyday life. These are just things that every person ought to know anyway. Any query about that, any further illustration? Anyone doubtful about that. Well everybody is doubtful about it actually, when it comes to practice to a great extent. It remains just theoretical

[60]

I don't know how many of you are under thirty five, I mean probably quite a few of you still, but I doubt whether you can really grasp it, apart from a definite attempt to do so, with the help of actual reflection and a bit of meditation. I doubt whether you can really feel the truth. I think it is very very difficult to transform the purely abstract understanding into a genuine real almost existential understanding.

Paloma: I think you can when you are very ill. And you realize that you are not that strong.

S: Yes, well when you are very ill, the expression means that your life force so to speak is weakened, and you do actually experience that your life hangs by a thread, and I think sometimes people can be seriously affected by the experience of grave, serious illness. But when they are well, they forget (laughter). There is a little verse that I quoted to a friend of mine, who was very ill for a while and started thinking very seriously about life, and then got better and started forgetting about it ... the verse was as far as I remember, it [was] a sort of traditional verse, " the devil was sick, the devil a saint would be, the devil was well, the devil a saint was he." So this is usually what happens, when you are ill, really ill when you are really in the shadow of death, you start thinking life is a serious matter, all sorts of things, "I ought to meditate tomorrow I am throwing away my chances", you think very seriously like that, but when you are better, when you are in the full flush of your youthful health and vigour and high spirits again, well those sorts of thoughts fly out of the window if you are not careful. They seem to belong to the sickroom, they don't seem to be the thoughts of a healthy

person. So we are very much conditioned in this way, you might say, by the state of our physical health, the weather and all sorts of relatively superficial factors like that. Our whole philosophy of life can change in accordance with that. So we ought to be aware of that too.

Bonnie: On our journey over here something went wrong with the engines on the aircraft, and there was this awful shudder, and my husband was flying with me, and so one look at him and I knew there was something not right, by his funny colour, and I think that was the first time in my life that I really experienced that feeling of maybe we are going to die. And since then it has eased off, and I have lost touch with it. And I am feeling really churned up now, and last night I had this terrible dream that the plane actually crashed. I woke up just before the impact.

[61a]

S: Well sometime last night, I did hear some bump or crash on the stair maybe it was that that gave you your dream.

Marichi: Somebody did fall down stairs last night.

S: Oh dear - that is the sort of thing our community members do after they have been to the pub (laughter).

Punyavati: When I was about fourteen, I remember writing an essay about a dream, I wrote that I was dead ... what I described was a Hindu funeral, because I was a Hindu in those days, and it was very vivid, I really felt that I had died, and I could see everything that was taking place, and I got really involved in it.

Marichi: It is curious how when we are in good health, it is almost obscene to sort of think of your life ending. It is an enormous jump in scale.

S: But it also suggests that your, that the actual understanding or awareness that life is transitory is quite compatible in principle with a happy healthy outlook. You shouldn't have to be in low spirits or on the point of death to be able to realize those things. You should be able to realize them, well, while you are emotionally positive and even happy.

Vidyasri: I found the crash, I found that really sort, well made it seem sort of real, that I too could die. And I wasn't feeling near death or ill, I was feeling well and healthy, but it suddenly became this sort of possibility that you could just be driving along and suddenly die.

S: In some respects we have [been] quite fortunate in the Friends that we haven't lost many people. I mean since the Order was started, which is now thirteen years ago, no order member has died as an Order Member. One ex-Order member has died, but no Order member has died, which if you think of it is extraordinary and we did lose a Mitra, was she a mitra?

Kaye: No

S: It is as though maybe because most people in the Friends are relatively young that we have been relatively exempt from these sort of reminders, it is as though it is a charmed circle almost. It reminds me about what I was reading some years ago in the biography of Voltaire, that Voltaire very early in life formed a circle of very good friends and there was Voltaire and

his friends at the end ... in their eighties and they were all vigorously carrying on and in correspondence with one another, and the biography which I happened to be reading [61b] charmed lives, in this little charmed circle. Here were these ladies of eighty and eighty and eight seven scribbling away to Voltaire their letters to him just as they had done sixty years before, they had gone on without interruption, (laughter), but sooner or later it has to come to an end one day. Although it went on for so long, but since what I am really saying is that within the context of the Friends, since our friendships are mostly within the Order or within the Movement generally, since there has been hardly a death at all, certainly not within the Order, perhaps we would tend to lose sight of that fact. Maybe yes, relations die, but perhaps since our life is mostly within the Movement even deaths of relations don't touch us in some cases at least so much as they might otherwise do. But if we were to lose a near and dear friend from within the Order or within the Movement, well, we'd probably feel that very much, because that will not be just a personal loss in the ordinary sense, it would be a spiritual loss, if that particular person had been a good Kalyana Mitra of ours, lets say. Or even just a very good friend, as a fellow order member or mitra. Their death would leave a real gap in our lives, spiritually speaking, not just in the ordinary personal way. But we haven't had to face that really yet, but as everybody grows older and Order Members and Mitras move into their sixties, seventies, well they won't I hope as Mitras, I hope Mitras by that time will be Order Members, but as everybody moves into the later decades of life, well we shall start losing one another sooner or later and that will if we haven't come up against the fact of transitoriness of the composite by that time, well we will certainly have come up against it then. We may be very detached, we may be very emotionally positive, but we shall still quite sadly miss those particular people, no doubt. So again it is not a question of profound philosophy or anything. It is just seeing the facts of ordinary life with a clear vision. I was just recollecting, I mentioned say thirty five by which I thought one could begin to have a glimmering of the understanding that one would actually die. But I remember quite clearly the first time I really saw this myself. And I think this must have been not until my early thirties, and I had been a monk for several years by then, but it struck me when I was listening to another monk a friend of mine giving a talk on a verse of the Dhammapada. And he dealt with the subject of death, I forget which verse. I could probably find it if I went to the Dhammapada. But I remember a sort of thinking I remember not only realizing that yes I was going to die one day, but also at that time realizing that I hadn't realized it before in that [62] sort of way even though I had been a monk for several years. It wasn't that sort of aspect of the Dharma that had really impressed me. What I had been originally been impressed by was the teaching of Sunyata. I was drawn by meditation. But the fact of death had not struck me even though and this is also what I remember feeling as I was just listening to him that also I had given talks about the transitoriness of existence, I had given talks about death, but I hadn't actually realized until that time clearly that I myself was going to die one day. So that went to show me how difficult it is to translate something from a theoretical understanding of something to an actual realization. So just in those few moments, when I was listening to this talk, I first realized that one I am going to die, and two that I hadn't realized it before, and three that I hadn't realized it even though I knew it quite well enough to give lectures on it. You see what I mean.

Marichi: You had even been through the War hadn't you? So it shows how well one is connected.

S: Yes, indeed, though I can't say that I had really been through it in any ... well as badly as some people had been through it. But I had been near enough to it. I had listened to my father

who was a stretcher bearer in London during the War describing how he had helped bring hundreds of dead bodies out from under bombed buildings. I had heard all these first hand accounts, but still it hadn't really affected me. It was something quite remote, something quite distant, something which didn't really concern me, it happened to other people. So this is why in Buddhism, as we will see later on in this chapter, it is considered quite important to make that application, to see something happening to other people and then say "well this will happen to me". But it is not as easy as it sounds to make that application. You can drive along in your car, maybe at high speed and you see an accident, you think "Oh its an accident - too bad, those people got killed". But you don't apply it to yourself and say "well this could have happened to me". You might in a sort of superficial conversational sort of way, but not in a real sort of way. It is very difficult to make that connection. It is as though there is a sort of inherent blindness in us. And perhaps from a purely biological point of view, that is not all together a bad thing, perhaps it has a certain survival value, because if you a were always worrying about the fact that you were going to die, you probably couldn't carry on living. But nonetheless, as you reach a state of greater awareness and greater self-awareness, well you can [63] have this consciousness that you are going to die, but nonetheless you are also capable of carrying on with the business of living in the light of that realization. It doesn't stultify you, if anything it inspires you to live a better sort of life and to develop and grow more.

Bonnie: It is actually coming into contact with death and lessening your love of home while she was dying that came to me that actually in fact I was living that was the first time that I became aware in effect of living.

[End of side A.]

Marichi: It is a bit like freedom doesn't seem to exist unless you can see a sort of barriers within which you are working. When you are aware that you can die, you'll become aware that you are alive.

S: Yes it is as though very often we understand things only with the help of a contrast.

Bonnie: Especially as right at the end she said, "well, Bonnie, it hasn't been worth it." I was shattered.

S: Well it is a very sad thing to think if that is someone's actual conclusion that life hasn't been worth living. I mean if it isn't just the expression of the despondency of the moment. If that is their considered verdict on life, well that is a very sad thing because it means that they haven't got out of life what life was able to give.

Bonnie: I felt in some kind of way it ... I had every opportunity to improve upon her level ... I couldn't help but naturally conclude ... It came almost like a kind of gift she had given me.

S: That you had to do better than that.

Bonnie: Well it wasn't that I had to, it was just that I couldn't help but do better than that because she had brought back to me ... and I still have at least half the distance to go on.

S: So it is in a way quite a reflection what one will think when one does come to die, whether

one will look back and say it was really worth it, or whether one will make some other kind of remark.

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Anyway a lot of people would consider such reflections morbid but actually they are not, they are just realistic, they are just truly practical. But I think that one shouldn't expect very young people to be able to be aware of death in the way that an adult is, or an older person is. So I think in for instance teaching the Dharma, or trying to explain the Dharma, or put across the Dharma to young people it is probably much better or more skilful to speak in terms of growth and development, not in terms of realizing the transitoriness of all existence and not being attached to it etc., etc. There is an aspect of this which young people can understand. They can understand not being attached to inessential things, like money and property and dress and so on. But that you should not be attached to life and that you are going to die one day, I think this sort of way into the Dharma is not one which will appeal to many of them, though there may be exceptions.

Sulochana: I had a small boy of six, looking very curiously at me, and saying "I you know you are very old" and I said "yes" and he said, "Aren't you afraid, you know you are going to die soon aren't you?" So I said, "yes quite possibly, would you like to come along with me?" And he said that he would. So he is going to come and watch. (laughter)

Punyavati: Young children quite often mention this quite often they do meet death in their pets and grandparents or somehow

Dhammadinna: Shanti see a dead bird, and obviously really struck them really strongly. She wanted to know what it meant.

S: Yes, because there is a difference between a dead thing and well a dead body and a living one. A sensitive child can pick up on.

Dhammadinna: In a way if a child asks you you have got to say that that is the fact of life.

S: But whether the child can apply it to itself, that is another matter. It is the application to oneself. Yes it is just curiosity, it is just an odd sort of thing, yes right.

Marichi: Young children do seem to be curious about basic questions like rebirth and things.

Sulochana: Yes, where has the bird gone when it has ...

S: Yes, because it isn't the same as it was, quite clearly. There has [65] been some change, the child can see that.

Marichi: They can see quite basic differences ...

S: Well you might say "the soul has left it." "Well where [has] its soul gone, can you see the soul, how do you know that it is there, or was there?" All these quite simple but in a way quite unanswerable questions arise.

Noel: Perhaps with young children they can sort of cope with that in a quite healthy way

because they don't become introspective until maybe their teens.

S: Yes, they are just asking about facts in the external world. They are not really asking about themselves. Possibly their reflexive consciousness, their self-awareness is not developed sufficiently for them to be able to turn round, so to speak, and apply all that to themselves.

Noel: In a way their enthusiasm for life and growing is so much greater that ten minutes later they'll be into something else.

S: Well two minutes later, half a minute later.

So I think it isn't a question of trying to flog oneself into an awareness of death in a dramatic sort of way. I think it is a question more of to begin with at least growing up or maturing in a truly human sort of way and taking note of certain objective facts of existence, applying what one understands, what one experiences to oneself, and trying gradually to deepen that awareness, through one's practice of the Dharma, one's meditation and so on.

Noel: Sometimes I think we are quite fortunate in living in this particular climate, because if you like it is a constant but in some ways a very gentle reminder that things are constantly changing and passing away and you know the seasons ...

S: Of course it is easier living in the country side, than in the city. Of course even in the city you see the odd tree and you can watch it. I know when I go down to London, when I stay at Sukhavati, if I look out of my study window, there is just one tree growing in the courtyard opposite and I always notice in what sort of state it is. So I have seen it in winter time with no leaves at all, I have seen it in summer time with , well covered quite thickly with leaves, I have also seen it covered with flowers. So even in the city you can take note of the [66] change of the seasons. Though I think you realize it much more deeply if you live in the country side and you see everything around you changing. Of course in some countries they don't have seasons in quite the same way, but you do get a sort of contrast. I remember when I was in New Zealand, one of the things that struck me was that the bush was virtually all evergreen. So over the greater part of New Zealand, there were no seasonal changes, everything was almost green and very green. But you also noticed in the midst of the vivid green skeletons of trees, sort of bleached white by the sun, that is to say so long as they were alive they were always green, but when they died they really died, and not only lost all their leaves, apparently their bark, and there they were standing in the midst of the green trees. So here and there in the bush, in the jungle, you saw these bare white skeletons of trees, and that was really quite odd, like a real memento mori, sort of skeleton at the feast (laughter). It would be just like if you were to go down to the bathing beach and see all these healthy bronzed people, sunbathing, but in between at intervals you just have human skeletons all bleached white, sitting in the same sort of position but they are all skeletons. Well that would be real memento mori, so I really felt that looking at these dead trees in the midst of the living trees. You know the Romans used to allegedly have skeletons at their feasts, wearing garlands of roses just to remind them that, well, the feasting was going to end one day, for everybody, well we don't do thing like that, we think it rather morbid. In fact even if flowers die, we remove them at once, we don't even keep any dead flowers in the room. But as I say if you live in the countryside, you cannot avoid this, and you do notice the seasonal change, you notice the rhythm of the seasons. I think that is one reason why it is really good to stay in one place in the countryside for a whole year and see the whole cycle through. I was saying to

some friends only the other day, that I was hoping to spend the whole of this year here at Padmaloka, partly because I could see the seasonal changes, because I have been out and about so much, that I have a bit of the summer here, and bit of the summer there and miss half the winter somewhere else, and it doesn't add up to an complete cycle as it were. But so far I have seen the winter here and the spring and now the summer, so I am hoping to stay and see the autumn too. It is really quite interesting to see the same trees, the same bushes, the same plants at different times of the year. Either completely bare or with buds or with blossoms or with leaves, and then again nothing at all. And everything feels quite different. So one can get a sense of [67] the transitoriness of things in this kind of way too if one is observant. One finds you know reflections of this sort of transitoriness of things in a lot of nature poetry in English literature and also in perhaps in a more sort of acute form in Chinese Buddhist, or Chinese and Japanese Zen Buddhist poetry, a sense of the effervescence of things, from a more spiritual point of view. So this just deepens ones awareness of existence, deepens ones awareness of one's own existence, the shortness of one's own life, and just makes one see things much more in perspective. So you think, "here I have got a life, with luck I have got a life of a few years, I can do so much with my life in the course of those few years. I can make it something really worth while, so that at the end of life, I can look back and think well I have had a wonderful opportunity, and thank heavens I have been able to [take] advantage of the opportunity." But I do think you do take full advantage of your life only when as you get older and a bit maybe wiser, you start recognizing the transitoriness of things, and then change becomes not simple change, but becomes transformation even say. You realize that things don't have to just change, but they can also change for the better, you can make them change for the better. You yourself can change for the better. You can grow, you can develop.

Bonnie: Maybe one of the compensations for getting older.

Marichi: That you can see the possibilities.

Bonnie: You realize when you look back and start to at least get a little glimmer of a change.

S: You can even see a pattern beginning to emerge. You can find yourself covering the same ground again, but at a higher level, because you are going round in a spiral. I mean so there is a certain advantage from that point of view as you get older, or in getting older. But I think the danger is that you start looking back more than you look forward. The young are always looking forward. The old tend to always to look back to the "good old days" and reminisce about their youth and their childhood and friends that they knew. But so long as you are living, you have to look forward. So no doubt have the backward glance from time to time, over the distance that you have traversed, but keep on looking to the future. Otherwise the danger is that you start living in the past, which is not at all a positive thing to do. As the Buddha says in the Dhammapada, " they lie like discharged arrows grieving over the past", that isn't good enough. Just take a backward look occasionally just for the sake of checking your route, but then [68] press on, facing the future.

Dhammadinna: Bhante, where did the Japanese approach to death arise? The whole Samurai thing, that ritual suicide, making death very much part of life. Was that to enhance life, it seems a bit extreme in a way.

S: No I think in a way it was rather different. The Japanese Samurai developed a sort cult of honour and honour was important to them in a way that we can hardly imagine, that honour

was more important than life. So that if you could not live without honour ...

Dhammadinna: It was much better to die.

S: Well it is not a question of being better to die, you couldn't even consider the alternative. It was just like a fact of life that you just had to die. If for instance you were defeated in battle perhaps and there was no possibility of your surviving to win another day, well the honourable thing to do was to die. Of course it got much more complicated than that. If you felt that you had let down your chief or if you felt that he might feel that you had let him down, even though without any justification, the mere suspicion that he felt that you had let him down, that was enough, you had to commit suicide. Or if some indignity was offered to your chief which you were not able to wipe out, the fact that you were unable to wipe it out, that you were unable to revenge him, was so shameful to you, you could only wipe that shame out by committing suicide. I think their readiness to face death was on account of this very highly developed, very exaggerated cult of honour. And I think Zen came into it, not for the sake of Zen. It seems to me that Zen was used by these people to subserve and support this cult of honour and to make it in a sense easier for them to die, to meet death with equanimity. This is how I read it, at least a part of what happened.

Marichi: Because if they didn't have equanimity, they would have fought back in some way, it wouldn't have been honourable.

S: Well Zen sort of provided them with a philosophy for dying. Buddhism taught well, you had to have the same equanimity in the face of life or in the face of death, and this they found it seems fitted in with their outlook, because they had to be prepared to die at any time. If the choice was between the loss of honour or death, well yes, death. So Zen made it easier for them to die, or rather made it easier for them to face constantly the possibility of death. So I think this is the reason that a lot of them took to Zen. Not for the sake of Zen, but [69] to help them to sustain that code of honour. So I think to that extent it was a misuse of Zen in many cases at least. Some it seems through Zen did pass beyond the Samurai code of honour, there are a few stories. But I think for the most part, most Samurai who did get involved in Zen even quite genuinely and sincerely, used it as a means of supporting and reinforcing this very exaggerated cult of honour, of chivalry, and something of that sort. It is something that we can hardly imagine, that if someone looked at you in a certain way, you thought that your honour was affronted, and that you either had to avenge that look or you committed suicide. It was something that was so extreme that we can hardly think of it. But if remember right down to the time of the Meiji restoration, which was only 1868, in Japan a member of the Samurai class had the right to cut down instantly any non-Samurai, which meant anyone of the majority of the population, whom he felt was not being sufficiently respectful to him. If they didn't address him in quite the right way, or weren't quite polite enough, or didn't get out of his way quick enough, he had the right just to draw his sword and kill that person. And this was right down until 1868. So the Japanese Samurais seemed to have lived very close to death, but it was mainly in the interests of this cult of honour. How they came to attach that exaggerated importance in that sort of sense, well that is another matter, interwoven with the whole history of Japanese culture which (?). Even now I think suicide is quite common in Japan, or relatively common for these sort of motives. You feel affronted or ashamed and you cannot really do anything about it, well the honourable thing to do is to commit suicide. The shame is wiped out by your death in that way. So it is a rather different outlook on life perhaps than that which has developed in Western Christian and post-Christian civilization,

where apart from the Stoics suicide has always been regarded as a terrible sin.

Paloma: There are many (teens) who commit suicide, for instance if they have to repeat a year's school, they think they cannot face it or ...

S: Well this is rather different, this is seeing death as a lesser evil than life on those terms. For instance you get or you used to get this sort thing in India I remember. In India, well I am speaking especially of Bengal and West Bengal, where I lived for many years in Kalimpong, it being in West Bengal, after the examination results were announced, that is to say, the examination results of the Calcutta University, there would always be a crop of suicides among failed students. Now why was [70] this? Well it wasn't due to ideology; it was due to the economic situation. That maybe someone failed to pass say his BA, so what did that mean? Maybe the whole family had been sort of scraping money together to keep him at college, so that he could pass his BA, in the hope that, or in the belief that once he had passed his BA of course he would get a relatively good job and he would be able to support the family in turn. So suppose he failed that would mean that he had let down the whole family. I have known families almost go into mourning because a son did not pass his examination. The whole family is full of gloom: his mother will be weeping, his sisters will be weeping, his father will be angry, his brother and sisters all upset "he hasn't passed his examination", because so much is depending on it. And if he knows this and also knows that they haven't got the money to keep him at college for another year so that he can sit again for the examination. If for instance he knows that they have borrowed the money to keep him at college for the last couple of years and if he feels that he is going to be blamed, and they are going to say that he didn't try and he didn't study hard enough. Well he just cannot face it. He has got no future, the family has got no future, the family might be virtually ruined in some cases, it is such a heavy investment, even economically in that student, he commits suicide. So this is quite common amongst Bengalis, but it is due to the economic situation, economic pressure, it is not anything ideological. I mean in Hinduism on the whole with a few exceptions like Sati, suicide of widows, suicide is not approved of. It is just the sheer economic pressure. I can remember not such bad cases as that, but in families which I knew in Kalimpong, if a youngster failed his examination, oh there was hell to pay, the whole family would be in turmoil for weeks and he would be in utter disgrace, even if he had studied hard his father would say, "He must have wasted time". So all right if they are able to afford to keep him at school another year to sit the examination again, he would almost be imprisoned in his room. Every time his father sees him going out, he will say, "where are you going? You ought to be studying, get back into your room, read your books" and he is not allowed to go out, not allowed to talk to his friends, he has got to sit in his room and study. His father sees that he is kept there; of course it is bad psychology, but they don't realize that. "Young wastrel"

: (?)

S: Yes. I have had fathers talking about it to me. "Young wastrel, I'll make him study, I'll see that he doesn't go out again this year"

[71]

: (?)

S: You see. So this is the sort of thing that happens in some parts of India, where the

economic situation is such. But I think in this country where students commit suicide, and I think the rate of suicide amongst young people is increasing isn't it? In this country, and I think in western Europe generally, it seems to be due to much more complicated pressures than that. Maybe it is in very many cases a reluctance to face life on the only terms that it seems available. It is certainly not due to material reasons, economic reasons, because even if you haven't got a job you survive quite easily, there is no problem in that sort of way. Do you know or have you known any young people that have committed suicide?

Paloma: Yes.

S: So what do you think the reasons were in their cases?

Paloma: Well they hadn't passed their exams in Germany, and the exams are very difficult, and you especially the higher you go in the school the more difficult it becomes, and there are new systems worked out, and basically you have study all day and all night and you get very tense, and it is very important to pass, because ...

S: Ah, this is where the crunch comes, if it is important to pass, and you think it is important and you fail, perhaps you cannot face the fact of your failure. Because succeeding is so important to you for one reason or another.

Paloma: Well it also depends what parents you have. This girl that I knew her parents that she came home her parents would check her books and what she had to do, and her exams and everything, and they had this hold, like you were talking about in India, and her whole life seemed to be planned, what she was going to do, and her interests also, like she wanted to do languages, but her father wanted her to do chemistry and physics, so she was doing chemistry and physics, and she could never pass it, because she really didn't have an interest in it. And she knew that all the three years, and the last one was the important one, and she didn't pass it. And I also knew a smaller girl, she was only ten, but it was the same thing.

S: So is it like that in England do you think? That sort of pressure, or is it a different kind of pressure? Because the suicide rate among young people is going up in this country. Don't know if you are aware [72] of that. But according to reports in the papers, just as alcoholism among young people is going up. It suggests some sort of pressure somewhere.

: (Life) is more complicated.

Joan: It seems like more a futility, nothing to work for, no point, no purpose.

Paloma: You don't want to compromise. It's ... society is that way I used to feel very often that schools sort of forming me and shape all the time, every day I would get a hammer. I would imagine that I went like a round ball and I would come out like a square. Really, I had this image, it was like a constant fight.

S: A square peg being made into a round one, as we say. A square peg being shaped to be put into a round hole, so it has to be made round.

Paloma: I used to feel the other way.

S: Well, it is just as bad either way, isn't it.

Paloma: It is like the whole society, you have to compromise one way or the other, otherwise you won't exist.

S: So it does mean in a way, in a way, suicide represents a refusal to compromise, because life on acceptable terms is no longer available to you. It may be of course that your idea of what is acceptable is a wrong idea. I mean from out point of view at least, the Japanese ideal of honour is not an acceptable idea. But anyway that is the sort of idea with which people like the Samurai will be brought up. We may have our own ideas of what is acceptable, or on what terms we could agree to go on living. But if those terms seem just unavailable, we might consider it better to die. So from many points of view suicide is a sort of protest. So what is it that makes existence say in England today with the Welfare State and all that so unacceptable that an increasing number prefer to commit to suicide. What do you think it could be?

Paloma: It is not human for them.

S: I am not so sure about that. You can have apparently quite a human sort of life.

Paloma: Well yes you can eat, you can drink, but human life as we always hear isn't just eating and drinking.

S: Yes, but what else? What else isn't available?

[73]

Dhammadinna: A goal and ideal.

S: A goal and an ideal, those things are certainly lacking. But a lot of people seem to get on perfectly well without them, well ideals anyway.

Marichi: There are a lot of young people who leave school and cannot get jobs, and begin to feel quite deflated because ...

S: Yes, well this is because they are brought up in a way in a slightly double bind situation, you are told that a job is very important, and you have got to have one to be anybody at all, or to have any sort of self-respect, but at the same time arrangements are not made to make sure that you do get a job.

Marichi: So that they don't have any identity.

S: Yeah, and no identity on those sort of terms.

Bonnie: I see young people looking at their parents and saying "if that is the life that we are in for, we don't want to lead it", that is what I see more and more.

S: But what do you think is it in the life that their parents are leading that they find so disillusioning and unacceptable, because this is a relatively new phenomenon surely?

Punyavati: It is totally materialistic.

S: But do you think that young people are so unmaterialistic.

Marichi: I think it is that they find their parents unhappy.

S: Find their parents unhappy, hmm, yes. I think that has probably got a lot to do with it. I think this is the message that gets signalled in between the TV programmes, that your parents aren't really happy.

Dhammadinna: A wave of disillusionment, there is the whole punk thing is actually very nihilistic disillusioned with society as it is.

S: Hmm, I must say that the last few months and year or two, I have been quite shocked from time to time reading these sort of reports in the papers, because in a way it presents a sort of contrast with the sort of life and sort of atmosphere that we enjoy within the Friends. And sometimes it seems that it is a bit unreal, can there be people out there in the world, in England, in the twentieth century, living on the Welfare State and feeling like that, and feeling that life is futile, it seems really almost incredible, but this is what is happening. [74] So this leads me on to another thought, that well maybe within the Friends we are not making a sufficient effort to reach out to these people, and at least keep open some channels of communication with them. Because it is not enough I feel just to have centres sort of dotted around, even all over England, because maybe those people aren't especially interested in Buddhism or Oriental religions or meditation, but I feel if what the FWBO has to offer could be put across to them in sort of intelligible terms, they would be able to latch on to it, and feel, that well "this is something which could make life worth living for us". But I think that means that we have got to take the initiative in making contacts and go outside our centres if you see what I mean. Not expect everybody just to flow through the normal channels into our centres, because they are interested in meditation or they are interested in Buddhism. I don't think it is going to happen like that.

Dhammadinna: I think there is a sort of gap somewhere. At worst, because we have been very materialistic, successful, that children are brought up, maybe not directly with the idea that when they are adults they will have everything, and that isn't the case any more, especially in England. They grow up and find that they are not going to have a job or their life is gloomy, it is in concrete jungles, nothing to do, so it seems that they use suicide in some of the more sensitive cases or violence seems to be the other avenue.

S: It does seem as though the ordinary person, for want of a better term, the average person of not very greatly developed individuality needs a definite social structure. It is as though they are not able to create or find one themselves or invent their own ideals or even their own interests. It is as though a structure has to be laid on for them to be able to function satisfactorily.

Marichi: And that structure has already partly broken down, which is why they, the meaning ...

S: Yes, there is nothing to support them.

Marichi: Their parents' structure has broken down.

S: The social structure for them has broken down.

Marichi: It's not really that they have got the wrong one, but they haven't really got one.

S: But the only sort of rudimentary structure, social structure that some of them manage to get into, is some kind of local gang. This is [75] of course mainly the boys, rather than girls, though you find some girls getting into these gangs, which in a way means that the situation has become even more serious.

Bonnie: It seems to me as though people don't know how to use their five faculties, they don't know actually how to see, they don't know how to feel texture, they don't know how to smell, they don't know to live ...

S: They don't know how to speak. They don't know how to communicate even within the Friends it is amazing to me, and I have included Order Members, how many are inarticulate, they cannot express themselves properly. To me this is incredible, but maybe I am just being a bit old fashioned. Maybe I am just one of the older generation.

But you see it is as though there are these basic instruments, these basic human tools which are not there, people don't have the capacity to handle them. I mean I really realized this, I don't want to inhibit anyone, but I really realized this when I listen to tapes of seminars, where people sort of hum and ha, and are unable to express their point, they are unable to articulate their ideas, it is quite painful. Another thing that I have noticed or read about with regard to young people, they are getting married earlier, yes, and what does that mean, is that a positive sign or a negative sign?

Dhammadinna: It is a search for security.

S: It is a search for some kind of security.

Dhammadinna: Away from the gang's security.

S: Yes, but does it work. No. Therefore you have got all these young battered wives, and divorce, and an increasing rate of divorce, so that solution is not working.

Dhammadinna: There isn't the confidence to exist between leaving home and marriage as an individual.

Noel: As a rule, it seems like children at fifteen or sixteen although on a superficial level are able to have say the trappings of adulthood, they can get married, they can have all the material things yes, they can go into a pub and drink and all this, but it is like the transition from real childhood to real adulthood has become totally blurred. When I was at school at fifteen, we were in many more senses still children, we had a space to develop our interests, every opportunity to develop interests, but out of this great notion or pressure that you could become an adult straight away before you left school, [76] they cannot cope with it. They get the wrong end of the stick as it were. Yes on the one hand they do want to become independent, but on the other they ...

S: Yes, but it is not a genuine independence.

Noel: And there seems to be no guiding situation for them. There isn't that space for them.

S: There are no guidelines. And it does seem that the children and adolescents need definite guidelines.

Dhammadinna: I saw two girls, I think they must have been probably thirteen or fourteen, they were very young, and still very unformed physically, but they were dressed in skin tight black shiny trousers and these little tops, you know as if they were off to a disco, and it looked really sad actually.

S: I know, I have got a little niece just like that. And she started in that sort of way at the age of thirteen, which seemed really pathetic.

Bonnie: Little girls do like to wear their mothers shoes and that sort of thing.

Dhammadinna: It wasn't like that though. It wasn't that kind of fun of dressing up. They looked like tarts.

Marichi: They were [in] their high heel shoes! (laughter)

S: But anyway, I ... the reason why I raise all these questions, connected with this question with this question of suicide, connected with the question of death, and connected with the an unhealthy rather than a healthy attitude towards to death is that I feel that broadly speaking and this is going quite a bit beyond the limits of the study narrowly speaking , I do feel quite strongly the FWBO as a movement needs to be much more outward going to make itself much more available to people and to help them where they are actually to be found. I don't think that we can sort of organize ourselves in such a way or organize ourselves on the assumption that the only way into the FWBO is to be a good boy or good girl and come straight along to an FWBO centre and get into meditation, etc., etc. I think that we have got to be much more outward going. Either on an individual basis, as it were going out and getting people, going out and making contact wherever it is possible to make contact with people in the way that Devamitra sometimes does, or else have different sorts of projects and different methods of operating, small teams of people, so that we get into [77] contact with the people who most need whatever we have to offer and could most benefit from it. And I think that we are not doing not nearly enough in this sort of way at present. There is a lot of people that I am sure that could be really helped and could really find in the FWBO what they are ... well one cannot even say what they are looking for, many of them don't even reach that stage, they are so despairing, they don't even think it is worth looking for anything, but perhaps you bring to their attention the fact there is something that is worth looking for, that is worth finding and worth following up.

Marichi: People are sometimes attracted by happiness or (?)

S: Yes, so you could say that it is your duty as an Order Member or mitra to be happy. (laughter) It is the best possible advertisement for the FWBO. I mean leave aside your Dharma knowledge and all that can come later, the least that you can do is to be happy.

Dhammadinna: And have certain confidence and purpose in life that you are not maybe expressing directly. Maybe we should go to youth clubs.

S: Well yes, who knows, but also we spoke, I mentioned young people getting married at earlier ages, I think one has got to be able to offer an alternative way of life, a complete package. Not just an ideology. I think that is not enough. And I think this is why it is important that we have this total complex of the centre, the community and the co-op. In other words you provide people in effect with a sort of world in miniature, within which they can live totally in a meaningful kind of way, because obviously certainly in the case of those who commit suicide, they don't want to live in the world the society as it actually exists. So you have got to provide a complete alternative for them, which means friends, jobs, etc., etc.

Paloma: I found that since I came into contact that it was actually worth while living, that they had a vision of something that I could ... It seemed to me all of a sudden such a lot that I could do with myself, and all of myself, and just so much that I hadn't seen before, and I was very surprised to see that, and also like I used to think that by trying the Friends was an English movement because I mean I didn't meet Friends here, I met them in Spain, I met one Order Member in Spain, so it was, I was very lucky in that way, and I think on an individual basis, it is much more effective because you find rarely person who looks happy and confident and has at least one [78] idea, some ideas of life, of what to do with life, it is very rare to find it ...

S: I therefore sometimes say it would be quite good if there was a whole type of Order Member who was roaming around, not permanently attached to any ...

[End of tape 3]

[tape 4]

Marichi: Bhante, you know how you were talking about communication, how people developed these things.

S: What I have noticed or according to what people have told me is that as a result of meditation, one of the results of meditation, their senses in some respects do become keener, and sharper. They mention especially that they are more aware of the taste of the food that they eat or they are more aware of different smells, or they are more aware of nature, or of the appearance of other people.

: Things are brighter.

S: Yes, quite a few people do report this.

Marichi: A greater clarity.

S: A greater clarity of perception. I haven't noticed though that meditation, and presumably we are talking here about samatha meditation, yeah, not vipassana not insight meditation, but the simple practice of samatha meditation, though it may as it were clean one's perception of the material world, it doesn't seem to improve ones human communication, not in the sense of making one more articulate or more able to communicate your ideas.

Marichi: So you have still got that jump.

S: I think that is another dimension. It probably helps indirectly, but I have not noticed that there is any very direct effect.

Marichi: But as samatha will increase your tranquillity and concentration, your basic ground, so then you can move on to vipassana, which is an actual push, like in communication it is only a basic ground work.

S: I think if you practice meditation in the samatha sense, of course [79] you become more integrated, of course you become more emotionally positive, and therefore more able to communicate, but it is as though it provides you with an improved basis for communication, but that the actual improvement of the communication depends [on] a separate distinct effort, and especially communication in the sense of the ability to articulate your thoughts. There is a lot of very confused thinking amongst people, I am referring of course to people in the Friends. It is probably worse outside, I hardly dare to think.

Marichi: But even in areas (noises interrupt) sensitivity to somebody else, that still requires a certain amount of conscious effort.

S: I think of course through meditation or as a result of meditation you would become, just samatha meditation, a more sensitive person, and to that extent perhaps a little more in tune with the, or a little bit more aware of them, but it is as though communication is a separate thing still, and requires a special effort.

Marichi: It does seem to connect with insight, real communication.

S: Yes, I think if you developed on the basis of samatha, if you developed insight that would certainly would improve your communication because you would have fewer illusions about the person with whom you were communicating. At least that. You would not be projecting for instance, you would see more deeply into them.

Bonnie: ... (unclear) I just get clouded, and my communication is very mucky ...

S: I think one of the reasons where our communication isn't very clear or very effective is that there is a divorce between thoughts and feelings, we are either trying to communicate very disconnected thoughts, or very chaotic feelings. But when thought and feeling come together, I think there is a much better flow of communication, when we feel what we are saying and also there is a certain intellectual clarity at the same time. Our thoughts and our feelings are really well integrated, and we are behind the communication therefore, then the communication becomes much more simple, direct, natural and effective. But as I have mentioned listening to tapes of seminars, it is sometimes quite painful to hear people's stammerings and stutterings as they try to express thoughts which are very fragmented without much feeling or feelings which don't have much intellectual clarity, [80] which are just feelings, with relatively vague and formless. So often you hear people coming out with, "with it's a sort of, you know what I mean ... it's like, you know what I am talking about, it's just well ..." (laughter)

Marichi: If you guess what they are talking about ...

S: Sometimes you can, sometimes I find editing the tapes, I sometimes can reconstruct what I

feel that they are getting at, but it is very very badly articulated. It needs a lot of working out sometimes, sometimes you cannot.

Marichi: It is not always clear when you read the transcripts, especially if it just says "a voice", if only you knew which voice it was, you could try to work it out.

S: Well sometimes the tone of voice also is part of the communication that helps you reconstruct the meaning, the conceptual meaning is not the total meaning by any means, and some people depend much more upon the voice, tone, gesture than others do.

Anyway, let's get back.

"how then is this concentrated attention to the significance of transitoriness to be developed?"

Three headings indicate

The development of concentrated attention:

Classification, method,

And profitableness.

Classification is twofold: transitoriness (i) of the world as the outer vessel and (ii) of sentient beings as the inner essence.

I) Transitoriness of the world as the outer vessel is of two kinds

(a) that of gross and (b) subtle matter.

(II) Transitoriness of sentient beings as the inner essence is also twofold: (a) that of others and (b) of myself.

The Method of developing concentrated attention to the significance of transitoriness is: (1a) the contemplation of the transitoriness of gross matter in this world as the outer vessel."

S: That sounds more complicated than it really is. It is just a classification. First of all you understand everything is composite is transitory, but that requires illustration, that requires exemplification, you have got to pay concentrated attention to a number of different aspects of that transitoriness of the composite, so how [81] does one do that? So, one goes about it systematically, transitoriness [is] of two kinds. First of all there is the transitoriness of the world as the outer vessel, that is the whole of objective nature, the whole of objective existence, and then, two, the transitoriness of sentient beings as the inner essence. The world is conceived of as a sort of vessel, and sentient beings as the liquid or essence that is contained within that vessel. This is just a traditional sort of ... not sure whether it is Buddhistic, or it is just Tibetan way of looking at things. And then the transitoriness of the world as the outer vessel is of two kinds, it is gross and it is subtle. And then transitoriness of sentient beings of the inner essence is also twofold, others and oneself. So the method of development of concentrated attention to the significance of transitoriness is going through these subdivisions one by one, and the first is the contemplation of the transitoriness of gross matter in this world as the outer vessel. In other words, you start off with the easiest the gross external world. You start off reflecting on the transitoriness of that. So how do you do that? It is in a rather what shall I say traditional way, even slightly mythical way. But anyway, lets go

through it.

"From the lower cosmic circle of Wind up to but excluding the fourth stage of meditative concentration, there exists nothing of a permanent nature or anything solid or unchanging. Sometimes what is below the first stage of meditative concentration is destroyed by cosmic Fire what is below the second stage by cosmic Water and what is below the third stage by cosmic Wind. After the destruction by Fire there is no ash, just as oil is completely consumed by a flame. After the destruction by Water there is no sediment, just as salt is dissolved in water. After the destruction by Wind not even a particle is left just as dust is carried away by the wind. As is stated in the Abhidharmakosa: destruction by Fire takes place seven times, by Water one. When the latter has occurred seven times, the rest is destroyed by Wind." The fourth stage of meditative concentration is destroyed neither by Fire, Water nor Wind, but by death and by the transmigration of beings therein. Therefore it is said: The palaces of impermanence arise and disappear together with the beings therein. Further, the destruction of the universe by Fire is foretold in the Viradatta-Grhapatiprachechasutra: When one aeon has passed, this universe which is of the nature of space will become space. Even the mountains will be destroyed and burnt completely,"

S: The questions of the father of the Household. [82] Yes. So what does one make of that? (laughter) Well, it is really quite simple. Well what is one concerned with? One is concerned with the gross external universe. But how does traditional Buddhism conceive of the gross external universe? It sees it as existing as not only in space and time, it sees it as also existing in depth, so to speak. I think you are familiar with this idea. It sees it as consisting of a sort of hierarchy of levels, a hierarchy of levels of consciousness and a hierarchy of worlds, it sees it in terms say the kamaloka, the world of sensuous desire or sensuous experience, the rupaloka, the world of archetypal form, and the arupaloka the formless world. Looked at so to speak objectively (sic) it speaks in terms of beings in certain states of consciousness on certain levels of consciousness, but objectively it speaks of it in terms of worlds, and of beings inhabiting those worlds, corresponding to their states of consciousness. So this is the sort of background, this is what the text is talking about. The gross external world in this sort of way, or conceived of in this sort of way, as stratified as consisting of a hierarchy of planes, and beings occupying those different planes, or those different worlds. And then of course, it applies to that certain old, you might say mythological, ideas about the destruction of the world, that objective world. One finds these sorts of mythological accounts in different forms in Buddhist literature and Hindu literature. There were beliefs for instance that the world could be destroyed by fire, that it could be destroyed by water, that it could be destroyed by air. And that this did periodically happen, the details vary, but roughly speaking the world could either be destroyed either by a great deluge, or it could be destroyed by fire, or it could be destroyed by wind, that is to say by an explosion, we would say probably, and here that seems to be applied to different levels, that up to a certain level the world can be destroyed by fire, up to a certain level by air, up to a certain level by water, it is just a way of filling in, in these sort of familiar mythological terms, the general abstract idea of the destructibility of the external world. Now we could do it, say in terms of an atomic explosion, or in terms of the, I forget what you exactly call it in astronomy, but the sort of point when a star reaches when it explodes. We could think in those sort of terms. Here the ancient Indian, or Indo-Tibetan author is just trying to illustrate the whole question of the transitoriness of the whole universe, out there, in these familiar mythological terms. We could quite easily substitute [83] scientific terms. You see what I mean? We can reflect for instance that the sun is so many millions of years old, it is dissipating its energy at a certain rate, at that rate it will take it so many

thousand million more years to become extinct, but it will become extinct. So we can think in these terms, or we can think as regards the world, well we are stockpiling nuclear weapons, if there is an explosion of nuclear weapons, it will take an explosion of such and such a magnitude to destroy half the world, such and such to destroy the whole world. That is perhaps a possibility. Or we can think in terms of planets colliding, or we can think in terms of great meteors falling upon the earth, and knocking it sideways in space, all these are possibilities, and we could reflect upon them sort of systematically to impress upon our minds the transitoriness of everything composite. I mean even modern physics, modern astronomy gives us a very sort of detailed illustration of these things, we can trace with their help the development of solar systems, the development of galaxies, of course there are various theories, not all the physicists and astronomers agree, but the general picture that is presented to us, is one of constant change. So I think the study of you know of quite elementary even, popularized physics and astronomy is quite a good sort of introduction to the realization of the transitoriness of the whole objective universe. We don't just have to have recourse to these mythological terms as we find them in the old Buddhist texts. You see what I mean? I mean modern astronomy especially can open up quite an inspiring perspective to us in this sort of way. We can even study the history of the development of the earth, we know that the earth was originally a mass of incandescent gas floating about in space, it cooled, it solidified, that it slowed down, and we know even now that there was this movement of land masses which became continents, apparently all the continents were once stuck together, and gradually drifted apart and this theory is the theory of continental drift, and another illustration of the transitoriness of the objective world of our own planet. We know that there were a number of ice-ages over a certain period of millions of years, we have only comparatively recently emerged from the latest of those ice-ages, perhaps we are in a sort of trough between the last ice-age and the next one which is coming. You see what I mean? So in, all around us in the external objective nature we can see these changes, we can see the transitoriness of everything, much more clearly perhaps than they could see it in the Buddha's day. So we can fill in here perhaps [84] quite a bit with our modern scientific understanding of things. But it illustrates the same Buddhist truth. Does anyone find this helpful or has found it helpful to fill in a bit with science in these sorts of areas?

Michelle: I watched on television a series about Einstein and I found that extremely helpful to relate to. But I am surprised that there seems to be so many scientists and physicists around who obviously can understand all these theories much better than other people and yet they don't seem to want to understand Buddhism. There seems to be a gap between scientists and people who think perhaps in more mystical ways.

S: This is true.

Bonnie: There are some scientists who are more ...

Dhammadinna: There are different sorts of scientists, there is the great middle ground: the data collectors, and then there are original thinkers. I think the original thinkers of science are open to the possibilities of Buddhism, and there is the writer Fritz Capra who wrote the Tao of Physics, and apparently he worked in a big bubble chamber in Switzerland and there were a lot of people there who meditated, because through their involvement with particles, they realized that everything was impermanent, and it opened up ...

S: But do you think one can make a sort of direct transition from that sort of scientific

understanding to, for want of a better word, a mysticism, meditation? I mean is there not a sort of gap, and what is the nature of that gap, and how does one cross it?

Dhammadinna: It is a gap in emotions, and they do seem to have made a transition but I still felt that the gap was an emotional.

S: Because after all one can practice meditation like a technique, can't one in a sort of inverted commas, "scientific" way, but would that carry one really very much nearer to spiritual life and personal development in the Buddhist sense? The fact that they were meditating, if they were meditating in that sort of way, it wouldn't perhaps mean very much.

Dhammadinna: It is a bit like starting at the top somehow.

S: But when you said that the gap was emotional, what exactly did you mean by that, because we might be getting closer to it there, I think? [85] In what way is the gap emotional?

Dhammadinna: I found it was emotional and ethical. It was somehow although he was making connections between theoretical and abstract physics and theories of Buddhism, metaphysics etc., there wasn't positive emotion, there wasn't metta, there wasn't faith, there weren't those emotions, and there wasn't an ethical dimension, a desire to change lifestyle very radically.

S: There was virtually just a sort of alienated intellectual approach or an alienated rational approach.

Marichi: So it really never had any real practical application.

Dhammadinna: I didn't think so; it might have done.

S: But I think that the problem that one is up against is this. Science has its own value, scientific knowledge has its own value it can be applied. It is the basis of modern technology, but it is based on a very special kind of perception, a very special kind of knowledge, it is as though it is essentially alienated, and therefore it cannot, as such, be integrated. I say, "as such integrated" with a spiritual approach, do you see what I mean?

Marichi: I am just wondering why it is essentially alienated?

S: Well because it excludes the whole emotional element and ...

Marichi: By its very nature in order to be of that kind of abstract nature it excludes an emotional involvement.

S: Yes.

Sulochana: If it goes any further it cannot help getting into ...

Marichi: But surely nobody is really an emotional thinker unless they are emotionally involved in it, can they really cut themselves off from ... surely it is a life force in you that makes you an emotional thinker.

S: Well I think you can have unintegrated emotions propelling your alienated intellect. (laughter) I mean the unintegrated emotions may take the form of professional ambition, yeah? So you are using both, but you are using the one to propel the other, as I have called it, they are not integrated and therefore although you have got, in a sense, emotion behind your intellect, the results of your intellectual discovery are of a very one-sidedly, intellectual nature.

[86]

Marichi: So, this gap is an integrated emotion?

S: Yes.

Dhammadinna: This person who gave this lecture I went to made the point that the connection was that most thinkers in abstract, maths and physics actually the original theory that comes out, comes out through intuition, it is a sort of rational paradox, and there has to be a break through to produce "MC squared" or whatever it is, and then he then correlated that with Zen paradoxes, so there is something other than intellect and rationality, there is this intuition ...

S: There is a faculty for making a sort of jump. This, I remember reading something about this in connection with Poincare, who was the great mathematician, and he was very much given to these sort of intuitive jumps, and he worked out the demonstrations afterwards.

Dhammadinna: I think that is the way a lot of these leaps are made in physics and chemistry as well ...

S: But nonetheless the emotional element is still lacking. And therefore it would seem that scientific knowledge looked at from the standpoint of the integrated individual is a product, is a construction of only part of oneself, and therefore one-sided, and not revealing Reality in a more total sort of way. So you cannot as it were take scientific knowledge and combine it with knowledge from other sources. It is as though you have to retrace your steps back to the point at which you went wrong, that is to say as an individual.

Sulochana: It is as though they have gone too far in that direction. After the reason for going in that direction ...

S: Yes, indeed, exactly, yes.

Noel: We wouldn't have had the atom bomb if the scientists that had discovered it had been emotionally healthy individuals.

Dhammadinna: The scientists that discovered that you can bombard the atom, maybe had no idea what the second layer of scientists, the data collectors, and technologists would do with it. You cannot actually blame the discoverers and that is one of the things which happens with science. You get people into science for science sake, and then you get other people who use it.

S: It is as though you get into another kind of tail spin, we were talking about the tail spin yesterday, in the other group, with regard [to] [87] negative emotion, you get into an

irreversible negative spiral. So I think it is possible to get into a state in which ... I mean originally to start with you were interested in working something out say theoretically say in this scientific way, for the sake of its practical implications, but in the end you get interested in the theory for its own sake, and then you get so deeply into it that you become virtually unable to find your way back to the practical application of that theory. You become interested in theory for its own sake, and you develop theory for its own sake, you extrapolate more and more, this is what happens. I believe in the case of pure mathematics, and this represents a very extreme one-sided development of the intellectual capacity. So if you wanted to be a whole human being and to develop as a whole human being you have to retrace your steps presumably, and come back to the point at which you had split off from your own wholeness as an individual.

Marichi: So you have no hope of being a whole human being if you turn yourself into an abstract thinker?

S: I would say that.

Marichi: Unless you keep sort of going back.

S: Yes, so therefore I don't think you can sort of combine scientific knowledge as such with some other kind, say with mysticism to form a sort of whole. A whole is not made out of overdeveloped parts in that sort of way. It is like a man for instance who is overdeveloped in certain limbs and underdeveloped in others, well if he is got an overdeveloped right hand and undeveloped left hand, well the overdeveloped right hand has to be sort of shrunk back to its original size, otherwise you have just got a sort of monstrosity.

Paloma: Does that mean that in the Friends we will develop the chance ... there are some people in the Friends who do know about science quite a lot about science, where is provision for such people? What can they do with science? I would like to ...

S: I ask the question, what could they do with it? Try to imagine a practicable possibility, what sort of scientific knowledge? Well take a very simple example, say what would [you] say was an example of scientific knowledge, give an example of scientific knowledge?

Paloma: Electronics.

S: Electronics, all right, supposing someone in the Friends is an electronics engineer, all right how could he utilize that knowledge [88] within the Friends?

Dhammadinna: Build us a computer.

Paloma: Yes, but I mean if it was ... yes she says that he could build us a computer or ...

S: Yes, but under what circumstances might we need a computer? How would that fit in? It is easy to say, "well we can have a computer", but could we use it, how could we use it?

Paloma: Well it would be very useful.

S: How?

Paloma: Storage for instance of addresses, and of lectures, books, so that you can just ...

S: So from what you say it seems that the scientist has a place within the Friends.

Paloma: Yes but ...

S: But it presupposes a certain degree of expansion of the Friends, even economically, because it would require money to build these things, and you would have to support the people building them. So what I am trying to say is that scientific knowledge or the use of scientific knowledge at least of a certain kind or within certain limits is not ruled out within the Friends, but it also depends upon the degree of expansion of the Friends, whether we can accommodate that in a practical way. You see what I mean?

Paloma: I was just wondering because we talked about the alienation that science brings and to get between science and mysticism, I wonder how it is possible then for ...

S: Well the question that arises is to what extent can one utilize any one of one's faculties to the exclusion of others without becoming alienated because there might be occasions on which you need to use, let's us say for the sake of speaking, just your brain or just your emotions, or just your physical body virtually. It would really be a question of balance and proportion. Do you see what I mean? It might be a bad thing for your development as an individual to be an electronics engineer and nothing but an electronics engineer and not developing any other of your faculties. But supposing you were working as electronics engineer for two or three days a week, or two or three hours a day, and supposing you were also meditating and communicating with others, it might be possible to incorporate [89] you know your sort of scientific knowledge, your knowledge of electronics into an overall pattern of a developing growing individual life. You see what I mean? This would have to be seen by the actual individual doing it, I think it would be very difficult to theorize in advance. I think the only thing that one can be certain of is that if one was only operating in that way, one would definitely end up as an alienated individual. So one couldn't simply be an electronics engineer in the way that some people are with your emotional life and all the rest of it quite separate and unintegrated. That would not be possible. The only question to be determined would be to what extent could you engage in any as it were separated in a sense almost alienated activity without it having an overall permanent effect on your personality. If you see what I mean?

Paloma: Yes, I was just thinking that the people who possess scientific knowledge usually develop it very highly and the other faculties are not so highly developed and to set up any business or anything you obviously need the person with the knowledge, but if it would mean the person to work like that, and everybody else who wouldn't have that much knowledge could work in other positions, it would actually change the person with that knowledge.

S: Right; well you might have to accept that being a scientific worker in that sort of way, even though of great benefit practically to the movement would be so detrimental to the development of that individual person, that you could not accept their working in that way. You would have to decide where your priorities lay, and that might not be an easy decision to come to. I mean you have to make it in other ways too, in other areas too already, because for instance say in the Co-ops, where an administrator is needed, someone might be good at administration, but then the question sometimes arises is it good for him to be doing that

work? You see it is another, it is a more extreme form in the case of the scientific worker of that same difficulty and for the sake of the individual you may have to forgo certain benefits and advantages in other ways.

Marichi: Though these may not be long term decisions like that; you might forgo being an electronics engineer for so many years, but then be able to use it when you have developed that backlog [of] emotions.

S: Indeed. Yes.

Dhammadinna: I think one of the big difficulties with science is [90] that it is a technology that is always moving and you cannot opt out very easily, because you lose ...

S: Yes, it is the same almost with medicine even.

Dhammadinna: Electronics, biology, most of those things.

S: Yes, you can give up Shakespeare and Milton for a few years and go back and Shakespeare and Milton haven't changed, you have just got one or two more critics on them to read, but as you say you cannot really opt out of scientific subjects.

Marichi: Except that you have a developed faculty, you have lost the knowledge, but you have retained the way of applying that.

Dhammadinna: Not if you have been meditating, you have been negating it, you might feel really alienated, feel really awful to go back, and not want to go back into it.

S: So this raises really quite basic questions, because it is as though certain advantages that society enjoys, at least in the developed countries, as a result of a technological developments, have been made possible by the very very one sided and distorted development or rather non-development of a large number of people. I mean there are other aspects too. I was reading in a report only a few weeks ago, that out of all the scientists in the world, that is to say real scientists, whatever that might mean, and there are many tens of thousands of them, seventy five percent are employed by various military agencies, seventy five percent of all scientists are working for military agencies, mainly American and Russian. They have the lion's share, every body comes way behind that.

: Possibly with a lot of pressure on them.

S: Possibly, possibly not, we don't know.

Dhammadinna: I would say possibly not in many cases. It is a facet of their alienation that they do that sort of work.

S: It is a career. So it might be that a humanity or a section humanity has to make a choice. It is as though you cannot have certain things and at the same time have certain other things. Do you see what I mean? If you don't want to have to produce people who are alienated to a degree that is harmful to themselves, you may have to give up certain technological advantages.

Dhammadinna: Yes, that is quite a thought, actually.

[91]

S: Yes, it is just like, say, well they are slaves, just like the Greeks kept slaves to do the dirty work while they got on with philosophy and listening to Socrates, and attending their drama festivals, well they accepted that, the fact that those people who lived as slaves was the condition for their cultural life and their freedom in a sense. They accepted that, well we tacitly accept in another way that certain people are going to have to lead lives of alienated intellectuality so that we can go on enjoying these technological improvements. We have virtually made that choice. Or we allow things to develop in that particular way. So a time may come in the future when we might, all sections of society might consider that it would be better to reverse that sort of decision.

Dhammadinna: People have thought that already ...

S: I think they don't quite see the whole question in the way that we have been discussing it in terms of that sort of knowledge, that sort of ability almost being the result of a human development that is so one sided as to result in positive alienation, which is of course harmful for the individual.

Marichi: Yes, it is seen more as an alienation of society rather than individuals within society. We are even out of touch with nature so that we can pour ghastly wastes into rivers rather than ...

S: Yes, well it is only individuals who are either in touch or out of touch obviously, one would have thought. But I think that one might have to face the fact that you are educating certain people in what is really an unhealthy way, in general human terms. You are reaping the benefits of that, but do you want to go on doing that? I think that one could say that by virtue of the very nature of human development there is a slight tendency to alienation built into every human being.

Paloma: Yes the gap between what one thinks and what one feels.

S: Exactly.

Paloma: And in relation to society the scientists are the thinkers and the rest are the feelers, and we don't make any attempt to integrate.

S: Yes, and I think this is the great danger for humanity as such. And this danger has been exacerbated recently in the sort of way that we have been talking about. So this sort of question is going to come up in a very practical sort of way when we do have our own schools, and this summer we hope to have a discussion about this. Because the question arises, "how are you going to bring up the children?" If you have got for [92] sake of argument a Buddhist school, it won't be Buddhist in the sense that the little nippers will be indoctrinated with the Abhidharma or anything like that. By a Buddhist school I mean a school in which a potential individual will be brought up in such a way that it will make it easier for them to become individuals later on. This is what one basically means. So if one is bringing them up to be integrated and if one is encouraging a balanced development of head of heart and hand where does that leave one with regard to say modern scientific education.

What sort of place is one going to find for that, assuming that eventually your school encompasses all the different educational levels?

Punyavati: I think that there will be a conflict where biology is concerned, the study of living things, you also kill them to study them. I remember feeling this conflict in me when I was at school, and being brought up as a vegetarian, I found it very difficult to kill animals or even to touch dead animals, and so I failed my O level biology and I remember sitting there looking at the fish and thinking about it and saying "what is important, passing exams or killing this animal?" and I decided to fail the exam. And I know a few other girls who made the same decision too.

S: So questions of this sort are likely to arise. I think will arise with increasing urgency the higher the educational level. I mean they are not very likely to arise on the playgroup level or even the primary school level. But they are sure to arise later on. So what is one going to do about all that? These problems will have to be considered and resolved sooner or later, step by step. Because you know if one is thinking in terms of Buddhist education at all, one is thinking in terms of integrated education or a potentially integrated individual, or by integrated education to help produce an integrated individual, this is what one is basically concerned with. I don't think one can sort of avoid the subject by just directing all your children into soft arts subjects. I think this is a sort of cowardly evasion of it. That is also a bit one-sided in its own way, in another way.

Marichi: A lot of practical things will be lost.

Sulochana: Yes, but not all arts are not just soft. Some of them incorporate science and technology and every subject that you could think of.

Dhammadinna: But scientific knowledge helps us to understand the nature of the world that we live in.

[93]

Sulochana: Well yes that is what I mean in some craft you might come across all scientific knowledge also, the more you go into it.

Joan: Perhaps using the old village school idea with different ages in the same class, they would help younger people in the class, so that they would be pushing ahead with their own knowledge but they would have [to] give time to helping younger people.

Sulochana: And now there is a movement to start really difficult subjects younger and younger.

S: That is true.

Sulochana: Because children can understand mathematics and reading I mean they can learn things.

S: But it is almost suggesting that the potentiality for alienation is arising at an earlier and earlier age.

Sulochana: Yes but also to make a person more balanced at least their earlier age wouldn't be a misery. Sometimes very small children suffer a lot because they want to learn so much and are prevented.

Joan: Because they do suddenly find that they have got a skill and they race ahead because they really enjoy doing it.

S: But this is rather the question of levels. I think a lot of modern educational thinking wants to keep children of the same age group on the same level, and say that others mustn't be allowed to go ahead, that is "elitism", that they are separated and they [are] given special encouragement or special teaching. Everybody has got to be kept back, or has got to move forward together. This is what a lot of modern educationalists seem to believe.

Joan: It doesn't work.

S: You have been a teacher? Yes.

Paloma: It is quite painful as well. I remember in school that I was very interested in reading some books about history, and I was very interested about the War, and I was told that I had to wait another year because that wasn't on this year.

S: Well I can remember the same thing, not about the War because when I was at school the War hadn't happened, but I can remember that I was a rapid reader and I can remember when I was quite young, while the rest of the class was plodding through chapter three for the third time [94] I'd be near the end of the book, I'd be just reading it through. I just wasn't bothering to listen to what was being taught. But I think now I would probably be prevented from doing that. One probably wouldn't be given the whole textbook. You are rigidly confined to just what the class as a whole, this is supposed to be democratic and giving everybody the same chance, but it doesn't really consider the individual. So one would have to look into that too. That is another sort of problem that one's Buddhist school would be faced by. Whether you would want to keep everybody the same age rigidly in the same classes at the same level.

Punyavati: But the comprehensive schools are the same ...

S: I am afraid here I just don't know anything. I have heard of comprehensive schools, I have heard all sorts of things about them. I don't think I've ever even set foot inside one.

Joan: That streams as regards ability, it is usually about the same age and streamed for ability within that same age group. But then that is very difficult because sometimes you find a bright person in a class will stimulate others to be interested and also a slow person will kind of stimulate them to give them a bit of help or have to encompass them as well getting on with the subject so when that is split apart it is all one-sided.

S: The bright may become brighter but the dull may become duller too. It is a question of weighing up advantages and disadvantages and trying to strike a balance.

Bonnie: The bright become alienated and the dull become delinquent. (laughter).

: There is no such thing as a dull person.

Paloma: You wouldn't be dull if the subject which you were being taught was interesting, if you were interested in the subject that was taught ...

S: But then this also raises the question of should you be taught only the subjects that you are interested in. How does that fit into any social organization? I can remember when I was at school, I was definitely interested in certain subjects and definitely not interested in others at all, but to what extent is it a good thing to teach the child only what it wants to learn?

Sulochana: I went to a school where we could choose, except they said half an hour a week of maths and that sort of thing.

Marichi: Do you think now that you might have benefited if you had had to study things that you hadn't chosen.

[95]

Sulochana: Oh well I went to other schools, I was always changing, I was only there for two years and I learned more in those two years than I learned at all the other schools put together.

S: I think it is more a question of perhaps teachers encouraging interest, not that the child has got this interest but not that. If the child hasn't got interest in a certain subject, but it seems that knowledge of that subject would be useful in life or useful for that person, then it is up to the teacher not to force the child to study a subject in which he isn't interested but to encourage his interest and develop interest first.

Marichi: Yes if the teacher is interested, the child is interested in the subject.

S: Yes, very often.

: (everyone talking at once)

S: Yes one of the subjects that I was interested in most was English literature, well that was taught in such a way that I could have been put off English literature. I wasn't, but it very nearly did happen.

Bonnie: On Waiheke Island, an island which we used to live on just off the coast of Auckland, they had, some parents had got together an alternative school, there was a public school, but they got an alternative school together, and they used the people on the island to do a lot of the teaching, so if they had a student who was showing interest in math, they would get a couple of good mathematicians of the island, and the student would just go and visit them in their own homes, the same with sewing and carpentry and art and chess, music. They just spread the students around the community. But that was rather special because it was a small community, only two thousand people ...

S: Well we might be able to do that in Norfolk in the Friends, because the Norfolk education authority is the most liberal in Britain it seems and already there are several hundred children in Norfolk who are being educated at home by their parents, and the Norfolk education authority seems to permit this. It sends along an inspector every now and then to check that the children are learning the subject they are supposed to be learning. Apparently there is no difficulty about that at all. So if we can start a Buddhist school anywhere in Britain it would

be in Norfolk, so this is one of the reasons that we are thinking about it here. We have begun to get the children, I think. (laughter) [96] We have got about two dozen in and around Norwich, which is a start. I am not suggesting that we need any more (laughter) but we have got these, so we might as well I think start some kind of school at least on the most basic level, and then see how we can develop that. Quite a few people are interested we know. But we shall have to face all sorts of problems, all sorts of questions, what is the purpose of Buddhist education, to call it that, that is the first thing that we shall have to face. And maybe we won't find quick and easy solutions to all the problems that arise. Maybe our solutions will be very ad hoc and piecemeal and provisional, we may have to experiment quite a bit. But I think it is possible to do something along these lines and of course one of the things that we shall have to decide, certainly at later stages, what is the place of say science in the curriculum, to what extent do we need as individuals [need] to be acquainted with the scientific world, to what extent is that valid, or to what extent is it the extrapolation of an alienated intellect? Does the alienated intellect see the world, does it see Reality? I mean in this way you get back to Blake, his denunciation of Science, the Spectre, the Alienated Reason, which according to him was insane. Well one can begin to see the Truth of that now, when we see what the scientific spectre has managed to produce. "It is at most ravelling and most insane".

Bonnie: It seems to be so energetic and have so much energy this alienated intellect, it obviously has to feed on something.

S: Right, yes.

Bonnie: It becomes tumultuous and gets out of hand.

S: One notices, I have noticed very often in the case of, I won't say scientists, it is more like intellectuals that I have known, especially working in the scholarly field, even the field of Buddhism, that very often an overdeveloped intelligence, an overdeveloped brain, was accompanied by or backed up by very underdeveloped emotions to an extraordinary extent. Almost infantile emotions. It is really as though the intellect is developed at the expense of the emotions.

Bonnie: It just doesn't happen in Science. I can see that in other fields too where people are preparing meals becoming more and more and more elaborate, which was quite unnecessary, and gardens being planned and going on and on and on, which is just not appropriate. So I think it is not only in science, but I think it is in other fields as well. And I know in my [97] own work, I can get into a space where I just become elaborating, and elaborate and elaborate, until I stand back and look at it and see that I have forgotten or lost the original concept which I started off with.

S: So why does one do that?

Bonnie: Yes, why? (laughter)

S: You know it is an expression of the reactive mind rather than the creative mind. You are just going round and round in the circle, you are elaborating a bit, you are doing it a bit differently each time you go around, but it is the same circle. You find this with human relationships. I remember once someone came to see me some years ago, and we were

talking, and after we had been talking for about ten minutes, it occurred to me that we had already had this conversation, in fact we had had it couple of times, and I said to the person "do you realize that we have had this conversation before?" , and when I pointed it out they saw that. But this is what happens sometimes, with one's relations with people too, we just go round in the same circle again. I mean, if you think back, you probably remember this, you meet someone, maybe you haven't seen them for a few weeks, you say "Hello, how are you, how are the children, and you know, they tell you the same thing as before, slightly different, maybe something about their mother-in-law, or something about the weather, or something about their holiday, or something that didn't go quite right. You have had essentially the same conversation before with them several times. You go around in the same conversational circle. You never move forward. There is nothing creative in it. Some people have the same quarrels over and over again, the same row over and over again, have them repeatedly, "that is life". So even in your so called creative work you can get into that. You just go around in the same circle embroidering differently the same time, but it is the same circle.

Bonnie: I ask myself now, I am beginning to twig to it now, and I stand back and try and look at it as though somebody else is going to look at it, and say "can it be any relevance to somebody else?" I think the relevance of what you are doing to somebody else whether they can understand it, perhaps this goes for the scientist as well. (Pause)

S: Anyway let us retrace our steps. I won't say that we have got away from what we were concerned with, because it is quite important. We are concerned with the objective world, and we were concerned originally [98] with the transitoriness of that whole objective world, and we made the point, I think a quite valid point, that modern scientific knowledge can often illustrate for us the principle, the Buddhist principle of the transitoriness of that objective world, objective universe. Physics can illustrate it, astronomy can illustrate it, but none-the-less it does seem that scientific knowledge is one-sided, it is not complete, it is not a complete knowledge and that it is very questionable to say the least whether a human being, whether an individual who is developing or trying to develop as an individual in an integrated, balanced harmonious way, balancing all his or her faculties and developing them all, can be a scientist. And therefore we may have to take account of this in various practical ways. It may be that someone could not work as a scientist within the context of the Friends more than to a certain extent, to a certain degree, which could be determined only by practice and also there is the point that we may not be able to include a scientific education in a narrow sense in our scheme of Buddhist education, we have to take account of that possibility too. We may in a manner of speaking have to make certain sacrifices, sacrifice certain possibilities of technological advancement, improvement even, for the sake of the integrity of the individual. These are questions that some people are beginning to face up to. But we have to come back again and again to the individual and the development of the individual.

With regard to this question of understanding the transitoriness of the world, the objective world, the universe, there is this whole question first of all of just looking at the world, looking at the universe. Punyavati was talking about killing in order to study. Wordsworth has got a phrase there, he says, "We murder to dissect". And at the same time as Wordsworth there was also the German poet Goethe, and Goethe was deeply interested in nature and the study of nature, but he insisted that nature was to be studied by observation, by sympathetic observation. It wasn't a matter of instruments, it wasn't a matter of killing something and taking it to pieces. He was strongly convinced that that was not the way to study nature. You studied nature by just looking at nature, observing nature, being in harmony with nature,

being in touch nature, and this sort of whole attitude towards nature from as it were [a] scientific point of view has been taken up and maybe developed a little by Rudolf Steiner and his anthroposophical movement. Some of you might have heard it. So perhaps there is something to be learnt from that.

[99]

Marichi: Do his schools incorporate that?

S: I don't know to what extent his schools incorporate these sort of principles, but it may well be that they do. So for instance if you want to study a frog, well what is the way to study a frog? What sort of knowledge of the frog do you want? I mean this is the point. When you dissect a frog, and you cut it up with a razor blade, well usually what do you do? You, I have never done this - I have never studied science but I understand that you want to find out what makes the leg twitch or something like that. Yes, isn't it so?

Joan: Yes, you put electrical impulses through the limb when it is dead, and it moves.

S: So I would have thought, I was very interested in frogs and toads when I was a boy, I used to keep them as pets, I would have thought that the way to study a frog was just to look at it, and just watch it jump maybe, you could see how it jumped, and you would feel the life and the energy of the frog. I mean it would seem to me that that was a better way of knowing the frog. Or acquiring knowledge about the frog.

Dhammadinna: What I found from doing three years of doing science and biology at university was that I completely lost my appreciation of nature, because you don't look at nature as a whole. You look at [it] by classifying it and rip it to shreds.

It took me a while afterwards to just forget all that, and just be able to look at a tree and say, "Oh that is a tree, it is beautiful, it is not its Latin name, and leaves grow in this way etc." ...

S: Perhaps a rudimentary scientific knowledge does help you to appreciate the tree, but I think not if carried beyond a certain point.

Dhammadinna: Not usually the way it is taught.

Paloma: You cannot connect it. I used to find that exact same thing. I would learn everything about a tree and hen and a cow etc., but when I went out, I actually have the tree or stripy cow, (laughter) I couldn't relate what I had in my head to the cow and tree.

S: So that knowledge that you had was unintegrated.

Paloma: Yes.

S: So this is what it means, it is abstract. And unintegratable, and not only unintegrated but unintegratable. Or unnecessary for you as a developing human being. It may be necessary for certain other purposes [100] But the question is, to what extent is the other purposes related to human life and the development of the human being, that is the real point?

Paloma: That is true, because when you are for instance when you are ten or something or even

when you are older then, and you go for a walk in the park, then you might have heard all about this tree, but you are not doing gardening, you are sitting in school learning this, and it is not very useful. I mean there is different types of school which when they teach you what a carrot is, you go and plant a carrot, and you have to observe it all the time. In Germany at least that was the case, we had to plant a carrot ...

S: I had to do this at school, it was either the top of a carrot or a bean, you had a bean to grow during your holiday and bring back afterwards.

Paloma: It is much more useful, because then you actually do what you are thinking, you think that this will come out, and then you do it, and then you see whether it does happen, but many things, it isn't done like that, it is just put into your head and there it is.

Noel: [indistinct]

Paloma: Well you cannot.

S: In the form of facts and figures. I'll give you a little illustration of this from perhaps an unfamiliar source. I'll go and get it.

[General conversation while Bhante goes out of the room.]

S: Yes this is a sort of classic illustration of utilitarian education which is the sort of thing that we have been talking about. It is from Dickens' "Hard Times". It is quite long. The Chapter is called murdering the innocence. Mr Gradgrind is visiting a school and he says, "Girl number twenty" said Mr Gradgrind, squarely pointing his square forefinger, "I don't know that girl, who is that girl?" "Sissy Dukes, sir" explained Number Twenty, blushing standing up and curtseying. "Sissy is not a name" said Mr Gradgrind, "don't call yourself Sissy, call yourself Cecilia". "It's Father that calls me Sissy, Sir" returned the young girl in a trembling voice and with another curtsey. "Then he had no business to do it" said Mr Gradgrind "tell him he mustn't". "Cecilia Duke let me see, what is your father?" "He belongs to the horseriding if you please Sir". Mr Gradgrind frowned and waved off [101] the objectionable calling with his hand: "we don't want to know anything about here, you mustn't tell us that here, your father breaks horses, don't he?" "If you please Sir, when he can get any to break, they do break horses in the ring Sir." "You mustn't tell us about the ring here, he doctors sick horses I dare say." "Oh yes, Sir". "Very well then, he is a veterinary surgeon, a farrier, a horse breaker, give me your definition of a horse (laughter). Sissy Duke threw into the greatest alarm by this demand. "Girl number twenty unable to define a horse" said Mr Gradgrind for the general ... "Girl number twenty possessed of no facts in reference to one of the commonest of animals. Some boy's definition of a horse. Bitzer yours. The square finger moving here and there lighted suddenly on Bitzer (he was a sort of prize pupil, a rather nasty little boy), perhaps because he chanced to sit in the same ray of sunlight, which ... "anyway long description of Bitzer, I'll spare of that). "Bitzer" said Thomas Gradgrind "your definition of a horse?" "Quadruped, raminiverous, forty teeth (laughter drowns Bhante's reading)

"Now, girl number twenty, you know what a horse is." She curtseyed again and would have blushed again and ... etc. etc., so this was knowing what a horse was, you see, that was the right sort of answer. This is sort of scientific knowledge.

Joan: She had probably ridden a horse.

S: She was a circus girl, that was the dreadful truth, she had been brought up with horses, she knew about horses, ridden them, but she couldn't define a horse, she was thrown into the greatest alarm when being asked to define a horse, but Bitzer who had probably never seen one could define a horse. But this is what a lot of modern knowledge, quasi scientific knowledge and even scientific knowledge is like. It has got no relation to life, and this is very unfortunate.

Bonnie: I sometimes feel that young men suffer from this form of education more than females do in the education system.

S: Well they are expected to develop more along those sort of lines.

Bonnie: They are, not that females are given anything.

S: Well you find the same sort of thing when it comes to bringing up children. Bringing up babies, the modern mother tends to go by the book [102] much more, I think, than the old fashioned mother, it doesn't always have good results, and in any case the book is often changed. Even Doctor Spock goes back on his old views, and recants. (laughter) So what has happened to all the Spock babies?

Bonnie: (all talking at once)

S: You didn't?

Bonnie: No I refused to read it, I saw what was happening.

S: But anyway to come back to this question of Buddhism and Science, it really boils down to that, that yes one can certainly use items of scientific knowledge to deepen one's understanding of certain Buddhist truths with regard to the external universe, but I think any talk of sort of combining Buddhism with Science or Buddhism with scientific knowledge en bloc, as was suggested in a new magazine which Nagabodhi reviewed in the last Newsletter, that is quite out of the question. This is what it comes back to. You cannot combine the Dharma with Science in that sort of way, it is quite impossible.

Dhammadinna: Then you cannot get the emotional doubt, which is obviously not enough faith in Buddhism, you can prove it by Science.

S: That is true, "Science proves Buddhism". Yes your faith is in science, not in Buddhism, science provides the criterion, Buddhism must be true because it agrees with science."

Noel: Western doctors were up until comparatively recently wouldn't entertain any ideas about acupuncture, which had been going for so many thousands of years. Until you could scientifically explore it, they were not prepared to entertain the idea.

S: Yes, it was just superstition, it was just primitive, there was nothing in it, so they said.

: When you start in medical school by cutting up a dead body which had a real effect on me.

S: Well there is also the psychological effect of yourself dissecting dead human bodies, which surely that has effects on your relations with other people. Well if you say, "No it doesn't, because you keep all that in a separate compartment", well you have given the game away immediate because the fact that you are the sort of person who can keep certain things in separate compartments means in a sense you are disqualified from total human communication.

[103]

Michelle: I think this problem of education must have occurred a lot to the Muslims, because they had solely Koranic Schools. It would be interesting to see what a Koranic teacher thinks, what conclusions he has come to.

S: I don't know whether they approach it in quite that sort of way because the main purpose of Koranic schools was to teach you the Koran, which meant initially meant just to learn the Koran by heart. Because they believe that all knowledge anyway was contained in that. I mean so many Christian schools they regard the knowledge of Christian doctrine, knowledge of the catechism supremely important. So I don't want to, I mean it is not my idea that a Buddhist school should be a Buddhist equivalent to a Christian or Muslim or Koranic school. My idea is I think totally different.

[End of tape 4]

S: ... that is why I mention that a Buddhist school would not be a school in which children would be indoctrinated with the Abhidharma. I put in that sort of way but I was quite serious about that, that the primary purpose of a Buddhist school should not be to teach Buddhist doctrine. The primary purpose of a Buddhist school is to provide a positive healthy environment, a positive healthy basis for the development of the individual.

Bonnie: Schools these days don't provide healthy human social intercourse in any way whatsoever.

S: I am sure that there are some schools which function reasonably well, but only because they are lucky enough to have some reasonably healthy teachers who have a reasonable amount of healthy contact with their children, their pupils, and take an interest in them, and give of their best. And I am sure that there are schools of that kind around, but I think that the structure, the system, the ideology the educational theory, in most cases doesn't help at all.

Bonnie: The bureaucracy behind ...

S: Yes, indeed, with headmasters having to spend most of their time in administrative work, two thirds they say now. I remember when I went to school, the headmaster or headmistress had their desk in the hall. In the Assembly Hall. Not isolated away in an office, no, they had their desk under a window on a little platform because they conducted assembly from their, but they sat almost all day, and whenever you went out of the classroom, you saw the headmaster or head [104] sitting there. And they were in constant contact.

Marichi: What were they doing there?

S: Well they did whatever job, whatever work they had to do, looking through attendance

registers, or marking exercises, they were available constantly, they were there physically constantly. So there is quite a different sort of attitude, even over the last few years, I can remember this very well. The headmaster or headmistress wasn't a remote figure at all. It was like that all the way through school, when I went to school.

Dhammadinna: To go back to Science and Religion, at the Mind and Body they have various machines which measure your brain waves while you meditate (laughter) several people from the FWBO tried these, and I don't think people got particularly good results on the machines. (laughter) I tried it, and I didn't, but apparently someone turned up at West London whose was recommended by the man who ran these machines, he told people who wanted to meditate to go to the FWBO. So although people's performance on the machine wasn't particularly good, he was actually responding ... to brightness in people's eyes, a Transcendental Meditator came along and got the correct pattern on the machine, but he didn't actually find ...

S: Well it is like for instance the people who pass examinations, but they are not whole people, others who cannot or don't pass examinations, but they are much better as people.

Dhammadinna: But there is a move towards measuring brain-waves and prove the ... and obviously it is very narrow.

S: The only thing that it proves is that you can produce those sort of effects on a machine. That when you pass an examination, it doesn't really prove very much more than you can pass an examination.

: It is interesting looking at those machines, because they look like alpha waves, which is what you have just before you go to sleep.

Bonnie: Well perhaps it alters your waves to relate to a machine.

S: Well it must do. This reminds me of an awful story which was told me by a friend of mine shortly after I came back to England, just to close with that, he was going through, this was shortly after my return in '64, this person who came along [to] classes had been undergoing psycho-analysis for a number of years, and he seems to have been [105] a bit schizophrenic but anyway, some years earlier he had had, or he had been given an LSD trip, and he had had a certain experience on that, and he was convinced that if he could have another such trip, then it would really help with his psychological problems. So, he went through his psycho-analyst, who was also a medical man, and apparently there was a laboratory somewhere in London where there was a woman doctor and psychiatrist, who was permitted officially to use LSD in treatment, I think she was the only one. So he was sent along there, and he was given this LSD tablet in her office, and he said that she was an elderly forbidding woman in a white coat, and while he was having his treatment, she was supposed to be with him, the telephone kept ringing and she kept dashing off to answer it. So, you can guess what happened, nothing happened. And he said it was incredible he said to him, that they could believe that you could have any sort of positive psychedelic experience under those sort of conditions. He said in fact that he asked whether he couldn't be given the pill, take it home, and take it with his girlfriend there, "Oh no", that was only allowed on the premises, on the doctor's surgery, and with the doctor in attendance. So of course nothing happened, and he was very very deeply disappointed.

So the environment makes a difference, and yes, you cannot be the same person talking into a little metal box as talking to another person, it is ridiculous, and it is like the people who carry out research into people's sexual reactions and sort of wire them up, and all that sort of thing. It doesn't tell you anything about people's genuine sexual reactions in relation to other people, only tells you about their reactions when they are wired up and all the rest of it. It is as though Science and this is its basic mistake, is so obsessed with this idea of objectivity. There is no such thing as objective reality in that sort of sense, that is a delusion.

Bonnie: They are making up a delusion, it sounds like they are making things to fit it.

S: So I think therefore within a spiritual context, you have to be very careful what use you make of scientific knowledge, otherwise I think you are almost better off with Wind, Fire, Water and the world being destroyed by them at intervals and leave it that. But probably most people, even most of you are sufficiently alienated unfortunately that you couldn't manage with Water and Fire and Air, you had better think of it in terms of modern physics and [106] astronomy, so fair enough, but don't let it get out of hand. Use these pieces of scientific knowledge that one may have within a definitely Buddhist and spiritual and individual framework. But don't try to place Buddhism or your spiritual life within the scientific framework. And certainly don't try to unite scientific knowledge with Buddhism as some of these modern scientific Buddhists are apparently trying to do.

Let's leave it there.

[107]

Day three - tape one - side A

S: I notice as I edit, which involves listening to the tapes of all the different seminars that some people really don't speak up - this applies I think almost equally to both the men and the women participating, so listening carefully to the voices on tape of those who don't speak up I've almost come to the conclusion it is something psychological. I don't want to alarm you all (laughter) but I don't think it is always that certain people have naturally soft, tiny little voices, I don't think it is that at all, I think a great deal of it is to do with voice projection which also means projection of oneself so I think that this is perhaps something that people should give a bit of attention to. I also notice listening to tapes of seminars that some people's voices seem all strangled in their throats - in some cases their chests, in others it's as though the voice has to come out of a very narrow vent and this is why it comes out so faint and reedy and whispery, in the case of some of the men as well as in the case of some of the women. So I think a lot of it is to do with one's whole psychological attitude towards oneself, one's attitude towards others and one's attitude towards life, so it seems as though it is something to be worked on - it is not necessarily that you're born with weak vocal chords, or something of that sort and therefore that you speak in that particular way, I don't think in most cases it's that at all. Obviously, volume does depend on the amplitude of your chest and lung capacity and all that sort of thing, but I think that is relatively marginal - a lot of people just don't project themselves. I don't know whether communication exercises would help you, I think they would to some extent or indirectly, because you notice - you must have noticed in the communication exercises people start off by saying 'Do birds fly?' (Bhante speaks quietly) (laughter) and then by the end or after a few minutes they say 'DO BIRDS FLY?' (Bhante almost shouts) (laughter). There is a difference and it is the same voice, the same person, but they've come out more, so I think we shouldn't just sort of pass over the fact that some of us

have got these teeny, weeny, reedy sort of voices which go whispering along on the tapes but ...

Sulocana: Some people seem to have the opposite.

S: That's true, yes.

Sulocana: Simply because such people who have a very soft voice are known at home perhaps, or in other places as people with very loud voices.

S: Well, that is significant also no doubt - some people perhaps have got over loud voices much of the time but one doesn't usually find that happening on the tapes of seminars - it is usually the other way around. So perhaps you could think about that, try to be aware when you are speaking of how your state of being is affecting the way in which you speak; I'm sure all these things [108] are significant, I'm sure that they all have a meaning - they're not just accidental so that they need to be given some attention. Even those who do whisper a bit on seminars, you can hear them sort of laughing and talking quite loudly in the garden afterwards in some cases. In some cases not - they always whisper but the question is, well, why, it isn't something one should just pass over. Anyone got any comments on this?

Dhammadinna: I think you're right

S: Thought about it, or talked about it before?

Dhammadinna: Yes we have talked about it a bit.

S: I'd noticed for instance a difference, a change taking place in the women's' chanting - yes, I don't know whether this is accidental or the result of actual work but on certain occasions before the chanting of women in chorus has been noticeably very weedy, and one might have expected that but I notice on other occasions the same women approximately, some time later, it has of course been a different kind of sound because women's voices are different from men's but it has lost that [think?] reedy quality, it is much more full even though it is still, as it were, feminine, you see what I mean? So no doubt there are certain limitations imposed by various quite objective factors but within those limitations one has to function fully and effectively. You may have a voice which is more highly pitched than that of another person, but that does not mean that when you speak it's got to be weak and thin and so on, if you could only project yourself better you might have a beautiful rich contralto voice. Who knows?

Dhammadinna: There is a woman I've heard of who runs voice production classes for women - she's a singer and she feels that women do tend to talk quietly through lack of confidence, sort of a conditioned thing - they don't have confidence enough to voice their opinion.

S: There is a lot of men like that, you really notice it on the men's study groups and listening to the tapes of these study groups just as much in some cases it's more noticeable because of the great contrast between those men who speak with confidence and those who don't speak with confidence. I would say in study groups at least half of the men do not speak with confidence, I think that is probably about the same proportion. I mean there are various reasons perhaps why one does not speak with confidence, it can be of course, lack of

confidence in one's knowledge of the subject that one is talking about it may be quite personal because sometimes a person may have a knowledge of the subject but not be able to speak about it with any real confidence, they may feel sort of over-shadowed or overwhelmed by other people present who are much more articulate.

[109]

Dhammadinna: We did find on one Mitra event, I think the first one we had, the first time we had forty people together, the chanting was actually quieter than with a few people, as though everybody held back a bit and we couldn't quite work out why that was, but the next time we had one it was as though people were used to being with that number of people and chanting loudly, it was quite different.

S: Well, perhaps the first time they were afraid of making too much noise.

Sulocana: It can be over-loud and over-enthusiastic.

S: I think it depends on the size of the space, if there's a lot of you in a small room - I mean a very loud sound doesn't sound right - does it? Perhaps if you're in a very big room, well, you've got more space so you tend to let fly more. I noticed on the Convention that the volume of the chanting varied quite a bit, almost irrespective of the number of people actually present sometimes it was quite appropriately full, other times it didn't seem quite full enough for the number of people present and the size of the room. I think one has to pay attention to things like voice as to things like posture and general attitude. It all says something or one is saying something in all these different ways.

Bonnie: It seems in some way to link up with something that you said on the very first day about taking a risk.

S: Yes, yes.

Bonnie: I find it difficult to take a risk and if taking a risk is speaking up.

S: You might be wrong - how terrible that would be.

Bonnie: Yes, yes that's right.

Paloma: I find also, even if you're aware of what you're feeling and how you're talking you are not able to change it just in a minute, because you are feeling like that.

S: Oh no, you can't change it in a minute. Some people seem genuinely to think, they even say sometimes, "who would want to listen to me?" "Who would be interested in what I think?" Some people have this sort of feeling quite strongly. "I couldn't make an interesting contribution to the discussion, no one would be interested in what I say." One hears quite a lot of this from different people. It's as though they are saying - well, everyone knows I'm a fool - but perhaps you're not - at least speak up and we'll find out (laughter) let us make up our own minds, you don't have to tell us - again it means taking a risk, doesn't it? Even the cleverest person sometimes says foolish things, even the most foolish person sometimes says a sensible thing. One notices this too doesn't one. It's very difficult to be sensible all the time but it is quite difficult to be foolish all the time actually. Oh well, perhaps that's enough of that

particular topic. We've got on to page 43. Oh yes, just one [110] more point which occurs to me, before we do press on. I think one of the things that can help is reading aloud. That's why I think it is quite good that there should be readings in the context of the Pujas and one shouldn't always choose just the two or three people who are best at reading. Give others a chance, encourage them to project themselves more, to read aloud in the fuller sense, even to practise, even rehearse it with them beforehand even if it's only a short reading, encourage them to project their voices more. Also maybe just informal poetry reading evenings, all this helps to develop self confidence and helps you to get practice in projecting your voice and projecting yourself. Do you even have this in any of the communities, those who live in communities, sort of informal readings or poetry readings. You do it from time to time but you must be careful to see that everybody does it, not just the two or three, or the few, who are best at it. In a sense, make everybody do it.

All right then. 1. Transitoriness of the Subtle. Would someone read that whole section down to 2. We're still concerned, by the way, with the objective universe. We've dealt with the transitoriness of gross matter and now we come on to transitoriness of subtle matter. In what sense is that?

"(ib) Transitoriness of the subtle is due to the change of the four seasons, is seen in the rising and setting of the sun and moon, and is witnessed in fleeting moments.

Of these 'transitoriness due to the change of the four seasons' means that by the power of spring in this vessel-like world. the soil becomes soft and reddish while grass, trees and vegetables sprout; but this is only transitory and comes about by the change of season. In the summer the soil becomes humid and green, while grass, trees and vegetables spread their stems and leaves. In autumn it becomes hard and yellow, while grass, trees and vegetables ripen into their fruits: finally in the winter it becomes frozen and whitish, while grass, trees and vegetables dry up and become brittle: but in each case this is only transitory and comes about by the change of season.

'Transitoriness seen in the rising and setting of the sun and moon' means that by the power of the rising day this vessel-like world is illumined by light and brightness, but with the coming of night it is dissolved in darkness. This also is transitory and a symbol of change.

'Transitoriness witnessed in fleeting moments' means that this vessel-like world which existed at an earlier moment does not do so at a later one. That it seems to continue in the same way is because something else similar arises like the stream of a waterfall."

[111]

S: Is the principle of the distinction between the transitoriness of gross matter and transitoriness of the subtle clear. No, it's not very clear, it doesn't seem to be gross matter as opposed to subtle matter. It seems like gross changes as opposed to subtle changes. Gross changes seem to be changes which involve the destruction of the entire universe whether by wind or by fire or in any other way. The subtle changes seem to be changes within the universe. Do you see what I mean. That is to say, changes brought about by the seasons and the succession of light and dark and so on. The translation, if I may say so seems a little sort of hasty in parts, do you see what I mean? As though the translator hasn't thought pretty carefully what the meaning really is or what meaning he is conveying.

Sulocana: Like a sort of list.

S: So, instead of transitoriness of the subtle is due to the change of the four seasons it is more like subtle transitoriness is due to the change of the four seasons. But that doesn't quite apply at the end, "Transitoriness witnessed in fleeting moments" seems of a rather different nature meaning that this vessel like world which existed at an earlier moment does not do so at a later one. "That it seems to continue in the same way is because something else similar arises like the stream of the waterfall." Do you get the point of the comparison. If you watch a waterfall it looks as though there is some 'thing' there made of water which has a certain definite shape but actually that definite shape as it appears is produced by the constant falling of different bodies of water so that it is one different body of water after another. The succeeding taking the place of the preceding body of water so the impression of continuity is illusory. So it is much like that so we are told in the case of the world. It's not that you see the same world but that world is changing. You see a rapid succession of different Worlds but the illusion of continuity is produced by the fact that the succeeding is very similar to the preceding world. Well, just like in the case of the film. When you look at a film, when you've watched a film you get an impression of continuity but actually there is no continuity, there is a succession of discrete frames which succeed one another very rapidly. Here we get into Buddhist philosophy, this is the view of one particular school of Buddhist philosophy, that events are discrete but they happen very rapidly and that therefore there is an impression of continuity and as it were solidity. Do you see the point. Perhaps we need not go into that because what we're basically concerned with here is just to realize the transitoriness of things.

Sue: I was puzzling about this last night because when I look at nature I get a feeling of continuity and little things like ... (inaudible) ... but that's a false kind of continuity?

S: Well, if you go into it very deeply it's some sort of mystery because when you go into it or try to go into it deeply, that is to say intellectually, [112] you go into it with the help of certain concepts, like those concepts of being and non-being, existence and non-existence, so you can regard objective existence as continuous in the sense of being absolutely continuous but without any kind of breach. You see what I mean? Any sort of discontinuity but that gives rise to logical difficulties because that seems to make change impossible. You see what I mean? All right, so in order to make change possible you ... a succession, a series of discrete events - the latter of which resemble the former to a great extent and therefore passing in rapid succession creates the illusion of continuity but nonetheless there are difficulties because if the succeeding is actually discrete from the preceding, well, in that case also, in what sense can you speak of change?

Marichi: Because change implies connection.

S: Hmm. Change implies connection but if it, there's complete connection then there is no change (laughter) so you end up with a rather Madhyamika sort of attitude, that you experience from a common-sense point of view, change, but really the nature of that change you are unable to explain. It's inexplicable. Because it's inexplicable in terms of being and non-being or combination of the two and these are the only concepts with which we have to operate. It's rather like the puzzle of Achilles and the tortoise isn't it? Achilles can never overtake the tortoise owing to the infinite divisibility of space. You know this old problem - it's alleged that it has been solved but I'm not quite sure how but perhaps we shouldn't go into these sort of things too much except sufficiently to enable us to realize well, there is a sort of

mystery that the concepts of the intellect are not really adequate to cope with the real nature of what we call existence, the real nature of life. But if we look at the objective world we see that yes, there is a constant change, whether it is absolutely continuous or whether it proceeds absolutely continuously or whether it proceeds by a series of discrete jumps is really impossible to say - we have said paradoxically that we know that change takes place but we don't really know what change is, that's our position. But of course we mustn't forget that we are studying this whole question of change at all, this whole question of transitoriness, in the case the transitoriness of the objective universe. But why are we studying it, how has it come up? We must not lose sight of that.

Dhammadinna: As a remedy for our sensuous attachment.

S: Yes, as a remedy for our sensuous attachment, or as a means of developing patience and discouraging anger and hatred. So, indeed, the analogy of the waterfall is meant to help, in some ways though it raises as many difficulties as it seeks to solve. We can at least understand that in a certain sense - [113] whatever that sense may be - change does occur. We see things are different from what they were, from what we thought they were, or think that they were, because this also involves memory doesn't it; which is another mystery, but the main point is that we should recognize well yes, in plain common-sense language - that things do change, the world changes and if you base your life on the assumption that the world or certain things in the world do not change or will not change, well sooner or later you'll encounter suffering and that will make you angry and impatient. So if you want to be free from anger and impatience you have to cultivate this sense of the transitoriness of conditioned things. We spoke about conditioned things - we spoke about composite things, those are the traditional Buddhist categories, but even they are not very satisfactory because when you think of things - well, if you think of things as one or if you think of things as many, there are equal difficulties. For instance you can think of this book here, well, is this book one thing or is it a number of things put together. Well, in a sense it is one thing but in another sense it is a number of things put together but it is put together of sheets of paper and a couple of sheets of cardboard and so on - well, can you not go further than that. Isn't the paper put together from something else, yes, it is but those elements, those constituents, aren't they put together from something else. So you can go on dividing and dividing so if you only know a thing in terms of the things of which it consists and if the process of sub-division can go infinitely or at least indefinitely you would never know what the thing is because you can never know what the thing is because you can never know what it is composed of because however far you go - however you sub-divide there's always the possibility of further sub-division so you can't really know the book at all, not in those terms - Do you see what I mean?

Noel: It reminds me of the Buddha talking to Nagasena and asked him what was a chariot.

S: Nagasena talking to Milinda - well, that is you can say things are transitory because they're composite, that's true, but it's not as easy as it looks. Certain things you're attached to as whole things so if it can be shown that those things, those whole things to which you are attached as whole things consist of parts and those parts will break up then where be the object of your attachment. Well, that's all right so far, it works for the purpose for which it is intended to work. If you work to pursue it metaphysically and know the fate of the parts themselves, well then, you find that they consist of further parts - those parts consist of further parts again so if your knowledge of a thing really consists in the knowledge of the parts of which it consists then no knowledge is possible because parts are infinitely

indivisible. This is as it were absolute knowledge but we have enough knowledge for certain practical purposes (laughter). It's as well to consider these things [114] occasionally because very often we think that we know but actually we don't - we don't know in any absolute sense, we only know in a very relevant sense - that is to say, relevant for certain practical purposes.

Bonnie: It seems to me like a decompression process - a deconditioning process isn't it?

Dhammadinna: Isn't it like what we were talking about yesterday about the horse - in the reading from 'Hard Times' about different ways of knowing things?

S: Oh yes, of knowing things.

Dhammadinna: You can try to know something by breaking it down, but if you only concentrate on that it would be one-sided - you also know - you know that book in a different way as a whole and that is valid as well.

S: You don't in a way know it as a whole but it functions as a whole for a certain purpose. That is to say for your reading it, for it's conveying of knowledge to you.

Dhammadinna: If you just dissected the book you could get very dry.

S: You could say there's no such thing as a book therefore you can't learn from a book, but actually you can.

Dhammadinna: Your experience of the book and your emotions involved in the book.

S: So the Theravada on the whole does over-emphasise the purely analytical approach. I think that is a mistake. There is also even within the Theravada, if you take the whole of the Theravada Abhidharma teaching, there is also the teaching of relationships of things, it is not only that you can analyse things in that sort of way but also you are able to see that things are related in a very intricate sort of way, you have to take that into account also, that is the more synthetic aspect but that's usually rather overlooked, the Theravada tend to go in much more for analysis of mental states especially. (pause) We could say that when we are attached to something - something which is transitory - what happens? What happens is that without going into this whole question of change, that you're attached to something - you are enjoying it, you're dependent upon it - it's there. One moment it's there, the next moment it isn't there, but you are left with the attachment for it but it is not there any more. That is suffering - that's the bare simple experience as it were. One moment the thing is there the next moment it is not there, there's a change in the object but there's not a corresponding change in you. Because the attachment for it is there when the object is there, that adds up to pleasure. The attachment is there when the object is not there, that adds up to pain and in some inexplicable way you might say - sometimes the object of attachment is there - sometimes it isn't - sometimes the object of attachment is there [115] and remains there but the attachment changes. So you have sometimes a situation in which in moment (A) the object is there - the attachment is there result - pleasure, and in moment (B) object is there - attachment is not there result - pain. So we explain this to ourselves in terms of change.

Kay: Why is that pain if the object is there by you're not attached to it - why do you feel pain?

S: Well, you don't want it to be there - you're got fed up with it. (laughter)

Sulocana: Would there have to be aversion?

S: Well, I think if an object is there which you don't want to be there well that is aversion.

Marichi: You mean you'd really just want nothing there.

S: You either want nothing there or something else.

Noel: It could even be the sunshine. Suppose you'd been longing for the sun to come out and you're happy, it's nice and then it goes on and on and on, for days. You're no longer happy, you're too hot.

S: Yes - but what I'm saying is when one considers the whole question in terms of actual direct experience without bringing in the question of change as it were, just a successive almost discrete instance of experience. You need not think that the object has changed or that its impermanent, it's just there one minute and not there the next - it might have gone away but you're not concerned with that because you're not in contact with it - its not there so far as you are concerned and if it isn't there and if you're not in contact with it, not experiencing it - not enjoying it - but wish to, and it isn't there, well, that is pain, that is suffering. It's transitory so far as you are concerned it might be that it's gone away to the other side of the universe but what do you care about that, you want it right here and now in front of you - it might have gone next door. (laughter)

Marichi: 'IT' in this case is states of mind rather than an object.

S: The state of mind is dependant

Marichi: The change is the state of mind rather than ... (inaudible)

S: Well, no. I'm trying to express it in, not in terms of change at all. I mean - the whole concept of change is riddled with metaphysical difficulties so one need not even think in terms of change, if so the object is here in front of you one doesn't say that it changes or doesn't change but one instant it's here and one instant it's not here, but the desire is there, the attachment is there so pain is experienced but this also brings in the question of time doesn't it? Because change presupposes time even this succession of instants, with something being there and then not there, this presupposes time, it presupposes that your attachment persists in time. Leaving aside whether it's [116] the same attachment or whatever but time again is another mystery - what is time? It used to be thought that time was a thing, a part of the structure of the objective universe. I think it's generally agreed among philosophers now, this is certainly the traditional Buddhist view - that time is not a thing, not anything that you can perceive - time is part of the very way in which you perceive things and space likewise - so this makes it in a way more mysterious still - you can't even examine time, you can't perceive time because time is part of the structure of perception itself. To use Nagarjuna's phrase you can't touch the tip of your own finger with that finger tip. So where does this leave us? This leaves us with our own experience or with just a common sense phraseology that we know the meaning of, in at least practical terms - in other words it enables us to know what to do and that is all we need to know - we can't make our conduct - our behaviour dependant upon

an understanding of ultimate metaphysical mysteries hence the Buddha's parable of the man wounded by the poisoned arrow. So we can continue perhaps to use this plain straightforward common-sense phraseology and say well, you know things change and if you become over-attached to those changing things you will suffer and that will make you angry and impatient.

Bonnie: We seem to have the capacity for standing with one foot in and one foot out like ... (inaudible) (laughter)

S: Yes that's true - that suggests you see that we are more than time - that time is something not in which we are but which is in us. Not that our consciousness is in time but that time is in our consciousness - that time is a mode of our perception not a mode of our being. Our perception - no, I was going to say our perception is limited by time but it isn't that. It's as though our perception limits itself in that particular way which we call time. What we think of as an object is really subject - so in a sense you can change everything by changing your mind - changing your attitude. You really notice a difference when you go against the flow of time. You resist change. Have you ever noticed a strange sort of experience you get when you're waiting for something to happen? Maybe you're waiting for someone to arrive - the thing doesn't happen or the person doesn't arrive. What is your experience of time like then?

Kay: It drags.

S: It drags. It's really quite odd. It more than drags, it's as though there's a sort of resistance. So this gives one an inkling of the true situation that one's experience of time or time itself because there's no time perhaps apart from one's experience of time, except clock time. It is very much dependent upon one's mental state.

Noel: ... when you're dreaming ... (inaudible)

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S: Our time experience is different it seems at different times in our lives, when you're a child a day is a very long time, a lot can happen. When you're much older it isn't a very long time. It seems as though five minutes time experience of a child is spun out and made to occupy a whole day in the case of an adult - you don't experience any more in a day than the child experiences in five minutes. It's as though one's time sense is bound up with the intensity of the experience.

Kay: I found that very much after the Tyn-y-Ddol meditation retreat. We were driving back and we felt as if about an hour had passed and in fact four hours had passed and during that week my whole experience of time was very different.

S: Yes, yes. Several people have mentioned this even recently. So what it really boils down to is that one is not as limited as one thinks, that what one thinks of as external conditions are simply ways in which you perceive things or parts of your attitude towards things and you can change the conditions in which you live to a great extent by a change of mental attitude. Of course, it works the other way around to some extent, sometimes a change in the existing conditions helps you to change your mental attitude. One must not adopt a purely solipsistic approach. It isn't all in the mind in a literal sort of sense.

Bonnie: You can put yourself in favourable conditions.

S: Even though those conditions are to a great extent dependent upon your own mental attitude. There is a time lag as it were.

End of side A

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Day three - tape one side B

Voice: The time-lag ... (inaudible)

S: Well, the conditions which you have set up, which you experience as objective conditions, having nothing to do with your present mental state, have been set up by your past mental state. There has been a time-lag in that sense. So it's not as though, when you change your mental attitude now, at once there's a change in the objective conditions.

Marichi: The time-lag has to be with the slowness with which the effects of the change are ...

S: Yes. You still have to go on, perhaps, experiencing, as objective conditions, the sort of crystallizations of your previous mental states. For instance supposing you occupy a certain job. Well, the fact that you have landed yourself with that particular job, maybe signed a contract for a certain period, is an expression of your mental state. So your mental state may change with regard to that job. You may want to give up that job, change that job, get another job. You may make arrangements to do so, but there's a time-lag before the mental state that you are now experiencing can find its expression in another set of objective conditions. You can't do it just like that, unfortunately. Sometimes you'd like to. Occasionally you can but it is very often not possible. So it is in that sense that I speak of the time-lag.

Marichi: Sometimes I find that quite disconcerting. I see my state of mind change and I expect immediate results. It's as though you feel really trapped in those states ...

S: Well, the speediness or otherwise of the results depends partly on the intensity of the present mental state and also, of course, on the intensity of the previous mental state and therefore the strength of the conditions set up by that previous mental state which persist into the present.

Paloma: I was just wondering whether ... (inaudible) What is an objective condition? Because - I understand that it depends on your mental state, how you will see the conditions ...

S: You see, it's very much like what I was saying about the infinite divisibility. Our whole discussion proceeds in the one case on a real distinction between being and not-being, or discussing the question in terms of being and not-being, but one finds that that is really not possible when you pursue it. In the same way here the discussion proceeds on the basis of a real distinction between object and subject. If you pursue that beyond a certain point you find you can in a sense no longer make that distinction. But for certain practical purposes you have to make that distinction. Well, here you are and there is the object. But, at the same time, did the [119] perception of the objective self, the way you perceive it, depend upon your mental state? So, to some extent, object is subject. Can you experience the object apart from your

experience of it? Can you separate the object from the subject? Can you not think of yourself, the subject, as an object? Do you see what I mean? (laughter) So again these are provisional conceptual counters that we use for practical purposes. We do use them. They have a practical function but when we try to understand them, as it were, philosophically, or consider them as having some sort of ultimate validity, then we just get into difficulties. I think that Buddhism, especially in the Madhyamika philosophy, shows this very clearly, shows it with regard even to the conceptual counters, as I've called them, of traditional Buddhism itself.

Marichi: This seems to be where spiritual friends are useful, because they at least ... well, you can't move them around as much as things. They've got their own objective validity. You know another person may be acting ... (inaudible) towards you but still it's difficult ... (inaudible)

S: I think it is very important, and this is something I've been thinking about quite a lot recently, to as it were, acknowledge the object. I think for a lot of people this is quite difficult. And I think you are, as it were, most compelled to acknowledge the object in your dealings with other people.

Paloma: What does it mean ... acknowledge the object?

S: Well, we were talking yesterday, I'm not sure whether it was in this group or the other one, about ... infantile behaviour?

Voice: The other one. (laughter)

S: The other one, ah. Well, I don't want to go over all that discussion even if I could remember it, because it went on for an hour or more. (laughter) But, I mean - how do we start off? We start off as human beings or potential human beings by being intensely subjective. Babies are completely selfish little monsters, do you know what I mean? They're only aware of themselves. They're not aware of themselves as distinct from other people because they're not aware of other people. They are just a need, just a desire, just a craving which eventually dimly becomes aware of other, well, other things. The baby's, the infant's instinct is to have its needs, its desires, fulfilled. It doesn't consider anybody else's needs. It is not aware of anybody else. You see what I mean? This is the state of the baby, the infant, at the very beginning. I'm not an expert of infants, so if anyone is, then feel free to contradict me but I think this is what is agreed. But as the baby gets a little older it does become a little bit aware that there are other forces, other factors, very often thwarting factors. And it develops a sort of sense of its identity over against the identities of others that it begins to recognize as other people. At first, of course, the baby seems to have, [120] not so much a sense of self-identity, as a sort of rather amorphous, diffuse sense of different objects. For instance, the baby doesn't start saying "I" and "You". He starts saying "Baby" and "Mummy", or whatever it may be. Usually it's "Mummy". Then "I" comes later. So in the case of the infant there isn't this sort of awareness of itself as a subject and others as subjects even though they are perceived as objects. So one of the functions of education is as it were to get the growing child to recognize that, just as he or she is an individual or a person, others are individuals, others are persons with, so to speak, their needs, their rights and that they have to be considered, and that you are living in a world of people. Some children apparently don't achieve this and some of them become, in some cases, criminals; that is to say they are anti-social. They don't recognize that anybody else has any feelings or any rights, etc., and that is an almost

pathological state. So I think one's sort of inborn tendency, so far as we can see, is just to regard almost the whole world as revolving around oneself. That is what I mean by "not recognizing the object"; that there is something different from you. At least, we are assuming here the structure of the subject and object distinction as being ultimate, which it is for our ordinary experience. But you have to acknowledge the object in the sense of recognizing, well, other things do exist. I'm not the only thing in the universe. Other people do exist. They don't exist as objects. I perceive them as objects, I only perceive myself as subject. I perceive everybody else as objects. But eventually, as you become more mature, it dawns upon you that, just as you (who experience yourself as a subject) are experienced as objects by others, so others are experienced you as objects, but they experience themselves as subjects.

If you do have a very close and intense communication with people, then you can get almost a sort of feeling of their subjectivity. Do you see what I mean? You can not only infer that they are subjects - even though you are experiencing them as objects - but you can experience at least a little of their actual subjectivity, just as you experience your own subjectivity. To that extent, at least for an instant or two, a very small extent, you I won't say transcend - but you encompass subjectivity and objectivity. Do you see what I mean? This is a very important stage in human development.

You can achieve this, of course, through meditation. But you can get, in ordinary life, or - I won't say ordinary life - but a fairly aware and developed and cultured human life - you can get some inkling of it in your communication with other people. You do, as it were, in a mysterious way that can't really be explained, enter into other people's subjectivity and experience their subjectivity as subjectivity, not as 'object' which you, as a subject, are experiencing.

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Sulocana: I just have a feeling that babies aren't born with this, but that it gets distorted very, very early and that's the stage which you were describing.

Marichi: Isn't there something ... (inaudible.) ... to do with ... (inaudible.) ... People get quite 'needing' and 'craving' if they're not weaned from their mothers properly, and it's sort of the other side of the delinquent pattern.

Sulocana: But it's much earlier than that. If they ever have to cry for something that they need ...

Marichi: ... and they don't get it ...

Sulocana: ... that starts this ... (inaudible.) ... But if they don't cry for things they need, and if you forestall that - having to go to such lengths for someone to feel what you need, then it starts that process, so it could be delayed.

S: You see, it does bring, it does introduce the whole question of re-birth. What I was saying a few minutes ago about the baby, or about the infant, would be acceptable to someone who doesn't believe in re-birth at all. This is the view of modern psychologists. All right, supposing you do believe in re-birth. Supposing you believe that that infant, that baby, is somebody else re-born. Well, it is presumably the re-birth of an adult, a mature person. So what has happened to that maturity, which will include a consciousness of other people? You

see what I mean? So that may be in abeyance, for reasons that perhaps we don't fully understand, the shock of death etc., etc. But if one does believe in re-birth at all, underneath even the child's or the infant's apparent self-absorption, due to its helpless physical condition, etc., well, the potential and even the recent experience of a more mature attitude is still present. You might perhaps, in the case of some babies, just have a lingering experience of that, even when you were born. But it could be very easily, as it were, over-shadowed if, as they are almost bound to be, your physical needs are uppermost and especially if these are initially frustrated, even to a slight extent. But apparently, going by what child psychologists say (they have not, obviously taken into account the possibility of re-birth) but going by what they say, from - well, it seems the very beginning, as far as they are concerned, at least, the child is this mass of intensely - well, not even subjective desires.

Sulocana: Only when it's gone wrong.

Marichi: No, I think it's got two sides. It's got either a selfish (inaudible.) ... or it's got an intense connection with the mother.

S: Yes.

Marichi: Again - their object.

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S: Again, there is an abeyance of this distinction of subject and object. But I would say, in that case, not an abeyance in the sense that subject/object is as it were, transcended; it is a lapse, as it were, into a preconscious state. The relation of that to the previous human existence (if one does believe in re-birth) is quite difficult to work out. This is one of the difficulties that those who do believe in re-birth have to explain. How is it that consciousness is not continuous from life to life? How is it that it gets sort of blotted out?

Joan: Could it be like, when you're ill, all your energies go into getting yourself well and then, once you've become well again, you continue as you were before?

S: Also, another point is that, in the course of our ordinary lives, our consciousness is bound up, perhaps to an extent that we can really hardly imagine, with our experience through our physical bodies, so that when the physical body is no longer there - as is the case at the time of death - well, we are virtually not there. If we haven't been accustomed, say, to meditative states of consciousness apart from the body, it's as though we don't exist. So, for all practical purposes, the continuity of consciousness is disrupted. We don't know where we are without our physical bodies. We just sort of blank out, there's a sort of swoon. This is what the Tibetan Book of the Dead tells us. Most people just go into a sort of swoon-like state and in that swoon-like state they're sort of re-born. Then they wake up and re-establish their consciousness, so to speak, on the basis of the new physical body.

Bonnie: It must be the baby's function to create ... (inaudible.) ... in the body as well and as quickly as possible. It's attachment to its mother is the most efficient way it can bring that about.

S: Yes. Anyway, to get back to the original point, in the case of the mature person, what we need to do is to learn, as I said, to acknowledge the object. I think this is an essential part of

our maturity, especially as it relates to other human beings. Very often, even in the course of our quite close communication with others, we do not acknowledge them as another subject. Yes? Well, when I say 'acknowledge as a subject' I don't mean 'as a subject appearing as an object', but as a subject, like ourselves. In other words, it is very difficult, almost impossible, for us to have an experience of another person as intense as our experience of ourselves, i.e. ourselves as subjects. Isn't it so? It's only just very rarely and occasionally that you actually enter into another person's subjectivity as subjectivity. Usually you come violently into conflict with another person's subjectivity, of which you are unconscious, because you're conscious of them only as an object, in conflict with yours. This is what very often happens, isn't it? If, say two people want the same thing. Well, far from uniting you it divides [123] you. But if you can sort of get a look into the other person's subjectivity, you think: "They're just the same as me. They want the same thing that I want." So surely you should be friends rather than enemies. But you're not friends, you are enemies because you see them as an object. You don't experience, or feel, their subjectivity. You don't empathize with their desire for that same object that you desire.

Verne: Does it tie up with what you were saying the other day about the chrysanthemum?

S: About the what?

Verne: The flower which two people ... (inaudible.) ...

S: Yes.

Verne: I was thinking that seems to tie up with the whole Sangha Refuge ... (inaudible.) ... communication, to the extent that you can enter into another person's experience ... (inaudible.) ... to that extent, Sangha Refuge is ... (inaudible.) ...

S: Well, yes, because in a Sangha - within a spiritual fellowship - you shouldn't see the other people as objects. This is a very difficult thing to describe because obviously we are trying to describe a state which, in a sense, transcends the subject/object distinction, in the terms of subjects and objects. So what you have to take, as it were, the spirit of what is said, rather than the mode of expression. But when you are, say, sitting in the midst of the Sangha, you shouldn't see, sitting around you, a lot of objects. It's as though you should see yourself looking out from other people's eyes. It's more like that.

Verne: That's where the metta practice really is valuable.

S: Yes. Well, metta prepares the ground for that, but actually it's almost a form of insight, which goes beyond metta, for which metta provides the basis and the foundation.

Noel: It can happen sometimes in communication exercises.

S: Yes, indeed. I think very often this is the nearest a lot of people do get to it. And then it's not as though you are communicating with another person as though you're the subject and the object's there; in a mysterious way there are two subjects. At least you get a glimpse of this for an instant.

Punyavati: It happened to me quite recently. I was listening to someone and I thought I

couldn't advise her unless I knew how she really felt. Then, just for a moment, my whole feeling ... (inaudible.) ... and I experienced the despair that that person was feeling.

S: So you could - yes?

Punyavati: At that moment I couldn't feel myself at all, I was experiencing her. It was very strange.

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S: Well, you could say that you cannot experience another person as an object. If you experience them just as an object, you're not experiencing them, because they're not an object, they're a subject. But how do you experience a subject as an object? Not as an object: This is where there cannot be a scientific knowledge of another person. There cannot be a science of people. You can't have a scientific psychology because psychology is about the mind, and it's people that have minds or that are minds. How can there be a scientific psychology: How can there be scientific history, how can there be scientific economics? No, you can't. This is to distort the subject matter. In fact, how can you have a science of life at all? You can't. You can't have a science of biology, even, I would say, maybe that's a bit extreme, or a science of botany. Probably a science of physics and astronomy, but I think that's about all. Chemistry ... yes

Voice: (inaudible.)

S: Yes, the more you approximate to consciousness, the less a science of that particular whatever - it - is (I was going to say 'object' but one shouldn't say 'object') is possible. You cannot have a science of people. You cannot have an anthropology or a sociology, because people are subjects not objects. You can't have a scientific understanding of people, or of human behaviour. Or, put it this way, (maybe that is too extreme); to the extent that people are people, to the extent that they are individuals, to the extent that they're creative and not reactive, not mechanical, you cannot have a science of people.

Marichi: Isn't that why, therefore, why ... (inaudible.) ... psychology tends to be a bit pathological ... (inaudible.) ...

S: Yes, indeed. The reactive mind, yes, there can't be a science of creativity. There can't be a science of the creative person. There can't be a science of the individual. There can't be a scientific knowledge of the individual. The only way you can know another person is by some mysterious almost intuitive, faculty of empathy in which mysteriously, at least for an instant, your subjectivity coincides with the subjectivity of another person; not that you as a subject know the other person as an object. I think collisions and difficulties between people arise when you, as a subject, look at them as an object.

There's a lot of talk nowadays about you mustn't use other people of the opposite sex as sex objects. It goes far beyond that. You're using people as objects, or regarding people as objects, of one kind or another, all the time. It is what we usually do. Hardly ever do we enter into another person's subjectivity.

Marichi: Is it possible to ... (inaudible.) ... you don't actually see their subjectivity ... you feel it ... (inaudible.) ...

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S: You just experience them as an object confronting you, perhaps fulfilling your subjective needs, or frustrating your subjective needs. I won't say 'You don't see them as an object', because you cannot but see them as an object. One can only use another sort of word and say, well, unless you empathize with them as a subject, that is how your experience will continue. You'll just go on seeing them as an object and treating them as an object.

Kay: You can go to the other extreme, can't you? If you're not experiencing yourself as a subject, if you're not in touch with yourself... I mean, I've seen other people do it and I've experienced it myself sometimes, that you almost turn into other people because you haven't got the balance of ...

S: Yes, but then I would say you are not into other people. You are over-regardful of other people as objects, as dangerous objects or harmful objects, that may impinge upon you unpleasantly. You are not aware of them - or not empathizing with them - as subjects. You are over-conscious of them as dangerous objects, and that's quite a different thing. That's not empathy. I think empathy is the key word. It's the best word that we seem to have.

Dhammadinna: Bhante, you started off by saying that it's important to acknowledge the object because we are intensely subjective, so it seems we first acknowledge the object and then go beyond that to experience their subjectivity.

S: That's a good point. Yes, indeed. You find with quite pathological people they don't seem, in some cases, to acknowledge the object as object ...

Dhammadinna: And that's an important stage ...

S: That's an important stage, yes. That there are other things around in the universe. And then that there are other people around in the universe.

Dhammadinna: And then to try to experience those other people as subjects.

S: Empathetically, yes.

Marichi: It's leaving home, isn't it? ... (inaudible.) ... where everything is separate ... (inaudible.) ... and then you see your connection.

S: Yes.

Voice: And then you can experience your mother as a person. (laughter)

S: Probably most people are unconscious of the extent to which they treat mother as an object, even when they're quite (apparently) grown-up. Mother just continues to be that nice, old, fat cushion, or whatever it might be that you see her as. Or that horrible, ordinary object that's always getting in your way. But eventually you realize, "Oh no, mother's a person. She's got feelings, just like me." (pause) Well, I think, to come back to the main subject matter of the chapter which, after all, is patience ...

Voices: No, it's not ... (laughter)

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S: Well, yes, it is, in a way, isn't it? Because if you really accept everything as transitory, you'll be more patient with things. And if you really, as it were, identify your subjectivity with other people's subjectivity, you'll be more patient with them, won't you, you'll understand them better. Anyway, so transitoriness 'witnessed in fleeting moments' - this is what it arose out of - 'means that this vessel-like work which existed at an earlier moment does not do so at a later one. That it seems to continue in the same way is because something else similar arises, like the stream of a waterfall.' All right, let's carry on, then. Would someone like to read (ii)?

"Of the two kinds of transitoriness of sentient being as the inner essence, (a) that of others is as follows. All sentient beings in the three world spheres are transitory. As is stated in the Lalitavistara (page 173) 'The three world-spheres are transitory like a cloud in the sky' "

S: So you've got the transitoriness of the objective universe, the so-called gross transitoriness, the so-called subtle transitoriness. So one comes on now to the two kinds of transitoriness of sentient beings. First of all there's two kinds of transitoriness of sentient beings as the inner essence, presumably the inner essence of the world receptacle, as it were. Then it goes on to transitoriness ... yes, it isn't much of an explanation of transitoriness of sentient beings. But what I was going to say was it's almost as though here beings are regarded as objects. In a sense they are regarded as objects because, just as the world is out there, beings are out there, and beings are part of the world. They're what is in the world receptacle, and what is in the world receptacle is just as much an object as the world receptacle in which they are. But, as what I've just been saying has indicated, that isn't the last word on the subject as regards other beings whom you, to begin with, objectively perceive or perceive as objects. With regard to people, with regard to consciousness, as I said, subject and object are only modes of our experience. Just as being and non-being, space and time, are modes of our experience, so we are not subject and we are not object. One can say that we transcend subject and we transcend object. So if you know yourself only as a subject you do not fully know yourself. If you know the other person only as object, you do not know him fully as object. In other words, you have to see yourself through the eyes of another, as object, and you see yourself objectively', as we say, and you also have to experience the other, that you normally perceive as object, as subject. So, in that kind of way, you experience yourself though not yourself simply as subject in a one-sided sense. You experience yourself as both subject and object, and neither subject nor object. In other words, you have a sort of break-through into Reality. And this is what happens in the course of some meditation, especially those meditations in which you - you know, visualization practices - in which [127] you think of the visualized object as you. Or you think of yourself as the visualized object, in other words, the Bodhisattva whose particular visualization practice you are doing. In this way, the subject/object distinction is sort of broken down. It persists but it isn't sort of ultimate. It loses its hardness, its rigidity. You are dissolved into a state in which - yes - the subject/object distinction exists but you are able to see right through it. It doesn't confine you any more, and you see yourself objectively. You experience others subjectively. Not that you only see yourself objectively. You experience yourself subjectively and see yourself objectively. You see others objectively still but you experience them subjectively. That's the hardest part of it. And this is why I said the Bodhisattva feels others' sufferings as his own. His effort to emancipate himself is his effort to emancipate all living beings. Do you see this?

Marichi: But he has to continue to ... (inaudible.) ...as well as experience ... (inaudible.)

S: Yes.

Marichi: Otherwise he gets lost in the mass of ... (inaudible.) ...

S: Right. Yes, indeed.

Paloma: Do you think that perhaps to experience someone subjectively one can just try and move like they would, to experience ...

S: You mean move physically?

Paloma: Move physically, or ... it just reminds me that when I came on the train into Norwich, I was sitting opposite an elderly women and she was blind. She just - she couldn't see anything. I found this very strange and I tried to feel what it was like. If I could see - well, I could see, and I tried to move rather like she moved with all that insecurity. There was nothing that I could touch ...

S: Well, I mentioned, at the very beginning, when I was talking about people projecting their voices, that all these things have a meaning, so that the way you speak, the way you gesture, the way you walk, the way you run, the way you smile, all these things have a meaning, they're all expressions of your particular mental attitude, in one way or another. So if you want to experience a particular kind of mental attitude you can, no doubt, get back to it, or get into it, to some extent by reproducing those movements, as you call them, which are the natural expression, usually, of that particular state. This can help but it is still more inferential, perhaps, than directly experiential. But it can help.

Paloma: I have noticed it is very different from looking at a person as a person moves this way and that. You just notice that they move but you don't actually feel how they move.

S: Yes, quite.

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Paloma: And by doing this, it's so strange, you feel as if you were blind, or as if you were in dark clothes, if you see someone in dark clothes. Like if you put the dark clothes on and you feel very differently. And also speaking ...

S: Well, that's why I did suggest, not altogether jokingly, that maybe the ladies in the Movement should wear rainbow scarves like Dakinis, because then they might start feeling like Dakinis. You see what I mean? But one can go even further than that, because the Zen artist empathises with the bamboo that he's going to paint. You can empathize with the bamboo to such an extent that you feel the way that the bamboo grows. It's not as though you just look at it from the outside with a cold, hard, camera-like eye, and then you reproduce what you see. No, you can actually feel the way in which the bamboo grows and you sort of identify with the bamboo, so we are told. Out of that feeling of identification, as well as the result of your objective observation of the bamboo, you paint your picture of the bamboo. You create the bamboo on paper, as it were.

Marichi: Doesn't this identification have to be selective?

S: Yes and no. You can identify with the tiger, yes? You can identify with the cobra.

Marichi: You can identify with a worm.

S: With a worm.

Marichi: Is that helpful? (laughter)

S: Well, I think this sort of identification exists on different levels. The empathy exists on different levels. In a healthy, living person, I think you actually empathize on a certain level of your being with everything that lives, with everything that exists, with the whole of organic nature. But that doesn't mean that you, as an individual human being are therefore going to behave like any one of those beings. You see what I mean?

Marichi: It's empathy rather than identification?

S: Yes, yes. You're not going to behave like a tiger, you're not going to behave like a cobra, because that same life with which you empathize in them has taken a higher form in you and you're going to behave in accordance with that. But I think the whole trend, perhaps, of our modern education and scientific outlook trains us or encourages us to see things in terms of a one-sided objectivity and to lose our, as it were, subjective empathy with things.

Kay: As a child, I remember I used to pretend I was blind. I quite naturally tried to become like other beings like that and sort of go round for half the day blindfolded. And in a way that was - I was trying to feel what it was like to be blind.

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S: I have heard at some schools, I heard at a girls school, where for one day every term all the girls were blindfolded and made to go round like that and actually experience what it was like to be blind. It might be a useful thing to do, just once at least.

Sulochana: I recently met a man who was deaf from the age at ten, and it is amazing how he can describe how it feels, and what he had to overcome. He said his sense of hearing didn't disappear, the actual mechanism was damaged, but he still had all the previous noises to deal with. But with an effort he had to quieten all these noises all the time, which is amazing because one doesn't realize that a deaf person ... And he knew about contemplation, so he was very interested in this book I had with me, and I couldn't get it away from him. In fact I am not going to, I am going to give it to him. He seemed to recognize immediately that he had already been working on his state of mind.

[Tea break]

Marichi: ... where he says he feels the people who survived were the people who made a clean break, who have identified who they were to some extent. They don't over-identify with the objects of their confession. Keats never ceased in his struggle against TB, nor in his last moments relinquished his hopes of being among the English Poets. When he could have over-identified with the TB and sunk somewhere but he had this idea of who he was and what he was trying to do and that sort of gave him a sense of being able to empathize with other subjects. He didn't lose that objective quality as well.

S: Yes, it is quite important that one should maintain a sort of balance between the two.

Marichi: I was just thinking about this point of view; recognizing the object.

Punyavati: It reminds me of the line of the Ancient Mariner, when he was left on the boat and was feeling very sorry for himself. There he was looking down into the sea and he sees all these living beings and the beauty at them and suddenly he is lifted out of his own suffering.

S: Yes, and he "blessed them unaware".

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Punyavati: And then things start changing for him.

S: Yes, because sometimes we do become very wrapped up in ourselves; very oblivious of other people and what was going on in other people and how things are affecting them.

Punyavati: I sometimes think that when we are like that and when we come across people who are having a difficult time, sometimes it can lift us out of our own moods. That's when we can really experience metta; when we can respond to someone else and forget about our own troubles.

Marichi: So as long as you don't sort of develop a sad attitude towards sadness. You have got to have the basis within metta.

S: There is a line in Tennyson somewhere: he speaks of "a painless sympathy with pain". But maybe a "painless empathy with pain" would be better. You empathize with the person but that doesn't actually necessarily mean that you feel their pain in the same way that they feel it. You empathize with them, not with their pain.

Marichi: Yes; Scott Fitzgerald wrote how Lenin would never have succeeded if he had merged himself in the Proletariat, and when Tolstoy tried doing that, it didn't work. It was much better keeping separate from the peasantry.

S: Yes. Mm.

Sulochana: (You hear of people who are extra sensitive to) other people. People who work in hospital for example ... they have to consciously clear themselves ...

S: I am sort of just wondering - I am not sure - I am just wondering whether they really experience those people as subjects, in the way we have been talking about, or whether they are affected by the things those people are going through as just objects, as it were. Do you see what I mean? For instance, if someone is in a very sad, mentally disturbed state, well that is a sort of objective fact of the environment as it were, and you can experience it as that and be affected by it without empathizing with that person as a person, as a subject. It is perhaps you are only able to survive under those sort of conditions if you can really empathize with the people who are going through those things as people, not simply just feel or be sensitive to or perceive their particular unhealthy mental states.

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Punyavati: Doctors and nurses were encouraged to spend, if they were ill, to stay in the same hospital, so that they knew how the patients were treated. And my attitude changed a lot when I was there. I spent about a month in the same ward and worked there again as a nurse and I spent most of that time crying, I was so unhappy. I felt there was no human contact. It helped me change my attitude towards people afterwards.

: I think that is the training. It just goes towards seeing people as objects or if you are soft or sentimental "people are suffering", but it never gets to the stage of what we have just been talking about, empathizing with those people, which is the only happy way to do things.

S: But I was saying just a few minutes ago that the whole trend of our education encourages us to adopt this sort of scientific, pseudo-objective attitude towards life, and this is very one-sided. We have to try to counteract it. In many quarters people are trying to counter it. I think the whole ecology movement in some ways is part of an attempt to counterbalance the purely, as it were, scientific, as it were, objective, exploitative attitude towards nature. You know, just treating nature as an object, not feeling with nature, not having an empathy with the rest of organic life on this planet.

Kaye: Also, what seems to happen is that it goes ... The opposite of that is to become sentimental and it goes wrong somewhere; to not actually ...

S: Well, sometimes, these sort of people are just working out something subjective, even a problem of their own, of which they are not fully conscious.

Paloma: I was just wondering whether we really experience ourselves and others as objects. Because I think that we even treat ourselves as objects ...

S: Because you know we treat ourselves to a great extent as others treat us. We take our cue from other people to a great extent. For instance, look at the way we treat our bodies. We take our cue for the way we treat our bodies, especially when we are sick, from doctors. We sort of pump drugs into them, and all that sort of thing, and that's the way we think: we [132] think something has gone wrong with the mechanism, so we have got to tighten a nut here, loosen a bolt there. This is the sort of way we think of our bodies, isn't it? Probably we pick this up from other people and especially from doctors.

Paloma: Also about feelings

S: This is touching on it on a quite controversial area, but one gets the impression that when one reads discussions about abortion and things like that that the body here is also being treated as an object, even by the very people in some cases whose body it happens to be. As though you are just thinking in terms of tinkering with the mechanism. So the more one thinks about it, the more one feels that our whole outlook is very one-sided and this is what Blake was protesting against when it first started to happen to any extent. You know, protesting against "single vision", as he called it, the purely scientific vision, that is seeing things just as objects existing in a geometrical space, seeing them as just possessed of length, breadth and heights - and no, as it were, inner dimension. He called that "The Banishing of the Imagination".

Anyway, we have got in a way quite far from our text, haven't we? It is in a way the fault of

the text because the two kinds of transitoriness of sentient beings of the inner essence are as follows: all sentient beings in the three world spheres are transitory. But it isn't enough to see beings, other people, just as transitory objects. Anyway, let's get on. Let's see how far we have come: we have dealt with the transitoriness of the object of the universe, gross and subtle; the text just mentioned the transitoriness of sentient beings, in the sense of first the transitoriness of others, and then it comes on now to transitoriness of one's own self. Let's read that. It has got various sub-divisions.

(b) Transitoriness of myself, means that I too am powerless to remain and have to depart. This can be known in a double way: (1) in discerning it in our own stream of life and (2) by drawing the conclusion from that of others.

S: Yes. Let us just make a few comments on this and then go on to the detailed discussion of it in the following paragraphs.

First of all, this expression, "our own stream at life". Do you know why this is used?

Noel: Process of our own ageing.

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S: It is not quite that. The Sanskrit term is santara - it means a sort of continuity, it is the term that Buddhist writers use to avoid using the words "self" or "being", which would suggest something unchanging. "Our stream of life" means us, we are a stream of psycho-physical states, not a thing that persists. Do you see what I mean? So "transitoriness of myself" means that, "I too am powerless to remain and have to depart. This can be known, in a double way, in discerning it in our own stream of life, and two by drawing the conclusion from that of others." "Have to depart" means of course "have to die". We can experience our own transitoriness by first of all experiencing our own will to live; and then of course coming up against the fact that we are going to die. And we can observe it in other people: they want to go on living, but they die. So "transitoriness of myself" here means that "I too am powerless to remain and have to depart". This is perhaps transitoriness in its most acute form: when your own will to persist, to go on living, in your present form is frustrated by the fact of death particularly. This really brings you up against transitoriness. You may not be greatly bothered by the transitoriness of the Roman Empire, or the transitoriness of the tree growing in your garden, but the transitoriness of your own life: the transitoriness in the sense of your own desire to go on living on the present terms comes up against the fact that you have to depart, comes up against the fact of death and that makes you at least momentarily more aware of the fact of transitoriness than anything else, perhaps. So one can understand or realize the transitoriness of oneself, either by actually experiencing it oneself, especially at the time of death perhaps, or actually seeing it, you know, in the case of others how they are brought up against this fact of death, how they have to depart even though they want to stay.

So, "in the first case": would someone like to go on reading? This is the detailed explanation.

(1) In the first case, the development of concentrated attention comprises (i) concentration on death and (ii) the signs thereof, (iii) on life as it draws to its end and (iv) on separation.

S: All right, now. The detailed explanation of that item by item.

(I) 'Concentrated attention to death' is the thought that I shall not remain in the world for long, but will have to move on to another life.

S: This is sort of reflecting and meditating on this, really realizing this, making it part of one's actual experience. And this is of course what one does when one actually meditates upon death in a systematic way, or when one does the element practice, that is to say, not just visualizing the [134] visual symbols of the elements, but recognizes that whatever is of earth in one's body will have to be given back to the Earth element in the Universe, and in a way one experiences the process of one's own dissolution, at least in imagination. So in the first case, this concentrated attention to death is the thought - not just a thought in the ordinary sense - it is more like realization, an experience, that "I shall not remain in the world for long, but will have to move on to another life". The second part is a bit difficult sometimes for people to accept. Nowadays again this is dependant upon belief in rebirth.

(ii) 'Concentrated attention to the signs of death is the thought that life is drawing to an end, breathing stops, the body becomes a corpse and mind must wander forth.

S: Presumably, or apparently, this is still with regard to oneself. The time comes when you recognize the signs of death appearing in yourself: breathing stops, the heat goes out of the body and so on; but of course we can start recognizing these signs of approaching death even before then. You know, they are closely associated with the signs of approaching old age, the joints become stiff, you cannot move about so quickly and easily, maybe after a while you cannot move about at all - you have to remain sitting in a chair or lying in bed, and maybe you cannot even move your hands and feet easily. You start experiencing all sorts of aches and pains, your vision becomes quite dim; you do not hear very well, then you know, well, you are well on the way! (Laughter) The signs of old age have appeared, they merge with the signs of approaching death, your breathing becomes difficult, and so on. One recognizes these things in oneself, or in others. "The breathing stops, the body becomes the corpse, the mind must wander forth".

Bonnie: I started working at an Old Peoples' Home on Saturday mornings. It's a home for old ladies. It's sort of like a four-hour meditation on death and decay. I find it a bit morbid but also there is just no getting away from it: once a week I have to look at it for four hours. It was quite patent, and it was also quite tragic because a lot of these women had ... are living in a state, the opposite state to what we are trying to attain through this ... They have been wealthy and had everything material and lots of them have had very good family backgrounds, servants and so on. And suddenly all that has been stripped away and they are paying an exorbitant fee to live in this home, and they are hating having to pay such an incredible amount, and they are all desperately unhappy, and resentful, and it is just the whole thing is such a horrid end. And of course their mental states are getting worse day by day and deteriorating.

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S: And presumably the people who run that sort of establishment are doing it mainly for money, as a commercial proposition. I remember I used to visit a very old Friend, who eventually had to move into a Nursing Home of this sort. She was at that time about 85 or 86. I used to go and see her once a week for some months, and there were plenty of people in this ward, in this nursing home for very old people, in their 90s, and she used to talk to me about them quite a lot when I went to see her. It was quite evident among other things that none of

them really faced the fact that they were very, very old and could die at any time. You know, this was something that was just not spoken about amongst them; and if and when one of them did die, it was hushed up - you know, everybody pretended that it hadn't happened. No one said, "Well, sorry to lose poor old Mrs So-and-so." No, no one referred to her. It was as though they hadn't noticed that she hadn't appeared for breakfast that morning, and the people running the place didn't say anything about it. They just passed it over. Maybe some weeks later they might refer to her as maybe someone who had gone away, or wasn't in their nursing home any more, but no reference to the fact of death. There was this sort of conspiracy of silence being kept up. But what was even more pitiable, in a way, from what she told me, it was evident that amongst these very old people, intense feuds developed. Intense enmities, to an extraordinary degree, and she herself I am afraid was having her own quarrels and her own little feuds, which she would tell me about. Her own very bitter complaints.

It wasn't a very happy or a very healthy atmosphere. They were all sort of retired, aged gentlefolk. That was their sort of official description. I think sometimes that lower down in the social scale things are a bit more open, a bit more healthy; but on that level they certainly weren't. And that is a pity. And it makes one think or reflect that maybe this is one of the things that we could do in the FWBO, at least for our own members, as they get old. Provide a positive environment in which one can face the fact of approaching death quite openly and quite happily, and not have to not talk about it or make a conspiracy of silence. Everybody pretend that everybody else is going to go on living for ever.

All right, (iii).

(iii) 'Concentrated attention to life as it draws to its end' is the thought that a year has just passed and a month gone by; that since yesterday a day has lapsed; that now a moment has just passed and that in this way life becomes shorter every second. In the 'Byan.chub.sems.dpa' i spyod.pa.la 'jug.pa' ('Bodhicaryavatara II, 40) it is said:

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Without waiting day or night, this life is continuously on the losing side;
And while the remainder decreases and its very existence comes to naught,
why should people like myself not die?

S: Yes, well, life is getting shorter. This is something that you start realizing only when you pass the half-way mark. You start realizing it seriously or effectively ... only another 30 years, another 20 years. Well, not that you know that for sure: there might not be another day left, for all you know. But, looking at it perhaps statistically, what you might reasonably expect, without being too confident about it, another 20 years another 30 years, another 10 years, another 5 years; Oh, well, maybe only another 2 or 3 years; it's getting shorter all the time. Maybe a time comes when you think quite genuinely, "Well, I don't know whether I am going to last out the week, I don't know whether I am going to last out the night". When you go to bed at night, you don't know whether you are going to wake up alive in the morning. You don't know these things. So all the time life is constantly diminishing. So, at the same time, one has to be careful how one dwells upon this. Because it can make you morbid, it can make you depressed. You need also to develop sufficient emotional positivity to be able to make that sort of reflection - well, in a sense an exhilarating experience, so that you live in the real present more and more positively and skilfully, all of the time, not that you just get depressed thinking what a short while you have to live.

Marichi: That would happen if you hadn't really done anything that you wanted to do in life.

S: Yes, or if you felt that your life had been a failure, a waste of time.

Marichi: So I suppose this sense of time moving can make that clearer, that we should decide what we really want to do, and do it.

S: It is again a question at following a middle way. You don't want to think about such things so much that they make you depressed or make you inactive. But on the other hand you don't want to be completely unmindful and forgetful of this. So it is good if in middle life you can think, "Well, with luck, a good solid 20 to 30 years, I can do a lot in that time. I know where I stand now. I am reasonably experienced. I know what I want from life. I know what I want to do. The path is clear; all I have got to do is get down to it. I am at my peak now." Well, it is never too late, even if you are 50 or 55 you can still say that you are at your peak. Some [137] few weeks ago someone happened to ask me how old I was. I said, rather rudely, "Well, I shall be 55 in August," so he said, "55? You're in the prime at life, physically and mentally!" So I thought, "Well, thank you very much!" [Laughter] I thought, "Well, maybe I am". But you can think that when you are 65. In a sense you are in the prime of life if you can move about, you are not physically incapacitated, you have no illness, with all that 50, 60 years of experience behind you, yes, you should be in your prime in a sense. Even when you are 80 perhaps, if you are not actually physically disabled. What does it matter if you cannot run fast? - that is nothing at all. That doesn't affect or improve your human functioning. Perhaps you can't even walk fast, but does a human being as such need to walk fast? (Laughter) It doesn't actually impair anything important or essential. You can even ride about in your bath chair and still be in the prime at life, from a purely human point of view.

Anyway, let's go on to (iv).

(iv) 'Concentrated attention to separation' is the thought that my present friends, wealth and body, all at which I esteem so much, will not always be with me, but will quickly depart. As it is said in the 'Byan.chub.sems.dpa'i spyod.pa.la 'jug.pa' (Bodhicaryavatara II, 35):

Should I not have known that

I would have to give up everything and depart from hence?

S: Yes, let's just talk about that. " 'Concentrated attention to separation' is the thought that my present friends, wealth and body, all of them, which I esteem so much, will not always be with me but will quickly depart." Start with the last one: "with the present body". We are so attached to this particular body. We are identified with this body, yes? But within the perspective of rebirth, you have had hundreds, you have had thousands of bodies, some healthy, some unhealthy, some attractive, some unattractive, some male, some female, so why identify particularly with this particular one? Why be so attached to it? You can have another body in a few more years, and another after that. What does it matter if this one is worn out a bit, or creaks a bit? Well, you can get a fresh, new, young body shortly, so why be attached to this one? I think if one does believe in rebirth, it is a very useful perspective because you can think of all these bodies sort of strung out along the line at your real continuity. That you are not the body, that you are not short and fat, or tall and thin, and not quintessentially male or quintessentially female. You can think in those terms too or you can think, you are not quintessentially beautiful, or [138] ugly - it changes according to the different body from time

to time. So the perspective of rebirth is a very useful one if one is able to believe that. Certainty it is an essential part of traditional Buddhist teaching. So don't be so attached to the present body. You are going to be separated from it anyway.

And then, wealth, well, whatever you have got: your own possessions, your house, your garden, your chair, your books, some people get so attached to these things. They become their very life. You spill coffee on somebody's carpet, well, it is a major tragedy in their life in some cases. Well, isn't it? You must have some mothers like that! You go and disarrange one chair and they don't like it; you disarrange the cushions. I heard of a woman not so long ago who didn't allow her husband to sit in the sitting room when he came home from work because he might disarrange the cushions - she couldn't stand that. So people get so attached to their wealth, their possessions. They not only want to take it all with them, they want to take it all with them exactly as it is!

It is pitiable in the case of old people. Some people profess to feel sorry for old people who have to move into homes because they cannot take all their possessions with them. They cannot take all their tables and all their chairs, all their cupboards and all the things they have accumulated. Well, in a way it is a pity, but in a way isn't it a pity that they have become so attached to those things? That they cannot give them up happily towards the end of their lives? Which would seem to be the natural thing to do. It would seem to be the natural thing to do as you get older and older to give away all your superfluous possessions, to disburden yourself and to keep only just a few barely essential items. But it is as though so many old people, even are encouraged to keep everything around them, all the things they have got and accumulated over the years. It gives them a sense of security. It shouldn't give them that, they shouldn't have to depend for their sense of security on all these familiar objects around them. It is going to make it worse for them when they die, because they will all be taken away, all at once, suddenly. So it is much better if, as an old person, you can just leave yourself with a bed, a table, a chair and a small cupboard, with a bookcase, and that is that.

Marichi: Perhaps nobody has a sense that when you are dying you won't miss it; that that is that. That they don't have this sense that they might feel things going.

S: Yes, right.

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Punyavati: What I found when I worked in geriatrics, there were all these possessions crammed in their bags, and they only had a locker; but it is all memories of the past - they didn't live in the present any more. It is always "When we were young ..." or in the past.

S: Well, it is a form of wealth, it is a sort of mental wealth. And at course it isn't bad to look back over the past, even to rejoice at what has happened in the past. But to live in the past instead of in the present, that is not helpful.

Punyavati: It was like possessions, those memories. They just hang on to them.

S: To refer to Dickens: Dickens' "Great Expectations", Miss Havisham, who just remains living on her bridal day when she was disappointed - still wearing her bridal dress, 30, 35 years later. The wedding cake is still there, uncut, covered with cobwebs. She is living in the past. But lots of people do that.

Kaye: But there is also the thing that the geriatric wards are so unpleasant. That people do not usually want to move into them, because of the feeling of coldness and unfriendliness, they want to take things that mean something to them with them to fill up the emptiness of the ward.

Marichi: But isn't the emptiness perhaps caused by people hanging on to memories? Because they cannot really be there in the present.

S: You don't want to be so much with the other people. And admittedly it must be unpleasant to be catapulted amongst all these strange people, but you shield yourself from them with all these little mementoes. But then again, if people have been living like that all their lives, you cannot expect them to change suddenly when they become very old. The difference at outlook and attitude has to be developed much earlier on. It will be quite interesting in a few years time, when within the Movement itself there is a generation at quite old people - that will be interesting, when you have got dozens and dozens of order members in their eighties (Laughter). Well, that might include some of you one day - the sort of ancient and venerable figures from the past (Laughter) or maybe not from the past - they will hopefully be very much in the present, very much on the ball, even at 80, 90. It will be very interesting.

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Noel: We can have a society where we have all ages integrated, whereas at present we tend to segregate ...

Bonnie: It is sad for them that they never see children around and they are not allowed to do any gardening, and not allowed to pick a flower and arrange flowers or do anything creative, like cooking perhaps or you know with people who haven't cultivated a liking for books or anything like that. So they can only watch cricket on television (Laughter).

S: Oh dear! Even the ladies?

Bonnie: Well, that is when the gentlemen are present.

S: When they have to watch the cricket!

Bonnie: There is usually one gentleman present.

S: Then everybody has to put up with cricket.

All right. What "present friends"? "My present friends ... which I esteem so much, will not always be with me, but will quickly depart". What about that reflection? Is that a bit different, do you think? What sort of friends are meant here? I think it means worldly friends, people to whom you are bound by ties of attachment and custom and habit. Not so much spiritual friends. And you are not attached to spiritual friends in the same sort of way. But you have to leave your spiritual things, at least so far as their physical presence is concerned. But one can perhaps say that you are not necessarily completely out of touch with them, even though you die. Just as you are not completely out of touch with them even when you are separated physically in some other way. You can feel very much in touch with them. Maybe you have your spiritual friends around you when you die; maybe reading from the Book at the Dead for you, and maybe after your consciousness is separated from the physical body you are still

aware of the physical friendly presences, in a different kind of way. But not that you are attached to them or depending on them: but that you are all on the same wavelength, and that the presence or absence of the physical body makes little difference.

All right: carry on with the reading then.

This concentrated attention to death should be developed in the following ninefold manner deriving from the three main heads of (A) the certainty of my death; (B) of my not knowing when it will come; and (C) of nothing following me to the hereafter.

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(A) There are three reasons for this certainty: I must die because (i) there is no one who has not done so before, (ii) the body is composite and (iii) the life ebbs from moment to moment.

S: Are you getting a little lost in all these subdivisions?

Voices: Yes.

S: Perhaps we should go back a bit - go back to the beginning and recapitulate - to get our bearings again. The text starts off by saying that we have the Buddha nature as our driving force; we have the human body as our working basis; we have spiritual friends as contributory cause of our development. So how is it that we have not already attained Buddhahood? This is where we started.

We haven't attained Buddhahood because we have come under the power of four obstacles, by which the attainment of Buddhahood is prevented. These are: attachment to sensuous experiences during this life; attachment to sensual pleasures in this world; attachment to self-complacency; and ignorance about the means of realizing truth. To dispel each of the four obstacles there is a remedy.

The remedy for the first of the obstacles, that is to say attachment to sensuous experiences in this life, is concentrated attention to transitoriness. So that is the particular remedy for that particular obstacle with which we are concerned in this particular chapter.

So then we go on to concern ourselves with the transitoriness of the universe as a whole - its gross transitoriness, which seems to mean its transitoriness as a whole.

And then its subtle transitoriness, which seems to mean its transitoriness within the whole, as it were, the minor changes as distinct from major changes.

And then we go on to concern ourselves with the transitoriness of the individuals who live within that universe, and we concern ourselves with individuals in the sense of others and individuals in the sense of self. So now we are on still the transitoriness of our own individual self. So we are developing that in greater and greater detail. We are concentrating on death, the signs of death, and life as it draws to an end, and on separation; and we go on now to develop it in a still more concentrated, ninefold manner under three separate headings.

Does that make it a bit clearer?

Dhammadinna: Yes.

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S: Maybe it should all be set out in chart form.

Let us go on then. "(a) the certainty at my death, (b) at my not knowing when it will come and (c) nothing following me to the hereafter". All right, let us go on to (a)(i), (ii) and (iii). First (a)(i), the first quotation. There are a lot of quotations here.

(I) The first reason given by the Teacher rTa.dbyans (Asvaghosa):

It is doubtful whether you will hear
Or see anyone
Who did not die, or who has been born,
Either on earth or in the heavens.

S: So first at all, one considers the certainty of one's death. The fact that one will certainly die. A lot of people don't seem too sure about it, especially when you are young, you are not really convinced you are going to die, but you will die. It is certain. There are reasons for that. The first reason is given by the teacher Asvaghosa. Well, has one, in the course of one's study of history, ever come across an example of someone who was born, whether on earth or in a heavenly realm, who did not ever die?

: (Indecipherable)

S: Well, do you think that is reliable? Anyone within historical times?

Noel: Well, if they were never heard of again, it doesn't mean that they went on living necessarily.

S: So it is doubtful whether you will see or hear anyone who did not die who had been born. Once you are born, death seems inevitable. So this is as it were the proof provided by empirical evidence.

Marichi: Scientific fact.

S: Scientific fact. If we study history, is there really any well ascertained instance of anybody being born but not dying? There isn't as far as we know. So it seems that in accordance with the principle of uniformity of nature, you can safely infer that you, being a human being, having been born, will very likely also die, will almost certainly die. That seems a pretty safe inference. So that is the first argument.

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: Like that story about the mother having to find a house in which there had been no deaths.

S: Yes; you realize the universality at death.

And then there are various other examples given. Would you like to carry on with the next prose section and quotation?

Thus all the sages of old who had magic powers and infinite supernatural knowledge, had to die without having found a place of refuge, where there is no death or where liberation might be obtained, to say nothing of people like ourselves. Therefore:

The great sages with their five kinds of miraculous knowledge,
Though they were able to walk far in the sky,
Could not go to a place
Where there is no death.

S: Not to speak of ordinary people. Even sages who develop the five kinds of miraculous knowledges, that is to say, who could know the thoughts of others, who could see things happen at a distance, hear things happening at a distance and so on, even they have to die, even they didn't succeed in living forever, even they, though they were able to fly through the air, could not go to a place where there is no death. This is just reinforcing the point.

All right, let's go on then. Let's proceed to the next section.

But this is not all. Even the saintly Pratyekabuddhas and the Great Sravakas, the Arhants, had in the end to give up their bodies, to say nothing of people like ourselves. As it is said in the 'Ched.du brjod.pa'i tshoms' (Udanavarga 1, 23):

When even the Pratyekabuddhas
And the Sravakas of the Buddha
Had to give up their bodies,
What about ordinary people?

S: Not to speak of miraculous knowledge. Even genuine spiritual development will not save you from death. You may be a Pratyekabuddha - a private or solitary Buddha - you may be a Sravaka, an enlightened disciple of the Buddha, they had to give up their bodies, they had to die; so what about ordinary people? What about you?

We might in the West sort of change that a bit; say, "Well, even people like Julius Caesar and Napoleon, they had to die. Even people like Shakespeare, Milton, even Shelley had to die, Keats had to die; well, what about you and me?"

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All right, carry on.

Finally, since the Nirmanakaya of the Perfectly Enlightened One, adorned with the major and minor marks of beauty and possessing the nature of the Vajra, had to be given up, what can be said of people like ourselves. The Teacher dPa'.bo (i.e. Asvaghosa) said:

When even the Body of the Buddha,
The Vajrakaya adorned with the major and minor marks,
Is transitory,
What can one say about other embodied people
Whose bodies are without solidity like weeds?

S: Why are weeds particularly mentioned? How are they without solidity?

Paloma: They are torn out ...

Marichi: A bit arbitrary, sort of not particularly conscious.

Sulochana: When you say weedy, it means sort of spindly, and not very (unclear).

S: Yes, indeed one knows that even if one does only a little gardening.

Marichi: It is a certain sort of solidity, isn't it? I experience people with little consciousness as having a sort of gross solidity, whereas more consciousness means being much less fixed; an indeterminate solidity.

S: So one should develop the certainty with regard to the fact that one is going to die in this particular way: just realizing that you are not going to be the exception. Everybody else has to die, everybody else who has been born. There is no reason why you should not. But it is very difficult to apply to yourself. This comes back to something that we were talking about: you see others as objects and you experience yourself as subject, so what might seem perfectly natural when it happens to objects, doesn't seem so natural when transferred to you as subject. Perhaps this is why this kind of argument we don't usually find very convincing or feel very convincing. All right: they all die, but they are objects. I feel myself as subject - I just feel so alive. That seems to make a difference - but then they also are experiencing themselves as subjects, just as you experience yourself as subject, nonetheless they have to die.

All right, "the certainty at death": the next argument, as it were:

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(ii) The certainty of death due to the body being composite, means that since everything that is composite is transitory, it is also perishable. As is stated in the 'Ched.du brjod.pa'i tshoms' (Udanavarga 1, 1):

Alas! everything composite is transitory,
Subject to birth and death.

Therefore, since this body is not non-composite, it is transitory and there is certainty of death.

S: "Therefore, since this body is not non-composite, it is transitory and there is certainty of death". Things are either composite or non-composite. If they are composite, it means that they are put together of different elements. That means they can be taken apart again: so the body is a composite object, a composite thing. It was put together, it has been put together; it consists of various parts. Buddhism analyses those parts for meditation purposes systematically. Those parts can be taken apart again. That means death, dissolution. So, you are certain that death is inevitable, just because the body is a composite thing, and composite things are subject to dissolution.

So, you can know the certainty of death from the facts of the universality of death, and you can know it from the truth, if you like, of the composite nature at the physical body - the parts that compose it cannot be held together indefinitely.

All right, (iii).

(iii) This certainty because life ebbs from moment to moment, means that life continually passes away and so approaches death. Though this may not be conspicuous all the time, yet it can be compared with an arrow shot by an archer, water falling over a steep cliff or a person led to a place of execution.

S: So "This certainty, because life ebbs from moment to moment, means that life continually passes away, and so approaches death". This, as it were, assumes that you know that the span at human life usually covers a certain number of years. Well, let us say a hundred years. But you know that all the time, time is passing, so that you are getting nearer and nearer and nearer to the time of death, so that means that death is certain. If time could stand still, and say you were always 25 years old, and death never came nearer, well, then you need not be certain that death was inevitable, because it wasn't getting any nearer. But it actually is getting nearer all the time, so it is inevitable that sooner or later you arrive at the particular moment. It is certain that your life-span will be exhausted one day, it is certain therefore that you will die, so that you know the fact of the certainty of death from this also, or in this way also.

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Let us go on to the explanation of the first simile.

The first simile is to be understood in the sense that life not pausing a moment quickly approaches death, just as an arrow shot by a skilful archer does not stay in one place in the sky, but swiftly reaches its destination. As is said:

Just as an arrow shot by a skilful archer,
As soon as he has pulled the string,
Does not wait but quickly reaches its target,
So also is the life of men.

S: So there are two points here. One is that the arrow quickly reaches its target. It is as though as soon as you are born, you are on your way to your death, quickly. Not only that, there is a slight difference between the prose and the poetry here, the prose says, "Just as an arrow shot by a skilful archer does not stay in one place in the sky," it just does not hang in the sky, it is moving towards its object swiftly, all the time. It is just like that with human life. It is moving towards death quickly, all the time. The verse says, "Just as an arrow shot by a skilful archer, as soon as he has pulled the string, does not wait" In other words, you are approaching death from the minute you are born. You can look at this in another way: in terms of biology. I am not sure of the precise details but it goes roughly like this: your life, from a physical point of view, as a human being, as a human body at least, starts with the subdivision and then multiplication of the original cell, doesn't it? The cells go on multiplying at an incredible rate in the first moments of life, and that rate, once it has reached a certain point, starts slowing down. So when is it that it reaches its point of maximum intensity, in the sense of the greatest degree of multiplication of cells - the greatest rate? Does anyone know that?

Joan: At the age at 25?

S: I am talking about the rate of multiplication. I think it is more like 3 days. Yes? So it means that the rate at growth slows down at 3 days, and so on for the rest of your life. So in a sense you start dying when you are 3 days old. You go by the rate of multiplication of cells; and then of course there comes a time when you are merely replacing the existing number of

cells.

Dhammadinna: That must be at about 25.

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Marichi: It is almost even before birth that the rate of multiplication slows down.

It is almost like within 3 days of conception you are dying.

S: Yes, right; this is what I meant. Or even from birth. From birth to the time of maturity, or say from the third day after conception to say 25, the number of cells is slowly increasing, but the rate at increase is out of all proportion to the rate of increase during the first 3 days of intrauterine life. And of course from the age of 25 perhaps you are just replacing the existing cells, and then it may be when you become really old the cells start wasting away, and when that stage reaches a certain point then death takes place. So it is quite literally, scientifically true to say, well, not only as soon as you are born, you start dying, but the process of death begins even before you are born. Just as soon as the arrow leaves the string of the archer, it is already moving towards the target, so in the same way, you are already moving towards death. The actual process at dying has started; the actual process of decline or that process of decline which will culminate in death has already started, perhaps if I am right here, when you are only 3 days old, within the womb. It is quite a thought, isn't it?

Marichi: Yes, because it is so easy to think, "Birth, death" and then there is this long, continuous space in the middle where you are alive. Perhaps one experiences it like that until one is about 25.

Bonnie: (Indecipherable).

S: It is amazing that we do.

If one looks even at the small child, and say compares the small child with the adult, it really does seem in terms of energy and interest and life there is a gradual decline from your childhood, in the case of most people. Do you notice that, or can you see it in your own case? To some extent at least? [Pause]

It might be interesting if someone could produce a graph. Do you see what I mean?

Marichi: A graph of what? Age against the rate of decline?

S: Yes. You probably could not make it exact, because if you could measure those three days to scale, or mark them to scale on a graph, you would need a very big graph if you were going to include the whole of human [148] life. The build-up would be something like this [gestures]; and then it goes down like that [gestures]; and remain like that.

Marichi: Why would there be such a steep decline, and then a slope. Surely it would be the other way ...

S: The rate at multiplication of cells, I am thinking in terms of.

Dhammadinna: It would tend to peak ...

S: It would reach a peak very early on, and then fall right down.

Marichi: Surely it would reach a peak, then there would be a plateau, a sort of fading, a slow start, going down faster.

S: I was thinking it wouldn't decline from the peak quite as quickly as it attains the peak.

Marichi: But you drew a graph like this, and ...

S: Well, maybe it should be like this, a bit more like that.

Marichi: More like that, and then it would decline rather more.

S: It is a matter of trying to do it. But these are quite interesting facts, aren't they? They do bring home the general lessons that Gampopa is trying to teach.

All right, second simile.

The second simile makes it still clearer that man's life cannot wait but is like water falling over a steep cliff, which rushes on without pausing a single moment. As is stated in the 'Dus.pa rin.po.che tog' (Mahasannipataratnaketurharani):

Friends, this Life passes quickly.
It is the rapid stream of a turbulent waterfall over a steep cliff.
The fool not recognizing this,
Stupidly lets himself be fooled by the sense objects.

S: In a way, this is an even stronger comparison. Just when the arrow leaves the archer's bow, it is inevitable that it completes its flight. In the same way, once the water falls over the top of the cliff, the precipice, it is inevitable that it just goes on falling until it reaches the bottom. In the same way, once you are born, you don't only fly towards death, you [149] drop towards death, with an increasing momentum. Does momentum increase? Yes, it does, with the distance fallen. So that is what it feels like subjectively. You not only approach death all the time, but you approach it, or feel that you approach it, more and more rapidly. In a sense, that is justified, biologically even.

So, "The fool, not recognizing this, stupidly lets himself be fooled by the sense objects."
There is another similar comparison. Would someone like to read the next quotation, too?

And in the 'Tshoms' (Udanavarga 1, 31):

Like the current of a great river,
Never turning back, it moves on.

S: It doesn't really add anything to the former comparison.

Marichi: You can get a sense of its force - you know, it has got a great weight behind it.

S: In this country, we don't ever see great rivers, but you can see them in India, you get a different impression from a really big river. You see all this mass of water moving towards the sea, quite irresistible.

So, it is an irreversible process, a process you cannot hold back; a process you cannot check; a process you cannot restrain; a process that you cannot slow down. It is a headlong, irreversible process, of continually increasing momentum.

We tend to think sometimes, I think, that death approaches us, but it is actually we who approach death. We even personify death as an old man, with an hour-glass and a scythe, and he comes to us, just as we are innocently playing among the flowers. He rudely interrupts our little games. It isn't like that: we are hastening to meet him all the time.

Marichi: In a way you cannot cheat death.

S: No.

Marichi: There are various plays when Death comes and you play various games with him, to go away but you can't.

S: You can't.

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Paloma: It means when you die, even if people are reborn again, it means that in between death and birth, there have been reasons to be born and die again.

S: Yes: the wheel is revolving.

Paloma: So what happens in the space in between?

S: Well, we choose; we choose.

Paloma: It seems like throughout the whole life it is fixed that we are going to die, and since birth we have always been dying, and it isn't fixed for us in between death and birth ...

S: Well, in a sense, the whole question of the inevitability at death is only half of the truth. It represents the cyclic process. There is the possibility all the time of the spiral process, therefore there is the prospect not only in between death and rebirth but in between, in other senses, of making that choice; either continuing to go round and round, or going up and up on the spiral. There is a point at which the two permanently separate.

Paloma: In your life?

S: It can be in this life, or in a future life. When the spiral process predominates over the cyclical process. At present of course the cyclical process predominates, or is perhaps the only process present. [Pause]

Would someone like to read the third simile, with the two quotations?

The third simile means that we are like a prisoner being led to a place of execution, who with every step comes closer to death. As is written in the 'Phags.pa lJon.sin.gi mdo':

Just as a prisoner being led to a place at execution,
With every step comes nearer to death.

And in the 'Tshoms' (Udanavarga I, 12):

Just as people who are about to be executed,
With every step they make,
Draw closer to the execution,
So also is the life of men.

S: What do you think is the special point of this comparison, this simile?

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Paloma: That you walk towards death.

S: No: the river was moving, the waterfall was moving, the arrow was moving. What is the special point here?

Sulochana: No choice.

S: You have no choice.

Sulochana: It has been already decided.

S: Not only that: you are unwilling; you are resisting, but that you cannot help yourself.

Marichi: You are a prisoner.

S: You are a prisoner, yes.

Noel: Here the execution comes as a result of your actions.

S: It comes as a result of your actions. You, having set up those conditions, it is inevitable that you are going to be influenced by them or affected by them. So it is here that the karmic element is introduced. It is on account of your past karma, according to traditional Buddhism, that you have been born in this life as a human being, and therefore you are responsible for the fact of your death, because you are responsible for the fact of your birth. If you don't want to die, well, you mustn't allow yourself to be reborn. It is completely within your own control. What most people want is life without death, birth without death; but that is not possible.

[Pause]

So all these arguments add up to the fact that death is certain. One can infer its certainty from the fact that everybody of whom one has ever heard dies, that the body is composite, so that the parts of which the body is composed, in as much as they were put together, must be taken apart again some day or other, and that means death. And then, the fact that life ebbs from moment to moment - you can experience life as it were ebbing away all the time, so that

means that death is inevitable, just as if you see a pot filled with water and the water is being poured away all the time, you know that it is inevitable that the pot will be emptied. That is certain. It is the same with life; life is always being poured away for these three reasons we can be sure that death is certain.

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You may nonetheless find it fairly difficult to apply this to your own self, because you experience yourself so much as the subject, whereas you are seeing all these things as objects.

I wonder how one feels when someone who has been near and dear to one, and maybe with whose subjectivity you have been able to empathize, I wonder how you feel when that person dies? Do you see what I mean? Do you think it would be easier then for you to apply the fact that he died or she died to yourself?

Marichi: It would also depend on the subjective state of that person.

S: Would it?

Dhammadinna: Probably, yes.

S: I mean, they wouldn't have been for you just an object.

Marichi: No, they would be another existing subject. If that other subject could face death with some equanimity, you could face the death at that person.

S: Or perhaps if you had a glimpse of the, let us say, you had a glimpse of empathy with the subjectivity of that other person, perhaps you would not feel the physical death so much because you didn't identify them so much with the physical body; that is to say, with their purely objective existence.

Sulochana: Well, isn't this a bit unbelievable?

Marichi: Isn't this the case with spiritual friends?

S: Yes. You know the physical body is not there, but you have an experience at something other than the physical body, not a sort of subtle object - do you see what I mean? - it is something different from that.

Marichi: Not something fixed.

S: Not as a subtle object.

Marichi: It is a subject, not a subtle object.

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S: Yes. Or a subject is not a subtle object. So when you say, "Go on experiencing" let's say the presence of a departed person: it is not that, instead of the gross physical body you experience a subtle physical body which is still an object, though you may do that too, that is another possibility. But rather than the same sort of experience of their subjectivity, the same

sort of empathy with their subjectivity that you had when it was associated with the physical body, you still have, even though it is no longer associated with the physical body.

Marichi: A ghost for instance would be a subtle object.

S: Yes; a ghost in the ordinary, conventional sense would be a subtle version of that gross material body, but still an object.

Paloma: When I was in Spain, I went to visit this girl. There were two girls who were very good friends and one of them I wanted to see and when I went to her place, the other girl, whom I did not know, and they were both very beautiful, not from their bodies very much, but how they behaved. They were very beautiful. I didn't know this girl and I talked with her; she explained things to me; I sort of felt that we would be good friends. She had a motorbike and we went on this motorbike and she gave me this lift to a place where I used to go. And I had got off the motorbike and she was waving to me to say goodbye or something and then because she didn't look in the front a van crashed with her and she was dead. It was a big mess and I had this feeling that ... well I couldn't understand what was happening with the body and I had the feeling ... I stood there for a long time after everything had been carried away. I had the feeling she was still there. And I had the feeling of space also, that there was somehow a hole in the air or in the atmosphere.

S: I think one does experience this with deceased people whom one has known or even that one hasn't known, that they are there, that one can actually perceive and experience them, even as though they were there in the physical body, but you don't actually see or hear anything physically. You could say it's not the ghost, it's the gestalt. You could even say it is the subjectivity. You sort of experience it as a sort of almost object, but in a way you don't experience it as an object, because it isn't anything out there in any sense, certainly not physically.

Bonnie: But they are really there.

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S: They are really there. It is not your imagination. It is a quite different sort of experience. They can even be in space apparently, in a particular location, but at the same time they are not an object, which sounds quite absurd, but that is actually how it is.

Bonnie: My father followed us around during his funeral and we were able to bury him ourselves, and he was finding it harder, harder, and then we put him in the ground, he just left us. You could just feel it, this rush of wind as he went away. Almost as if he kept us together until the point when he could now leave us, and go off.

S: I have had several experiences of this sort in connection with people whose funeral ceremonies, Buddhist ones, I have performed. It is quite odd, but you sort of get used to it.

Bonnie: I could hear him saying to us, "It is all right, it is all right." At my mother's death, I was saying to her, "It is all right, Mum."

S: Well sometimes after death you can hear people sort of calling out for some time. Sometimes they don't know where they are, and don't know what is happening to them, or

they are afraid.

Bonnie: I also had an experience with my father that there was a tumultuous number of entities of some kind hovering by as well.

S: [Pause] Anyway, perhaps we should close on that note.

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S: So we are still concerned with the certainty of death, you may remember. (laughter) It is probably going to be hammered home a little bit more today, (laughter) under the heading (b).

(B) For the certainty of death without my knowing when it will come, there are also three reasons: because (iv) my span of life is not fixed, (v) the body is without solidity and (vi) there are many causes of death.

(iv) It may be said that, although the life of beings or of men in other continents may be of determinate length, this is not so for people like us in Jambudvipa. This is stated in 'Chos.mnon.pa. mdzod' ('Abhidharmakosa' III, 78):

Here it is indeterminate; it is ten years at the end (of a cycle of aeons) and immeasurable at its beginning.

That some live longer than others is shown in the 'Tshoms' ('Udanavarga' 1, 7-8):

Some die in the womb,
Others the moment they are born (19a),
Or while crawling
Or running about.
Some grow old and some die young,
And some in the prime of youth,
In due course they all pass on.

S: So the fact is here that you know that you will die, but you don't know when you will die which means that you could die at any moment. The text says that, "it may be said that although the life of beings or of men in other continents may be of determinate length, this is not so for people like us in Jambudvipa." This refers of course to the old Indian geographical system, in which there are four continents or we translate them as continents, it is really islands, of which our world, Jambudvipa, is one. And it is said that the other continents the beings have a fixed span of life, but ours, in our world Jambudvipa is not fixed. At the beginning of the cycle, when history sort of begins, life is very, very long indeed, but as human beings become more and more corrupt they degenerate, the length of human life decreases until it comes right down until ten years. So we are supposed to be somewhere, well not exactly in the middle, but pretty near towards the end. In other words we have become pretty corrupt we have degenerated to quite an extent, because nowadays human life is not much more than a hundred years: but according to tradition it is going to get worse, and the length of life is going to decrease right down to ten years. Well how literally one takes that, is one matter. But the fact is that yes, even though we know that death is certain, we don't know when it will come, that is uncertain. So it is as though the uncertainty reinforces the certainty. And this is also something [156] that you need to remember. It is not enough

just to bear in mind in a general sort of way, that well yes, "I am definitely going to die one day", because that one day could be any day, you just don't know, people can die any time, there is no guarantee that you are going to live to a ripe old age. It would be nice to think of oneself as growing old gracefully and the silver threads appearing amongst the gold and gracefully declining into your armchair and letting other people get on with it, it is nice to think in those sort of terms, but you don't know. You may not reach that grand old age, or happy old age. You may die tomorrow. In the case of very young people they may not even see maturity, in the case of children they may not even grow up, in the case of babies they may die before they can walk, may die as soon as they are born. So even though the fact of death is certain, the time of death is uncertain, we just don't know. So this is an additional incentive so to speak to make the very best possible use of our time. We don't want to dwell upon this fact of the uncertainty of the hour of death in a morbid sort of way. But it is probably good if at least we remember it from time to time, and just ask ourselves: "Am I making the best possible use of my life? Am I doing the best for myself and others that I possibly can?" You don't want to brood on the fact of death, or on the fact of the uncertainty of the hour of death, but just advert to it so to speak from time to time and just check up or use it as a means of checking up that you are living a truly useful and truly meaningful life, and worthwhile life. Anyway it is pretty obvious isn't it, when one does think of it. All right go on to five.

(v) The fact that the body is without solidity means that there is no single solid substance in it apart from the thirty-six impure components. As is stated in the 'sPyod.'jug'
(*'Bodhicaryavatara' V, 62-3*):

First open this heap of skin with your intellect,
Then separate the flesh from the network of bones with the scalpel of discriminating
awareness.
Having opened the bones also look into the marrow
And see for yourself
Whether there is anything solid.

S: What is the point of this? "seeing that there isn't anything solid". I mean clearly of course it is part of the realization of the certainty of death, but what is the connection?

Dhammadinna: There isn't anything fixed that is going to continue.

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Sulochana: You can analyse it smaller and smaller, more ethereal.

S: Yes, and how does that help?

Sulochana: Well it eventually becomes just energy, doesn't it?

S: Yes, one could say that, because the emphasis is on the lack of solidity. What does solidity convey? When you feel that something is solid?

Dhammadinna: Unchanging.

S: Yes ... it is unchanging, but more than that.

Paloma: Strength?

S: Strength, but more than that, you say that it is very solid.

: It has a definite existence.

S: Yes, but I say more than that, it is a sort of capacity to support, you can depend upon it, you can rely upon it, it won't give way. But the body will. Because it is a transitory thing. What about these thirty six impure components? I think it is usually more often that there is thirty two, but we won't quarrel about that. Like for instance hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, skin, teeth, bones, flesh bile, phlegm, there is a whole lot, a whole list that you reflect upon. So the lack of solidity seems to be also connected with the idea or thought of impurity. What do you think about this idea of impurity, the impure component, in what sense are they impure?

Sulochana: They are made up, they are composite.

S: No.

Marichi: They are liable to decay.

S: They are liable to decay, they are the rather sort of unpleasant sort of messy as it were. I mean the whole passage is meant to prevent you from depending too much on the body. Taking it for something solid that can support you, when it really can't. It sort of goes bad, it sort of goes nasty and squashy and it loses its solidity. It is an aspect that we don't care to dwell upon very much in the West, and certainly one can overdo it, give it some morbid twists, but it is a fact if you consider the body; when the body starts decomposing it isn't a very attractive object. Maybe you haven't seen decomposing corpses unless you have worked in a mortuary or something like that; but certainly you notice then that the body lacks solidity, and that you [158] cannot as it were depend upon it.

But perhaps one could look at it in another way. Buddhist tradition certainly looks at it in this way, instead of speaking of lack of solidity, you can speak of fragility, you can speak of vulnerability. The human body is immensely complicated, one can look at as an immensely complicated machine, though perhaps that is not the best way of looking at it, but it is an immensely complicated organism, it is perhaps the most complicated organism. So when things are very complicated, whether mechanisms or organisms, when they are very complicated, one of things that one finds is, that they very easily go wrong, because the more complicated they are, the greater the number of ways in which they can go wrong. So the body being very complicated can go wrong in all sorts of ways, all sorts of things can put it out of action. You have only got to get a tiny little clot in your blood stream and that will put you out of action for good. So in this sense, the body is not just lacking in solidity, it is frail, it is vulnerable so that you can think here you are with this very valuable piece of equipment, a human body, a human psycho-physical organism, but it can go wrong and stop functioning so easily. You have only got to get a little piece of dust here, a little of speck of dirt there, a little cut in some other part, a little growth in some other part for the whole wonderful mechanism, the whole wonderful organism, just to come to a standstill. So perhaps one could think of lack of solidity in that sort of way, more as fragility and vulnerability of the organism.

Joan: Would you say that was a scientific approach to classifying all the parts of the body, say it was bones, skin ...

S: I suppose it is scientific in principle, in a rudimentary sort of way. But it is very rough and ready, isn't it, by present day standards?

Joan: Yes, it is just that in your illustration from Dickens it sort of put down the more feeling aspect, when he classified the horse, but here it is quite useful to perhaps to be a little more objective.

S: Yes, here, if one concentrates more on the impurity of the different parts, it is not with any idea of so much of saying that the parts are real and the whole is unreal, but of discouraging an unskilful or unhealthy mental attitude, as when you do the corpse meditation, you ask yourself, "well, what is that I am really attached to?" But none-the-less, I think probably it is more meaningful in this context of the realization of the certainty of death, if we think of fragility [159] and vulnerability rather than lack of solidity. You realize that due to the well, one of the reasons that why death is certain is that the human organism itself, the physical organism is so fragile, is so vulnerable. It is susceptible to disease, it is susceptible to change of weather, change of climate, even the food that we eat can upset us, can bring about our death, or there can be some little speck of dust, or clot of blood in the system somewhere or we can receive a blow, and that can put the whole organism out of action. So it is the precariousness of life, due to the fragility and vulnerability of the body. It is this that we have to bear in mind. And it also suggested that we need to look after ourselves in a positive, healthy objective sort of way, not take undue risks with our physical organism. I think some people don't, they don't look after themselves properly. This is something that we have been talking about in study groups I think recently, that people need to care for themselves more on the physical level. After all if you are convinced that you have a wonderful opportunity, in as much as you have a well endowed human body and you have come in contact with the Dharma, you have the opportunity of practising and suppose you rejoice in that opportunity, well it would be a pity if you lost that opportunity because you had been careless with regard to your physical body. Do you see the point? It doesn't mean cossetting yourself, or being a bit of a hypochondriac. Hypochondriac means someone who is unduly careful about his health in a very (valetudinarian?) sort of way. You know the sort of thing I mean. It doesn't mean that. But sometimes people are careless. Do you notice that? Do you notice that you are careless with yourselves. You don't take proper care. I mean some of you I am sure. So this means paying proper attention to diet, to exercise, to rest, look after yourselves in that way, keep yourselves healthy, keep yourselves fit, keep yourselves functioning properly on all levels. Have you been talking about this recently or just thinking about it?

Paloma: [??]

S: But I notice this as people get involved with the Friends more and more, one notices that they not only become happy, they also seem to become more healthy, and I think that this is a very positive sign. One knows that sometimes people don't take sufficient care of themselves, of their physical bodies, just because they don't seem to like themselves and that isn't a very good thing, it isn't a very [160] positive attitude. So one can give this particular teaching quite a positive application too. Remember the body is frail, remember the body is vulnerable, but it is useful, so therefore look after it carefully, care for it, nourish it, don't pamper it, but give it the same decent treatment that you give say at least your dog or your horse, lead a healthy

life.

All right on to six.

(vi) The fact that there are many causes of death means that there is nothing that does not become such a cause for ourselves as for others. As is written in the 'bSes.sbrin' ('Suhrllekha', 55):

This life has many dangers; it is more unstable
Than a bubble blown about by the wind.
With breath coming and going, it is the greatest miracle
That one ever awakens from sleep.

S: Mm, yes this is closely linked with the one that came before. I mean since this human body is so frail, is so vulnerable, I mean death can come in so many different ways. It isn't that death will only come in one particular way. No it can come in hundreds in thousands of ways anything can be a cause of death, anything at all, any heavy object, you have only got to pull on it from a certain height and it can be a cause of death, even anything that you eat, any single mouthful of food can be a cause of death because you could choke on it, any little speck of dust anywhere floating around, it has only to get into the wrong place in your system and it is a cause of death. So anything can be a cause of death, so it is as though all the time your life is suspended on a single thread, it is amazing that you live at all, "with breath coming and going it is the greatest miracle that one ever awakens from sleep". Just think of the breath, well your life is dependant upon that. You're breathing in and breathing out all the time, what a risk you are taking (laughter) because you breath out and it could happen that you don't breathe in again, something goes wrong, and that means death, you have only got to have that breathing process suspended for a couple of minutes and you are finished, so every minute you are taking several risks, a number of time [every minute], breathing at all. So the sheer vulnerability and fragility of existence, so all the more reason to make good use of life while one has it, and not to be attached to it.

Dhammadinna: Does the way in which you die or the time at which you die, is that determined in some way by your karma, or is it just chance action?

[161]

S: Well if one dies a violent death, this is usually considered to be due to past Karma. But apart from that there is the natural span as it were. We don't live longer than a hundred years. So if there is no karma to cut short life, well the fact that the species to which we belong has a natural life span of say a hundred years ensures that at the end of that hundred years, well we die.

Dhammadinna: Mm, yes, say you have an illness and died when you were young, and you died at birth would that be a karmic cause?

S: Well it could be, because I have discussed this question whether something was due to Karma or not with the example of illness. That an illness can be due to past karma, but it can be due to other factors which are not karma. So if you die as a result of illness, this could be as a result of karma or not. It would be difficult to tell.

Marichi: Isn't it difficult to say because you cannot define ...

S: Well no, it is not so much that you cannot define it, you can define it, but you need actually to trace the actual history of that particular person and know and see what they have done in previous lives and then see that there is a correspondence. If one cannot do this, one cannot really conclude that something is definitely due to karma unless you can definitely eliminate all the other factors. Then you can conclude that "well it wasn't due to this, it wasn't due to that, it can only be karma." So it is clear that one shouldn't jump to the conclusion that something is the result of karma. Except in that very general way, which I mentioned the other day that it is due to karma - that is karma appropriate to a human being that you are here with a human body at all. So indirectly everything that happens to you may be due to karma, yes, but only indirectly. Not that there is a specific one to one linkage: what happens to you now is what you did to somebody else in the past.

Dhammadinna: Presumably the way in which you die also, is that ... ? does that determine future conditions? I mean, if you die violently you are probably not in a very good state of mind, but if you die naturally ...

S: Yes, what would determine future conditions would not be the way in which you died with, in a sense of whether you died say by a knife or a fire or something, but your state of mind reacting to it, because the first would only be a resultant, but the second would be karma.

Bonnie: Some forms of astrology go into this. I believe [162] that they can trace back and also can indicate the likely form of death that you are going to have ...

S: Well for instance, I mean sometimes one can have a pretty good guess oneself. If one sees that someone is quarrelsome and violent and hasty and hot-tempered, you could possibly predict that they might well die a violent death.

: (??)

: (??)

:(??)

S: And one notices that some people seem to be accident prone, you can be pretty certain that they are going to die as a result of an accident, because accidents seem to be always happening to them, more or less serious accidents.

: (??)

S: Yes it is the given, the given factor, but your reaction or response to that is something which is not given, which can modify the pattern at any time. It may be difficult if it has been a pattern you have repeated many times in the past. In a way with each repetition perhaps you lose some part of your freedom not to repeat the pattern, in the sense that it becomes more difficult not to repeat it again.

Bonnie: That explains anything you learn in this life time another opportunity to overcome

the past difficulties that you have had.

S: Yes you have another opportunity not to be a human being. To be something better, to be a Buddha! or at least a Bodhisattva.

: (??)

[163]

S: Well it depends very much on what one thinks about identity. Because in a way you could say that the whole past history, of life even, belongs to you, it is your history, in as much as you have emerged from that. But it isn't your history in the sense that it is the history of your present individualized consciousness, and in any case that individualized consciousness did not exist in the past. But you cannot separate yourself entirely from the total evolutionary process of which you are one expression. In a sense it is your past. Of course it is the past of a number of other people too. But then there is a bit of your past which is peculiar to you alone. But it is not easy to see the point at which your individual past merges so to speak into your collective past, or grows out of your collective past. An animal is not an individual in the way that a human being is. So perhaps one shouldn't speak of a human being having been an animal. Though of course a human being has been all animals. You see what I mean?

Joan: Is that true, Bhante? (laughter) That one grows through all animal stages.

S: No, I didn't mean that. That is why I said ... not that you as a human being have an animal, no, but you have been all animals.

Joan: Is that like in the wheel of life.

S: No, I am speaking of the ordinary scientific evolutionary process. You see what I mean.

Joan: Ah, yes.

Paloma: (cannot hear)

S: Yes... the individual also inherits the collective. You see what I with mean? I mean just as with regards your collective cultural heritage, you are an individual, but you have grown out of the collective, haven't you? So you inherit the collective. So in the same way we as human beings we have grown out of the whole evolutionary tree, that is included in our past history. But in a rather different way, I mean what we are now say in this decade has grown out of what we were in the previous decade. But that is a succeeding phase of an individual growing out of the preceding phase of an individual. But in the case of the wider evolutionary context it is a case of the individual as it were growing out of the collective, growing out of the group, but even though you are an individual, you still take over so to speak a heritage of the group, even though you are a human being the animal is still at work in you, that is a component so to speak of your human [164] individuality. So it is in that sense that you have been, because in a sense you are all animals. By becoming a human being you don't cease to be an animal. That animal ancestry, that animal heritage is there; so one can look [at] it in that way. It is not that you as an individualized human consciousness were once upon a time this particular animal or that particular animal, no, because an animal does not have an individualized consciousness in the way that a human being has. An animal seems to share, especially the

lower animals, seem to share in a collective or group consciousness. So for a human being to have been an animal, in the same sense that a human being is a human being would be a contradiction in terms. But the individual human consciousness can be said to grow out of in a manner of speaking the collective animal consciousness.

Bonnie: (paraphrased) It seems that we can stand and look back at our past and into our future.

S: Yes you could say that, because we are very much in a middle state. You could say that in our worst moments we are very much like animals. But at our best moments well we are very much like Bodhisattvas. But at present those Bodhisattva like moments are only moments, they are only moments. But even the fact that they are only moments is highly significant. Because you can at least imagine being a Bodhisattva not just for a minute, but maybe for several minutes, maybe for half an hour. And so then you can have a sort of inkling of yourself of [being] completely transformed into a Bodhisattva. I mean for instance you might have on one occasion practised generosity, and have been really generous or you might have had a really deep profound meditation experience, or you might have had a flash of genuine insight, all these things are momentary, just flashes. But you can, as it were, multiply them in your own mind and imagine those sort of momentary states as being indefinitely prolonged. And when your consciousness is a sort of uninterrupted stream of experiences of that sort, that sort of generosity, that sort of meditation, that sort of insight, well what are you but a Bodhisattva. So it is very difficult, in fact it is impossible to completely demarcate one stage from the next, even in an animal, the higher animals you get glimmerings of rationality. It has been shown that chimpanzees can reason, that some other animals too, I think, can reason. It used to be thought that only man was rational, but [165] glimmerings of reason have been found in certain higher animals, even traces of language, communication, there is no sort of hard and fast line of division, where everything above the line is completely human, and everything below the line completely animal. The different species are not completely discreet in that sort of way. It is just the same with the group member and the individual. Sometimes we speak of the group member and the individual as though they were totally distinct, but they are not. I mean you can, when someone is very much the group member or very much the individual, yes you can distinguish them, but even in the ordinary group there is glimmerings of individuality. Even in the individual there is some trace of group attitudes. So it is like that all the way along the line, that in the animal you get anticipations of the human, in the human you get anticipations of whatever is Bodhisattva-like or Buddha-like, and that provides us so to speak with our guarantee of the possibility of further and higher evolution.

: What you said about imagination made me think about what Dhammadinna was saying in the latest Mitrata about how first of all you imagine, or make your imagination envisage what one can become, and then you work towards emulating that.

And that puts me in mind of when I read James Merton(?). 'Towards a Psychology of Being' towards the end I started to realize that what he was talking about was the Bodhisattva, a sort of self-actualising person seemed to merge in with how you were saying about a Bodhisattva and I got a really vibrant feeling for what a Bodhisattva would feel like, and I found it really inspiring, just to imagine it.

S: But sometimes one can imagine just sort of extrapolating in an imaginative sort of way

from one's own experience. Yes, because sometimes one is capable of these more noble actions, or these more sublime thoughts, it does sometimes happen, the only thing is that these things are so momentary. But we can by act of imagination imagine them, or conceive them as being more sustained, and when they do become more sustained well we become genuinely transformed.

But I think to go back a bit to what we were talking about originally, I think we have to be careful when we talk about rebirth, and talk about what we might have been before. We have to be careful to not speak in terms appropriate only to the individual when we are referring to what is broadly less than individual. If you try to sort of trace your previous well let's say line of descent, [166] or line of ascent, as a reincarnating individual back into the animal kingdom, you don't as it were pass from an individual human being to an individual animal, in a sense of from an individual human consciousness to an individual animal consciousness, no, you pass from an individual human consciousness to a collective animal consciousness, even though that collective animal consciousness is manifested so to speak in a number of separate animal bodies. So it isn't a question of which animal was I in my previous existences, that is inappropriate, it can only be that you were all animals, because the individual by the time you get back to that stage has merged back into the collective.

Marion: What is it that is reborn? If it is not your own individual consciousness?

S: No.

Bonnie: Don't you recapitulate the whole evolutionary process like from single cells.

S: Yes, I mean this is often ... this is an aspect of biology as far as I remember. Is it phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny? Is this what it is? Yes. It cannot be apparently traced in full detail, but broadly speaking in the course of your development as an individual, you recapitulate the whole history of the race, even the whole history of life itself. So this also ties up with what I was saying earlier on, that even though you are an individual you have as your heritage the whole heritage biological, psychological and cultural of the group. It is not as though you as an individual are completely cut off from the group and have nothing to do with the group, your roots are in the group. It is rather like a tree. You are like a tree in a way, you are like a plant, you grow out of the soil, out of the earth, that is the group in the widest sense, your roots are there. You draw nourishment from the soil, but you produce flowers, those flowers you could say are your individuality. So even though an individual is distinct from the group, the individual is still connected with the group - in a sense grows out of it.

Bonnie: I have a feeling that I am a collection of entities and like a bag full of lollies gathered together in one form, and I'm only too well aware of those different entities ...

S: Well one could say that this is what one feels and what one experiences when one is not an individual, that is to say when one is not [167] integrated. To be an individual means to be integrated. To be integrated means to be an individual. Well we are not. We are sort of collections of floating bits and pieces of selves or individualities, rather than individualities; the unity is illusory because it is based upon the physical body. It is as though, rather like holding a bunch of flowers in your fist, it is the fist that is holding them all together. In the same way it is the fact that they are connected with one particular physical body which gives all these moods and states and bits and pieces of selves a semblance of unity. So we think that

we are dealing with the same person because we are dealing with the same body, but sometimes we sort of twig what is going on because we say "Well, she doesn't seem the same person today as she was yesterday!" (laughter) and it is true. The body is the same, but maybe a completely different mental state has taken over, a completely different mood, completely different attitude and of course you know that you not only behave differently with different people but in a sense you are different with different people, and that will sort of go on until your whole consciousness, your whole being is more unified and you are more of an individual.

Marichi: To go back to Marion's question, can you actually - what is reborn is a fragments of different selves.

S: Mm, it is a loose collection of bits and pieces which are certainly roughly associated, otherwise they wouldn't have connected with the one and same body, they sort of share the use of that body you could say. Like a number of people living together in a flat, well they must have had something in common to bring them together and make the wish to share the same flat, even though they don't speak to one another much or even quarrel, but they have got something in common that caused them to share that same flat, so it is rather like that, it isn't that there is a sort of entity, of something fixed and unchanged, and very stable, which is associated now with this physical body, now with that. It is a changing collection of different psychic states very loosely unified, which is associated first with this physical body and then with that physical body, and that is what we call rebirth. So this is why one cannot, according to classical Buddhism, one cannot strictly speaking ask who or what is reborn, because this suggests, it suggests something fixed and unchanging which is subject to the process of rebirth; whereas there is nothing fixed, there is nothing unchanging, it is a very loose, floating collection of different states and functions, mental states and mental functions.

Bonnie: How does the individual come about out of that collection?

S: Well, ask oneself, because here one is, so to speak. (laughter) One is asking the question, so don't say "How does one?", well, "How do I?". So the question arises, how is it possible for [168] oneself to make that statement at all?

Bonnie: Tell me! (laughter)

S: That is the answer to the question. Because ...

Bonnie: The combined energy of the lot.

S: It is the combined energy of the lot, but does one not find that amongst all these fragments, all these parts, these bits and pieces, there is one that so to speak gradually takes over and acts as a unifying factor for all, and is this not what one customarily speaks of as oneself, or feels, or experiences, or is aware of, as oneself, even though in a sense the other bits and pieces are also oneself, but it is like some are more equal than others, all are equal but some are more equal than others, the slogan; in the same way all these selves are yourself, but some selves are more yourself than others, and one self is perhaps yourself most of all. So in that way, they tend to organize themselves, and as self-consciousness develops then that self-consciousness or that self which is conscious of itself can take the lead, and because it is more conscious and a self which is more conscious of itself it is able more to organize the

others and in that way an individual emerges.

Bonnie: Could it be that in a relatively successful kind of (?) just doesn't become stuck on anything that is happening that is free and just doesn't become still, but has an ability to float and discriminate with all the stuff that is going on?

S: Yes, well this is the self-consciousness and it does seem that the self consciousness develops in the process of well one can say evolutionary process itself, certainly as far as human beings are concerned because what is the essence of self-consciousness?

Dhammadinna: Self-awareness. You are aware that you are aware.

S: So how do you become aware that you are aware? This is really, to go back to your original question of how does one become an individual, this is what the question really amounts to. How does awareness pass into self-awareness? How does consciousness pass into self consciousness? I mean animals have got awareness, in the sense of what I have called simple awareness, it can be a very rudimentary sensitivity or it can be a relatively sharp focused awareness as of say a cat or a mouse that it is pursuing or watching. But how does [169] that awareness, can one imagine the process by which that awareness becomes self-awareness at some time in the evolutionary process.

Paloma: Reflection.

S: By which do you mean reflection within oneself?

Paloma: Yes.

S: But would assume that the self-consciousness was in a sense already there.

Dhammadinna: It would assume that it had already arisen.

S: Yes ... but it seems to me that it arises in the course of the struggle for survival itself.

Bonnie: It breaks free.

S: Self-consciousness, self-awareness, it seems to me, arises in the course of the struggle for survival.

Paloma: But anyway it is also struggling for survival before it becomes self-conscious.

S: That's true.

: Does it become aware of the suffering, it is a sort of waking up to that.

S: Mm, yes that may be part of the process, that there is a greater sensitivity in human beings to suffering, but then that would only account by itself just for the simple awareness.

Punyavati: They have to adapt to the environment.

S: They have to adapt to the environment, yes, that is very important. But perhaps we can sort of trace it back to the apes. Because it does seem, and it is generally agreed by biologists, it does seem that primitive human beings developed out of some kind of ape. But what do you notice about these apes, how did they organize themselves to survive? As compared say with lots of animals?

Punyavati: Hierarchy.

S: In a hierarchy in some cases, yes, but even more basic than that?

Marichi: A tribe.

S: Yes, a tribe, a small group. So what seems to have happened, what one can reasonably suppose is that within this small group, there was a more intense interaction of the members as such than one would get [170] say within the larger group, or within a group of lower animals. In other words, the members of that group would be more aware of one another, they would be co-operating for purposes of survival. For instance you find in the cases of some apes, they station sentinels to look out and give warning of the approach of danger, and they co-operate in hunting prey, they co-operate in defence. So this means that if there is that sort of co-operation, they are conscious of one another. So supposing you are conscious of another ape, or proto human being, because you are co-operating you may have to make him aware that he has done something or not done something. So when you see that he has done something, this is simple consciousness. But if you, and then if you try to communicate to him what you have seen him do, and you succeed, it means that he has developed self-consciousness. In other words there has been a reflection of your awareness of him back into his mind as his awareness of himself, and when that takes place, well of course you have reached the next stage of development of consciousness. You have gone from simple consciousness to reflexive consciousness or self-awareness. It seems to me that the transition took place in that sort of way, and this is where you get the germ of individuality arising and therefore the possibility of being an individual. You become conscious of yourself, you see yourself in a way as others see you. You experience yourself not only subjectively, but also objectively, you develop self-consciousness. But you are still heir to the heritage of the group.

Punyavati: Is that why the Bodhisattva ideal, gaining enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, arises partly from that, because we are ...?

S: You could say that. You could. Because however highly developed your self-consciousness is, your simple consciousness is still there. So on another level you are let's say an animal, so you are one of the group in the animal sense. And also of course you as a human being are in contact with those who are not human beings, you have an effect on them, an influence on them, and in the same way the Bodhisattva remains in contact with ordinary human beings, he has an effect on them, he has an influence on them. And not only that, not only an influence as it were from without, he feels a sort of solidarity with them, a sort of organic solidarity with them, so that his effort to gain Enlightenment is also their expression through him of their effort to gain Enlightenment, even though they don't know it, in him it is [171] conscious, and in them it is not conscious. So it is in that sort of sense I spoke, admittedly in a more poetic sense, of a Cosmic going for Refuge, you may remember. You can take it as poetry provided you remember also that poetry has its own kind of truth, poetry is not just flowery words, it is based on the truth of the imagination.

Dhammadinna: So do all human beings have self, reflexive consciousness developed to different levels, is that an aspect of humanity?

S: As I said earlier on you cannot draw a hard and fast line of demarcation, you can meet some human beings who seem to have just the mere glimmering of self-consciousness, you can meet other human beings in whom it is highly developed, the range is quite wide. But in principle yes it is that reflexive consciousness which distinguishes human beings from animals, even though some human beings have very, very little of it, and some animals have a measure of it.

And of course once you have, if you, that is to say primitive man, or when primitive man develops self-consciousness and becomes more conscious of his own place in nature and his relationship to nature, his relationship to other human beings, well his self-consciousness becomes then a very powerful tool for survival, and not only for survival, for cultural development and eventually for the development of the individual himself. I mean a human being can sort of stand aside from himself and say "Well what can I do to develop?" No animal can say that. The animal grows and develops to the point of which is sort of connected perhaps with (?), it cannot do any more than that. But the human being can as I have said sort of step aside from himself and look at himself as though he was another person, and estimate what he has done, what he can do, what he has to do and so on. And of course this has its dangers too, because there is also the possibility of alienation. The individual can lose his roots from the group. You can get out of touch with your animal nature, out of touch with your emotional nature, etc. Then your individuality can become a very withered, a very dry, a very attenuated sort thing, like a plant or a tree which is growing in very shallow soil, or which has few roots. So it is quite an interesting thing. I think in a way this is the whole point of the Mahayana in relation to the Hinayana. It is as though the Hinayana spiritual ideal eventually became one-sided, the individual lost his contact with the group for want of a better term. I am discussing the whole subject in a way in symbolic terms. Let us say the individual in the case of the [172] Hinayana lost contact with the group, so that the Hinayana spiritual ideal, the Arhant ideal of the Hinayana not the early Arhant ideal of primitive Buddhism, the Arhant ideal of the Hinayana became rather bloodless, rather dried up, rather withered, academic even, all those sorts of things, scholastic. And so what the Mahayana had to do, again from a certain point of view was to re-establish contact with the group, re-establish contact with the laity, re-establish contact with the emotions. In other words broaden the base of the spiritual ideal, and enrich the spiritual ideal with energy from those sources, with life from those sources. So again the spiritual ideal bloomed as it were, and it bloomed in the form of the Bodhisattva Ideal, which was the Mahayana's restatement of the Buddhist ideal itself. So it isn't an accident that the Arhant is represented as a withered wrinkled old man, and the Bodhisattva is represented as a young and handsome, well, hero let us say. So in one's own life one has got to maintain a balance. You have got to maintain your contact with all that comes to you from your animal and group heritage, otherwise there is no energy. If you cut yourself off too much, or if you have it too much under control, you will just deprive yourself of energy and nourishment, but if you allow it to overwhelm you then you will just sink back into the group, you will be less and less of an individual. So you have to maintain that quite delicate balance, that poise between the alienated individual that is not an individual at all and the group.

Dhammadinna: Sometimes it feels as if people, when they first get involved with the Dharma, they tend to take the more Hinayana approach they get alienated and later they discover how

to broaden their base.

S: Well in a way it is necessary. In a way, because when you do become involved with the spiritual life, or you get involved with the Friends and you want to go forth, you want to leave the group, that is the emphasis to leave the group, and you have to leave that. But the danger is that you cut yourself off from the group in such a way that you alienate yourself from the group within you, but which is after all the source of your energy.

Marichi: I suppose at that point you think you are going to get energy from the spiritual, but you are not really in contact with it.

S: Yes you do get energy from the spiritual eventually. But after all you have to make contact with those spiritual levels. Yes you can get energy from say from your meditation, from your dhyana experience, [173] but what are you going to do until you get there? So you have got to maintain sufficient contact with your roots, let us say, with the group, your emotions to make sure that you have enough energy to get you up to those other levels where deeper sources of energy still or more refined sources of energy will be available to you.

Bonnie: It seems to be that we need to balance this kind of hedging that we often seem to have, because sometimes it will be exhausted and gone, and sometimes you will dampen it down, and it will leak away somewhere else.

S: Yes, or you just use up your energy keeping down your energy. This is what happens. You divide your energy, and one half is being kept down by the other half. So you have no energy left with which to do anything. I have often mentioned the fact that on our early retreats we used to find people alternating between alienated mindfulness and unmindful energy. You could see them swinging, and it used to be very difficult to get the whole retreat to come to rest in that middle point, because what one would find would be that people would turn up on the retreat and they would come very often thinking "Oh it is a retreat, we have got to be very good, very mindful, very well behaved", so they would be like that and of course they were a bit new and in those days, they didn't communicate very freely, so what happened was, that everyone was a bit stiff, a bit self contained, a bit over mindful, so then after two or three days you start communication exercises, meanwhile of course they were settling in and getting to know one another and then would come the communication exercises and some people would really open up and their energies would become much more free, but then they would forget their mindfulness, and then there would be so much talking and general jollification and well then you would have to impose maybe a bit of silence. But then when the silence [was] imposed, they would go to the other extreme, they would be all very over-mindful and very severe and a bit stiff and alienated again, so again you relax things and then they would swing to this other extreme. So you would see this whole retreat sort of swinging like this, but with luck the extent of the swing would become less and less and then people would more or less rest in the middle with their energies reasonably out, but at the same time with a reasonable amount of mindfulness. It was very difficult in those days to achieve a balance. Now there is much more of a balance. I'd say that there people are more and more able to combine free energy with a genuine unalienated awareness. But I still notice, I noticed say within the [174] community, if the community is very lively, and I am talking about the Padmaloka community, if it is very lively, which it often is, it tends to be a bit unmindful. It is as though it is very difficult to maintain mindfulness when you have got a lot of energy, and when you have a lot of mindfulness it is very difficult to not get out of contact with your energy. But

you can do it, you can blend the two, and this is one of the signs of the True Individual. If you never lose contact with your energy and you never lose contact with your awareness either.

: Does it become (?)

S: Well yes, as the energy becomes more fused with the awareness it becomes more refined. As the awareness becomes suffused with the energy, it becomes less alienated.

Paloma: It reminds me of what you were saying about the fist that holds the flowers, and sometimes it is our body that holds our bits and pieces, and sometimes it is our head that holds all the bits and pieces, we think what are going to feel, and we think what we are going to do, and sometimes we don't think, it is like we are just in the body and the body is what holds the bits together. It is one or the other, and then there is imbalance.

S: Well it is then what somebody called "The ghost in the machine". It shouldn't be a ghost in a machine, it should be a total psychophysical individuality which from one point of view is a body and from another point of view is a mind, so to speak. But how did we get into this? We got into this from rebirth and you can get into rebirth via death, I think, so to speak. (laughter)

Marichi: An individual is going to be so self-conscious that [indistinct]

S: Well yes, yes, this is in effect what it means.

Dhammadinna: It says in one of the verses that you won't know when you are going to die; doesn't an Enlightened being have some idea about when ...

S: Well yes, this is what it does say, and it does seem from various records that some people have known when they were going to die. But this is a form of precognition, and this is not an altogether uncommon faculty, you can sometimes know when you are going to die or even when somebody else is going to die.

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Punyavati: Sometimes some of the patients on the ward when I was nursing knew when they were going to die, and they almost prepared themselves for it, when they had their tea they'd say, "This is my last cup of tea" and they were quite happy because they knew when it was going to be.

Dhammadinna: But that is when you are quite close to it, which is not like me here knowing when I am going to go.

: ??

S: Well you sort of feel that you have got a certain amount of energy left and you know that it is only going to last say a couple of days, so you feel well I am going to die in two days time, well you cannot be completely sure, because that is if any other factor doesn't intervene. Supposing there is a fire in the hospital that very night, well you will die before you thought you would die, in that sort of case. But apart from that it does seem as though some people have this precognitive faculty, which they can apply to their own lives as well as to other matters, and actually know when they are going to die, by whatsoever means, but when it is

said that we don't know when we are going to die, well presumably it is referring to ordinary people who haven't developed that sort of iddhi. Well sometimes you develop it as a result of meditation and sometimes it happens spontaneously, even if you don't meditate or aren't a particularly spiritual person, it is a sort of subtle mental vision, almost.

Marichi: People who are on the verge of death seem to have a rush of energy, and seem to be very clear, and look very (?) and are there, and know.

S: In some cases. Maybe for a healthy death, lets say.

Marichi: Or even people who have [been] ill for sometime, there seems to be a restoration of their faculties.

S: Well one often comes across references to the last flicker, the dying flicker of the flame, it does seem like that sometimes.

Dhammadinna: There seems to be an emphasis in our society on how to prevent death rather than how to live life.

S: Yes, we take it for granted that life is some kind of boon and it [is an] indefinite prolongation on almost any terms is to be desired.

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Dhammadinna: And it seems as though when medical science deals with one form of death, say TB, which it did in the last century, then in this century it is with cancer and heart attacks, and people are trying to find a cure for that, which is trying to cheat death in some kind of way, that kind of approach ...

S: Yes, one shouldn't be so obsessed with preventing death that one loses sight of the even greater need to find out how to live well.

Joan: There is a painting in the Courtauld's Institute and it is two monks on the outskirts of a forest, and they are being killed and one of them in the foreground of the painting is turning around and looking at the man who is killing him with a really happy kind of ecstatic kind of expression, like he is just seeing a friend, and that struck me, I hadn't seen that kind ... I mean with the Christian connotation I have looked martyred and looked sort of above and beyond the situation, but this man seemed to ...

S: Ah, that is quite unusual then, indeed.

: ??

S: Yes, I mean there is this sort of concept of death as a friend, but you don't often see it represented in art in that sort of way, quite literally.

Joan: He looked as if he really accepted the fact that this was happening.

S: And welcomed it. Who was the painting by, do you remember?

Joan: I cannot remember. It is like Bellini's style.

Noel: I wonder what kind effect that would have on the person killing him? In a way the person doing the killing would probably expect the monk would have been at least very frightened, if not screaming, but to be actually smiling at him, that is going to have a very different effect.

(indecipherable discussion)

S: Anyway let's go on. Have we finished with this. 'It is the greatest miracle that one ever awakens from sleep'. But just to go back maybe for a minute to this development of self-consciousness. It is as though within the group, let's say the primate group or the proto-human group, which is quite a small group, you have got the different group members living together in a quite small number and impinging on one another and living together and co-operating in the struggle [177] for survival and that it is out of this sort of mutual impingement of these group members in that sort of way, that the spark of self-awareness arises.

Dhammadinna: Would that apply to human beings with a greater degree of self-awareness as a group rather than in our sense of ...

S: Oh yes indeed.

Dhammadinna: ... of the individual?

S: No, not so much a cohesion ... I think there has also got to be a certain amount of conflict.

Dhammadinna: Danger?

S: No, I think of conflict within the group, among the group members. Because if someone ... if you are impinging on one another, and getting in one another's way, but if at the same time you have got to co-operate it is important that you as it were understand one another and if the survival of the group depends upon co-operation, if co-operation is being threatened by lack of understanding, well you will develop that understanding that communication, otherwise you will not survive. Or put it around the other way, those that survive are those that have developed it. And so you get the self-awareness, just developing from the collision as it were of these group members within the group.

: Creative conflict.

S: Creative conflict. And you get that at any stage I think thereafter I mean it isn't enough if you settle happily down within the group. It is just the same in the Spiritual Community. You say to someone, 'Do you realize what you are doing?' And you say, 'Well no, I'm sorry I didn't'. 'Well look, this is what you did', and you think about it, and say, 'Well yes, that is what I did'. Then your simple consciousness with regard to that particular matter is transformed into self-consciousness into self-awareness.

Dhammadinna: Simple consciousness is a bit like your blind spot.

S: Right, yes. And in the case of say the animal or the primitive man, it is all blind spot. And as we are still group members well we to a great extent and not full individuals, we know that we have got lots of blind spots. So we really need the help of others, because others can see it because to them we are objects. I mean [178] this is using the word object in a literal sense, to them you are object, they can see what we are doing. In a fuller sense, they can point it out to us. Then we can see it. So that helps us to develop self-consciousness, thereby we are helped to be more individuals. So it isn't as though well once upon a time in the evolutionary past we became individuals and that is that, and we have developed self-consciousness. No. We are still in the process of developing it, and we still need this impingement of person on person to help us to develop it.

Marichi: (paraphrasing) So if there was a group that didn't have that conflict situation ...

S: I think conflict is inevitable. Because people have got the same interests, the same desires and these will I think inevitably bring them into conflict. Different members of the group will want the same things and there will have to some sort of adjustment and that will almost inevitably, will give rise to at least some degree of self-consciousness on the part of all of them, on the part of each of them.

Dhammadinna: So could you say that in the Friends there is a limit on numbers in a co-operative or centre that can produce that kind of intimate, creative conflict?

S: I think there is. I think that doesn't mean you must limit the movement as a whole, but the movement must naturally fall into sort of constituent units which are large enough to give scope but at the same time not so large that the developing individual is virtually lost or cannot have an impact or cannot register him or herself as an individual.

Dhammadinna: Bureaucracy would be the death of that wouldn't it? If something got so big that you had to organize it rather than ...

S: I think that one has to be careful here, because people have a sort of almost instinctive reaction against bureaucracy, and bureaucracy as such is a dirty word. So I think that one has to be a bit careful here, because supposing you have, as you have got already, an Order consisting of a hundred and thirty nine people as it is at the moment, and a couple of hundred mitras and several hundred if not thousands of friends, well, how is one going keep the whole thing together, so to speak? So it isn't a question of bureaucracy but what has to be done is that there has to be all these sort of overlapping sort of circles within the main circle, with different [179] people circulating at least from time to time within these different circles and some people at least having at least from time to time contact within all of them. In other words you cannot just have circles consisting of the same people all the time, and no interchange. I think the unity or the dynamics is provided by the interchange. If you don't have the interchange you will need some kind of bureaucracy. If you [have] say a Movement of twelve people here who have an intense communication but only have it amongst themselves, and another ten or twenty people there, and another ten or twenty people there, they may have in a way the same ideals, but not living interconnection. They must sort of meet from time to time, or interchange from time to time, so that the blood as it were, is kept circulating round and round. This does in effect happen in varying degrees.

Dhammadinna: What about more primitive societies like that book you gave Parami to read

about the Indians, that seems to be a positive group, there doesn't seem to have been much crime or much conflict, is that group going to produce individuals? It didn't seem as though it did, although ...

S: Probably not. Or perhaps very very slowly.

Dhammadinna: The woman writing the book seemed to think that was an ideal which we should recreate in a sense ...

S: I think that one can say that it is an idea to recreate the positive group. It is an ideal, or can be an ideal, but I think that there is a further ideal as it were which is to create individuals, not only that, but to create an open-ended positive group, that is to say, a positive group that is open to the production of individuals and therefore a spiritual community as we call it within it. Any way let's have tea.

Break in tape.

S: ... of course one could say that one can reconstruct or imagine the way in which self-consciousness started emerging from simple consciousness in the case of human beings or those who became human beings by just seeing how even now self-consciousness continues to emerge from the simple consciousness. It is the same process essentially. We shouldn't sort of think that self-consciousness has emerged, individuality has emerged, it is in process of emerging. The process has been going on perhaps for several hundred thousand [180] years. One could link it up with changes in external nature because it is significant perhaps that Homo Sapiens arose at the time of great global upheaval. You had the Ice Ages. You had four or five of them. The last one ended only how long ago? Thirty thousand years ago. Something like that or even less. So, that produced great climatic changes, great changes in the conditions under which men and animals lived which meant that the struggle for survival became more acute and in the case of these small bands of primates, the proto human beings, there was a great need to develop, to co-operate, intelligence, communication and so on, this may well have hastened the whole process.

Verne: It is interesting in a way this friction - I had this image in my meditation yesterday of lots of slim plants growing next to each other and somehow knocking the branches off each other in a sort of self correcting process.

S: I think this is where the spiritual community is very important on the higher level.

Marichi: How is it on a higher level?

S: The level of the development of further development of individuality. One could say that on its own level the family is important, using the word family in quite broad sense, not necessarily the nuclear family, as a sort of field of development of at least the rudiments of self-consciousness.

Bonnie: The difficulty within a family is that you have some members who are physically dependent on other members. The children are dependent on their parents for physical support and this puts often an uneven emphasis on one or the other at different times.

Dhammadinna: Well presumably that does happen in the family that as a child begins to emerge, as it develops self-consciousness there is conflict.

S: Well I would go further back than that. That before the child develops self-consciousness, there is conflict, because the child's sort of naked ego coming up against the requirements of other human beings, the requirements of the family group and so on. And usually self-consciousness develops in the case of the child, or very often it develops in the case of the child, when it starts coming up against these limiting factors. And I think therefore in the whole process of growing up there is inevitably a strong element [181] of frustration. I think that this is almost built in to the human condition itself. But if you are a healthy individual you can sort of contain the frustration, and you can make an almost creative use of it.

Dhammadinna: If you don't give your child some sort of limits, then in fact you are frustrating its development.

S: You are in fact, you are stunting it.

Break in tape;

Verne: ... I remember you talked about in terms of development of positive volitional samskaras.

S: I'm not sure what you are referring to.

Punyavati: You were talking about children in India, being taught to do things in a more skilful way, I remember talking to you about conditioning or not conditioning children, and you used the word samskara.

S: I think what I was probably meaning was that it was impossible not to condition children at all, but that you should condition them positively.

Verne: It was something about if you don't condition [182] positively they will condition themselves.

S: Well it is as though the basic animal nature which is essentially blind and egoistic will assert itself and if that is allowed to assert itself too long or too late, they will suffer, so you should gently introduce a positive conditioning that will enable or help or encourage individuality to emerge. I mean I think in India people on the whole manage this very well. You see a lot of people in the West, a lot of parents seemed to have lost the secret of this. You don't want to crush the child on the other hand the child mustn't be allowed to be a complete little nuisance within the family circle. Sooner or later the child has got to live with other people and will not always get his own way. I mean if you have got a lot of people living together all insisting by whatsoever means on having their own way, well that is a recipe for social disaster, and chaos. So you have to sort educate the child into a recognition of the existence of other people and the needs of other people as well of his own, of which he is sufficiently conscious.

Verne: So it is developing an awareness of subject and object.

S: Yes, it is also a question of how you do it, supposing to cite the example that I gave the other day, supposing the child snatches away a toy belonging to another child, well there are several ways of dealing with that situation. You can catch hold of the child and say, " You naughty boy, you mustn't do that", smack. Well he learns but he learns a painful way. Or you can say, "Look, just come here didn't you see that he was playing with that toy, he was enjoying playing with that toy, you don't want to spoil it for him do you? You wouldn't like it if it was done to you." So you can put it in that way and produce the same sort of effect but in a milder pleasanter sort of way, hopefully. And the child knows why. Yes. So it doesn't have to be rough and harsh, but you have to as it were socialize the child by some means or other.

Verne: Make them aware of the actual consequences.

S: Make the child, the child has to be made aware that there are other people. So he can become [aware] that there are other people either painfully or relatively pleasantly. In the case of course of some children either because of their heritage of Karma or whatsoever reason it is very difficult to do it the gentle way. And then you may come to the point of decision, "Well maybe I just have to smack [183] him". And sometimes that may be necessary.

Paloma: I remember my little brother, I had to look after him for quite along time and when he was really small to when he was much older, and I taught him how to walk and also we starting talking and he could reason quite well, so I used to talk to him sometimes about things that he had done and try and reason with him and even when he would agree that I was right he would still (laughter) and we weren't allowed to use any violence at all, so if I came to the conclusion that I should smack him, I couldn't do that, so I had to try and sit there, and feel really angry ...

S: So what was the effect upon you? Because if you are bringing up a number of children, you have to consider all of them. So they cannot have all their own way, this would be a contradiction in terms, so there has to be some sort of mutual adjustment, some sort of mutual self-limitation, and that can only be by recognizing other people as other people, and recognizing yourself in other people, that as you feel, so they feel, therefore you should have consideration for them, respecting them.

: I think a lot of children don't learn this.

S: In the modern West they don't.

Paloma: The thing is that this is quite neurotic because sometimes he would do things that I wouldn't really mind whether he does them or not, but it would be the general rule that that was forbidden, so I had to forbid it, but I didn't really mind.

S: Well then you see one has to make up one's mind say within the sort of family context how one is going to bring up the child. One has to see well one has to think of it primarily in terms of the development at least eventually of an individual and one has to ask oneself well what are the things in the interests of that future development of individuality that the child must not be allowed to do. The main thing is that the child should not be allowed or better still should be encouraged to understand that he should not hurt others, that he should not do to others what he does not wish others to do to him. In other words this Golden rule, this is the basic principle of education. And ideally you should not sort of just belt it into the child but

explain it.

Paloma: Mm, but you don't think like that when you are yourself [184] a child.

Bonnie: When they are very young you cannot explain something ...

S: Well at the beginning when the child is in fact a baby, you just have to gently exert force.

Marichi: It is as though you have to explain it without words, by your own example, you cannot hit your child and say "You should not hit other children". You are explaining the wrong message.

Noel: And if they overhear you having a violent quarrel ...

Punyavati: It is difficult not to do that, especially if you live in a nuclear family, mother and father are so frustrated and you can get angry very easily, and often that is what happens, you can get quite violent with the child.

S: Well sometimes it is an overspill from the relationship with the spouse. And they take it out on the child because you are angry with the husband or the wife.

Voices: Yes.

Bonnie: The extra responsibility of children puts extra difficulties on the relationship with the spouse.

S: Within the nuclear family.

Bonnie: Within the nuclear family.

S: So it just seems to be an additional argument for the extended family if one has a family at all.

Punyavati: Or at least making sure that the children have lots of other contact with other adults. Another thing that I do is develop a lot of good communication with them, and you sit down and discuss it together, they can say if they have got any complaints towards me, and they can say it ...

S: Yes well sometimes children do have. Sometimes children have a strong sense of injustice. I can remember incidents from my own childhood, I am not going to bore you with the details but I remember on occasions, one particular one, I think I was six then, I know that I was six then because it is linked with something else that I won't bore you with, but I can remember being very clearly and acutely conscious of the injustice of the way in which adults behaved. Sheer injustice of it, and I was as clear about it at six as I am [185] today at fifty five. So it must have been pretty clear. So children do have this, these sort of awarenesses they awaken quite early. And children really do judge the behaviour of adults in a very sort of sharp kind of way. They often find adults lacking.

Joan: I find that often in teaching, I go on the mood of the room, I have got to do or say a

certain thing before we can move on, but they are all aware that something isn't quite right.

S: So let me go back a little to this in a way educational process because after all we shall be thinking certainly in Norfolk in maybe a few months time about this whole question of education. Because it links up with the whole business of education in the widest sense. Especially education of the small child, and especially education within the family circle. What you are basically concerned with at least from a certain point of view is to enable the child, the new human being to make the transition from simple consciousness to self-consciousness and through self-consciousness to individuality in the most positive manner. This is what education is basically concerned with, isn't it? Especially education at the primary and even pre-school level. I mean in other terms you have got to socialize the child, you have got to induct the child into the human group, but you have got to do it in such a way that the child isn't turned against the human group and merely knuckles under to superior force and stores up resentment. You have got to do it as positively and pleasantly as you can. So that the way is left open for the child to use later on in life the group as a springboard for the development of individuality in a higher sense. It might be, this is just a passing thought, it might be useful if those in future who have small children [to] keep a sort of record of the children's behaviour and their sort of dealings with their children from this sort of point of view right from the beginning. Do you see what I mean? What they observe in the baby, what they observe in the child and how they handle it, how they deal with it, how they cope with it, when they see self-consciousness beginning to emerge, how it can be positively strengthened, maybe the mistakes that you made as a father, as a mother and so on, just from this point of view because this is what education is all about on the most basic level.

Bonnie: Even after 25 years the details are quite clear.

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Marichi: I was going to say I think that that is the most vivid thing isn't it. (indecipherable)

Sulochana: ??

S: Well perhaps those who have had children should also write it down from this point of view, you see the specific point of view that I am concerned with.

Bonnie: Because not all children are growing up in ideal circumstances where every adult around them is trying their best to make it possible for them to grow, but they have to still look after them and make it possible in the circumstances.

S: For them at least to survive.

: Most children are (?)

Paloma: You couldn't do it, educate a child on these principles unless it was a different society, because now if you say to the child, "Don't hit this child, don't take this away," when every body else is taking from him and hitting him, then he might not understand that you are right. I think where for instance my brother did understand I was right, he would still do something different, was because the law was different.

S: Well that is why we are thinking in terms of a Buddhist School, because I think if you can

bring up the child along the right sort of lines, maybe up to the ages of seven or eight it is enough, but the foundations of character are laid. The early years are the most important. I mean if you bring up the child in a positive sort of way and ease that transition from simple consciousness to self-consciousness and potential individuality, well then maybe you could even send the child to school in the ordinary way and it wouldn't suffer unduly however bad the system. This is why I am ... when I speak in terms of Buddhist education, say trying to start a Buddhist school, I am definitely not thinking in terms of a Buddhist College or High School. I think we should start right at the bottom and build up stage by stage, and step by step, start even with a playgroup and then start with a kindergarten or whatever you call it nowadays. I mean that is the most important time. That is when you really need as it were to get the children, well you don't even need to get them, you have got them. So it is a question of doing the right thing by them at that stage.

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Punyavati: Even if you give them all that positive support and love at home, the biggest drawback I have recently found with my children is the concept of God at school. I mean they have been persecuted quite strongly and very isolated because of that and they find it quite difficult to cope with it. Things like that will come up with Buddhist children.

S: But I think if they have received the right sort of education even up to the age of seven or eight, they will be able to cope.

Punyavati: It certainly makes them stronger, because there is not much I can say about it, but they have got to feel that, so somehow they have to stand up for themselves.

S: Yes.

Noel: If they get the reinforcement again at home, because I have had this with my daughter of twelve, it is not only God, but it is the whole system. It seems that I only have to walk in through the school gates, and it sets them all off.

They pick up on so many things. It helps for her to come in contact with children whose mothers are also Buddhists, even that in itself and being able to talk about it at home.

S: It is not just your mother who is strange and exceptional because there are lots and lots of people like that. (laughter) So if she has got the backing of her group, just as other children have got the backing of their group.

Noel: This is very important because children of eight and nine get quite conformist, quite group orientated.

S: I think this is well recognized. It is as if they need to.

Marichi: This is why ... it is what they have been ...

S: This is why I say it is quite important for those people in the movement who have children, it is important there are occasions on which they can bring them along to the Centre or whatever, because clearly it is not possible to bring a small child to meditation classes, it would almost be cruel, or to a lecture, you'd bore the child stiff, but there should be other

occasions, ideally festival occasions, where there is a lot of people and you can bring the child. Because it is not enough for the child just to have even a good mother, [188] father, grandparents or whatever, it needs to feel that it belongs to a larger group, and that is as it were supplied if on certain occasions the child can be brought along by the parents to the Centre or whatever or whatever is being celebrated.

Verne: I actually found at work he was really caught up in the whole feeling of what we were doing, and also when (?), he came along and helped us with the painting.

S: He identified with what was going on.

Verne: He really felt part of it, and he often wants to go back to that house where we were painting.

S: Well I remember in the very early days, sometimes when the level of retreats wasn't as intensive as it is now, people used to occasionally bring children too. I remember one of our friends brought along her daughter of about maybe nine or ten, but she thoroughly enjoyed it. I mean she was with about maybe sixty or seventy people, and it was noticed that she didn't stay with her mother, she wandered around and sort of made friends with people and ... It isn't appropriate usually to take any children on retreats, but at the same time there should be opportunity for them to mingle with the group as it were, the group to which their parents in a manner of speaking belong. They need that too. So therefore it is important that every centre or community makes some provision for that in the case of those members of one kind or another who do have children.

Punyavati: We are going to have a few days at White Row to spend time with the children.

S: Well I am sure it will work out very well. It's maybe only a semi-retreat, but then you have to accept that kind of thing in the beginning, it is not going to be a retreat, you are not going to try and do as much meditation as possible, it is a semi-retreat, you have to be sort of quite clear in your own mind, and that the children are going to need a lot of attention and you are going to give to them that.

Verne: We took the precaution of not even calling it a retreat, and just superimposing the idea of tapes and meditation when rather than be frustrated with having this sort of thing about the problem really was that the place was too small.

S: Well clearly with children you need a bit of space, they need to [190] run around and you need to get away from them sometimes for a few minutes anyway.

Verne: (?)

Short break.

S: So we are still really concerned with death (laughter)

Dhammadinna: (?) side track

S: Well it isn't really a side track because we have been talking about individuality and the

emergence of self-consciousness from simple consciousness, but in a way death or the recollection of death helps that, because you see other people dying and then you apply that to yourself, that "I too am not exempt from that, I too will have to die one day". So this means that you see yourself objectively, you see yourself as others see you, you see yourself as you see others and in this way self-awareness and self-consciousness is enhanced. So it isn't something morbid and gloomy, it is something, the recollection of death, is something that sharpens one's self-awareness, one's self-consciousness. All right lets go on to C.

"(C) There are also three reasons for the fact that we die without being followed by anything; (vii) our wealth, (viii) friends (ix) and body do not accompany us."

S: It is not so much three reasons for the fact that we die without being followed by anything, it is more like three ways in which we die without being followed by anything. Let's see what those are in detail.

"(C) There are also three reasons for the fact that we die without being followed by anything: (vii) our wealth, (viii) friends (ix) and body do not accompany us.

(vii) That our wealth does not follow us is expressed in the 'sPyod.'jug' ('Bodhicaryavatara' VI, 59):

However much one may have acquired
And however long one may have enjoyed it with pleasure,
Like a man whose seams have split open,
One departs naked and empty-handed.

Thus wealth besides not following us is a great danger for life here and hereafter. The danger here is that we quarrel over it and that the misery of becoming its slave by guarding it arises; and in the life hereafter as a result of this misery we are born in (19b) evil existences."

S: So "our wealth does not follow us", this is pretty evident. But most of these evident truths, there is more in it than meets the eye perhaps. When we say that our wealth does not follow us, we [191] are really saying in a way we are not our wealth. But usually we think, or society thinks, that we are our wealth. In other words, there is always a tendency to identify the individual or at least the group member with his possessions. So when we say or read that wealth does not follow us, it is like a reminder to us that we are not to identify ourselves with our possessions. Now it is very easy to say that, but it is quite difficult to actually to practise it, because you might find that or you might notice that ... supposing you meet, supposing you are introduced to somebody who you are told is a multimillionaire, do you think that that will have no effect at all? On the way that you treat that person, or the way in which you regard him? Almost inevitably it does, doesn't it? It is very difficult for you to see him then just as an individual. You cannot help thinking of him, and even if you are not a gold-digger, you cannot help thinking of him as a wealthy man, not "Here is a person, here is the individual and he happens to have some money", no, it is as though the idea of the wealthy person is fused and you treat him as such. It is very difficult, and in fact the person himself no doubt thinks of himself as a wealthy man. So if he thinks of himself and behaves as such, speaks as such it is very difficult for you sometimes to treat him as such. It is very difficult to separate the man from his possessions, because he is not separating himself from his possessions. And in our society, let us say our capitalist society, well the possession of wealth gives you a certain status, it gives you a certain position. So all that aspect of it comes in. So we can also

say, we can go a step further it is very difficult to separate a man from his position, and it is very difficult from his status in society. Because it is very difficult for him to separate himself and therefore it is very difficult to meet as individual to individual. I mean I have mentioned say in talking about my experiences in India, and writing about them, you are expected to have a caste, you are expected in other words to have a social position, and other people treat you in accordance with sort of caste you have, in accordance with what your social position is. You treat yourself so to speak in accordance with that, and expect to be treated by others in accordance with that, you expect to treat others yourself in accordance with that. In England of course also it is not only social position in the grosser forms of income bracket, social position in the broader sense, maybe official position, office, we have also got that subtler thing that we call class. You could say that when you die you leave your class behind except [192] that it is embedded or imprinted in your consciousness, which it sometimes is. But basically as an individual you are separate from your wealth, separate from your social position, separate from your class. I mean these things are no doubt influences which have worked upon you, but they are not the essential, the quintessential you. But it is very difficult for us to meet people, meet human beings, meet individuals just as individuals. So perhaps it helps not only in a general sort of way, as intended by this text, by this chapter to recollect death and we will not take our wealth with us etc., it also helps us in appreciating individuals as individuals, that we cannot take our wealth with us, that we cannot take our social position, that we cannot take our caste or our class.

Bonnie: There is also the male and female aspect of our (?) which I think is the strongest of our conditionings.

S: Yes, I don't know whether it was this group or the other one that I mentioned that when we think of the stream of so called reincarnation that at one time we have been a man, another time a woman, if we think in this sort of way, then we are less likely to identify ourselves exclusively with this sex or that sex. If you say "Well I am a woman, or I am a man", well that is OK for this life, but what might you have been in your last life? So, supposing you are an advocate of women's rights and then you practise meditation and you start remembering previous lives, and you find in your last life you were a man. So where does that leave you? (laughter) Or vice-versa? You might be a male chauvinist pig in this life, but then recollecting previous lives you might find you were a beautiful female dancer or something like that in your previous life, well where would that leave you, if you were identifying very strongly with your present sex in this life. So sex also is relative. Even taking it further than that, we know that even the balance of male and female within each individual is not even (?), not to speak of psychologically, even anatomically is not always exactly standard so to speak, if that is what it is supposed to be according to some people. So one cannot think exclusively in any of these sorts of terms. Not the deeper that one goes into the individual as such. The individual is not as such poor or wealthy, the individual as such is not high caste, high class or low caste or low class. The individual is not as such male or female etc., even though in ordinary social life these things may be quite important. So one has to treat people less and less in terms of those distinctions and more and more as individuals and see them as individuals and be an [193] individual oneself.

Kaye: That conditioning is so deeply embedded in us it is very difficult.

S: Which conditioning?

Kaye: Well the conditioning say when I meet somebody who I hear has got all kinds of degrees and things, it is very difficult to then just see that person there and not kind of have an idea that this is a very intelligent person, who knows such and such and such and such.

S: I do know that there are quite a number of people within the Friends who feel in some cases quite strongly or quite deeply their lack of education as they call it. Their lack of culture, their lack of knowledge, they feel very deeply that they haven't read as much as other people, etc. Not that they would really like to in their interests of their development as individuals and regret that they haven't, not that, but that they feel inferior to those who have those sort of advantages or qualifications or whatever you like to call it. It is not that they feel that they need to study in order to be more individuals, though sometimes that is the case. But that they sometimes feel inferior because they have not studied to those who have studied or to those who have degrees etc. So this is quite foolish, this is due to a very wrong sort of conditioning.

Verne: But Bhante, those two things can coexist can't they, like the ... you were saying it is not that they don't want to learn, because I find that I feel inferior but I also want to know more.

S: Oh right, if one feels that it would be better for one's growth as an individual to learn and it is a pity that one hasn't learned fair enough, but I am speaking more of those people who don't need to know certain things or certainly don't need degrees, but who feel inferior to other people because other people have those things and they don't. They unnecessarily feel inferior. They are not inferior. But they feel that they are.

Paloma: I was thinking the other day about English and English Literature and things like that, and then I thought I do want to learn the English language because I need it to express myself, but I don't have to read all these books, I don't have to know them all ...

S: Well you would really have your work cut out. (laughter)

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Paloma: You can get really stuck on it. And I was quite aware that if it was in my family for instance it was a necessity that you went to university. If you didn't go to University then well you hadn't completed your humanity or something.

S: Right, yes you weren't fully human. Yes. And it is as though some of our friends within the FWBO feel almost like that. As though they are not fully human, those that haven't been to University in comparison to certain other people who have been.

Dhammadinna: And they get dehumanized in the process (laughter).

Paloma: You can meet people in the country sometimes who have the knowledge of human life of people much deeper than someone who has gone to University, someone who is really academic.

S: This can be the case.

Paloma: They have a sort of deeper knowledge of human nature in a way than you have by

reading books about psychology or having a grade in psychology even.

S: Well you can meet many a person who has got a degree in psychology who just don't how to handle people.

Punyavati: I think those people feel a lack of qualifications rather than education.

S: Yes, it is the lack of qualifications.

Noel: Because you know an awful lot of people with ... like in job hunting ... Your experience is never as really important as your qualification.

S: Yes, somebody was talking to me about this only a few days ago, and he was saying that whenever he went for a job some years ago, he would be competing against people with degrees and he would be more experienced and more capable but if he was competing against them he would never get the job, and then he started thinking that he ought to study and go to University, he didn't really want to, he wasn't all that interested, but he felt that unless that he did and graduated, then he wouldn't be able to get a better job.

Bonnie: That whole academic thing is breaking down because you had to have a Ph.D. in order to get a job, but twenty years ago ...

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S: I remember when I was in my teens how particular they were about the sort [of] people they took into banks. But now they seem to take anybody they can get, they are only too glad to. But when I was in my teens you had to have all sorts of qualifications. I don't think that you had to actually be a graduate, but it was something like that to get into a bank and just be a clerk behind the counter.

Marichi: Did that prove that you were trustworthy in some way?

S: Well you had to have a respectable family background and had to have certificates of character from the local vicar and things like that, or you needed to have an uncle who was perhaps a bit well known or something a solicitor or something. But one of the things that I have been a little bit concerned with, or at least a little bit interested in which I have mentioned from time to time, and we discussed it on our very first Order Convention, and that is the question of class. I think this is something in England which is quite subtle and quite insidious, almost like the caste system in India, perhaps more subtle and to that extent more insidious, and I think that within the Movement especially we have to be quite careful that we aren't effected by the sort of class attitudes with which we were brought up. I think that there is a certain amount of consciousness of this still within the Movement. I don't know whether anyone has got anything to say about this, or has had any reflections about it, because your class also is one of the things that you leave behind when you die, so you should try to see the individual apart from class.

Punyavati: I find that in study in Order weekends, most of the study is based on English literature, and I find a lot of the class attitude coming out, and one time I found it so middle class, that I didn't go back again, because I couldn't really relate to that.

S: How do you find the question of class coming in when it seems to be more at the cultural level. Do you think that a certain cultural level is associated with a certain class?

Punyavati: Yes.

S: Which of course it need not be.

Punyavati: Middle classes tend to be more academic.

Bonnie: It could be inverted too, certain people often assume that certain classes have certain characteristics, which they may not in fact have. Assumptions about, people put people in categories and stop relating to the person.

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Dhammadinna: There has been some discussion about this, I think that working class people tend to assume that middle class people are cultured. And this point was made at ...

S: Mm, yes. Cultured in the true sense as it were, almost.

Dhammadinna: And some people with middle class backgrounds say well that is complete rubbish and it is only a small section of the perhaps middle and upper classes who are cultured in the true sense. Certainly not all middle class people are cultured. I think there are misunderstandings.

S: Not all middle class people spend the evening reading Shakespeare.

Dhammadinna: Very few indeed. I think there are misunderstandings (?) class background in terms of who [is] and who is not cultured.

Sulochana: (?)

S: I think also there is an assumption on the part of some middle class people to use that term, that people who work with their hands are unintelligent and work with their hands because they are unintelligent. And I think that this has been quite an eye-opener for some people within the Friends, say people with a more academic background, working along side people without an academic background in certain very practical areas discovering that in order to do certain apparently simple practical things you needed quite a bit of intelligence, which in some cases they themselves didn't seem to have. I think that this has been quite an eye-opener in some cases. That there was such a thing ... that a skilled workman was often a highly intelligent human being. I think that this is something that some middle class people don't appreciate even now.

Dhammadinna: I think that is quite common.

End of Side A.

S: But I think in a way the basic evil in connection with the class system is not simply that you categorize people but you categorize them relative to one another in terms of higher and lower. So if you become sort of aware that someone is from a certain class and that class for

instance is supposedly higher than yours or lower than [197] yours, you treat people therefore as higher or lower in a very sort of subtle way, even without realizing it. If you feel that the person comes from a lower class you can be sort of subtly patronizing in a way that is very difficult to sort of put one's finger on. It is not anything that anyone could actually object to, but it is more subtle than that.

Kaye: And people can think of themselves like that, like there is a friend, like she has come from a working class background and I can feel that she is limiting herself because most of the other people working in West London say are more middle class and I can feel that she is constricting herself and thinking that she cannot be as responsible or have her own opinions because she is working class and they are not.

S: In Marxism they have this idea of the classless society, but it doesn't seem to have been achieved anywhere, certainly not in communist countries. But without thinking too much in Marxist terms it is as though in the FWBO one should think in terms of a classless spiritual community, that the spiritual community should be quite free from any distinction of class and that when you come into the spiritual community you leave behind all those considerations: which is exactly what the Buddha said, you leave behind all those sort of conditionings. The Buddha put it in slightly different terms, in terms of the caste system, he said, and in terms of the Bhikkhu Sangha: "Just as the different rivers lose their separate identities when they flow into the great ocean and are reckoned simply as the great ocean, so in the same way when people of different caste origins come into the Sangha they are no longer reckoned as Brahmin, or ksatriya or vaisya or shudra, they are reckoned simply as sakyaputras, sons of the Buddha". So this is the principle quite clearly enunciated by the Buddha. These group distinctions have no significance, no validity within the spiritual community. It means that the spiritual community consists of individuals, it means that within the spiritual community you see one another as individuals, you treat one another as individuals, that is the primary consideration.

Bonnie: Class distinction is not so obvious at the other end of the world, in New Zealand and Australia, but it still exists in subtle forms, and because it has been broken, there has been able to arise especially in Australia the self made man or woman, who is so strong and so aggressive and so ego-centric that it is really unpleasant, infinitely unpleasant than the forms of aggression and arrogance.

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S: Well it sounds like the spoiled child writ large. They have not been sufficiently socialized.

Bonnie: Yes that's right.

Marichi: Won't that grow into yet another class structure based on (?), the same as is happening in Russia, so that will become the new aristocracy?

Bonnie: Yes, but pretty gross

S: Well when you reflect that the modern British aristocracy what's left of it might seem rather refined and cultured, but they are all descended from robber barons and bandits and pirates and what not. [They] just seized with both hands whatever they could lay hold of.

Bonnie: An interesting thing happened to me so far as class, I was wandering around when I first arrived in the centre of London, and obviously looking somewhat bewildered not aware of where I should be, and had literally walked into the gutter by a man with a bowler who was strolling along who hadn't seen me. And exactly the same thing happened in Alice Springs when I was walking there, except that time I was mowed down that time by a black Aborigine, who wasn't going to have a white woman stand in his way.

Dhammadinna: In Jilly Cooper's book she makes the point that class is becoming back into fashion or something in England in times of financial difficulty and that in the sixties where the classless society was an ideal, but that people are more concerned about their class and their conditioning, she felt that that was happening in the seventies and eighties.

S: I couldn't say.

Marichi: (?) in the twenties.

S: Well it didn't come into it because it was always in one particular class.

Marichi: Yes but you could sort of move towards it and as soon as the Depression came in then things got much tighter.

Dhammadinna: Another point that she was making is that people need a position and they are more insecure in financial insecurity [199] they fall back on whatever class they happen to be in at the time.

S: Yes this could be true. It is more a question from another point of view of falling back upon and consolidating one's true position, not an artificial position which is merely conventional.

Marichi: So at times of financial crises so that is what is relatively true what is left, living in genteel poverty, along as it is genteel.

S: Yes quite, it is more important that it should be genteel than it is poverty. You don't mind confessing to poverty because everybody knows you are genteel. Poverty is no disgrace, but not to be genteel is a terrible disgrace.

Sulochana: Nowadays it seems to be the other way around.

S: Yes, there is an inverted snobbery as it is called which is if anything more deplorable.

Sulochana: (?)

S: Anyway we haven't quite finished because the prose portion goes off at a slightly different tack. "Thus wealth besides not following us is a great danger for life and life hereafter, the danger here is that we quarrel over it and that the misery of enslaved by guarding it arises and in the life hereafter as result of this misery we are born in evil existences". So not only can we not take wealth with us when we die, even while we have it, while we are alive during our life time it is certainly not an unmixed blessing, in fact it is almost an evil, because we quarrel over it. Now if you use the word wealth it makes it sound a bit archaic and old fashioned and

therefore a bit unreal, but is it not true that people quarrel over possessions, is it not true that they do. Over wealth and the sources of wealth.

Paloma: Sometimes over very little things.

Kaye: And over positions as well, a sort of power struggle.

S: Well one finds this in the economic life of this country in the form of strikes, because what are people going on strike for, more money. In other words a bigger slice of the cake and very often they don't seem to care whose slice has to be made smaller so that their slice can be made bigger. I mean I remember in the course of my life [200] sort of little things that have made a strong impression on me. There are certain sort of political slogans that have made a strong impression on me, and that have told me quite a lot. One I heard when I was in India in Kalimpong, the slogan with which Mr Macmillan won the election, the General Election, I don't know which one it was, but it must have been in the fifties and the slogan was "You have never had it so good" and I thought "Oh how gross, Oh how unworthy, how ignoble to think that slogan could win you an Election". I was quite appalled. And then another slogan or statement was one I heard not many years after my return to this country, a trades union leader speaking on the radio being interviewed said "When the boys are after the lolly there is no power on earth that can stop them". So I thought "how gross, how awful" Lolly is slang for money. So one sees or hears evidence of this every day in the newspapers on the radio, people are after the lolly and no power on earth is going to stop them and this is the attitude more and more, that the ambulance men say "Well we are going to go on strike", even nurses now are talking about the possibility of changing their constitution of the Royal College of Nursing to make the members able to go on strike, to take industrial action. And people almost say now, have said it, they said it the winter before last, "Well if patients die, too bad, we are sorry but we cannot help it, we are out for own interests".

Dhammadinna: It is like going back to intense subjectivity and not seeing other people.

S: Yes, and this seems to be on the increase in Britain as far as I can see.

Joan: Could there be an aspect in it that is quite good in that the allocation of money is now more in the hands of everyone and it is taking a negative form in just people grabbing, but it does ...

S: It is in the hands of everyone it is true, but it is like everybody being equal some are more equal than others. It is more in certain persons hands than others. It is more in the hands of those who are capable of damaging industrial action.

Dhammadinna: It is gluttony.

S: They are in the position of blackmailing everyone else.

Joan: Yes, but when the nurses say "Well what about us?" I mean they take an awful risk in the nature of their job, but it is standing up to industry.

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S: You have a situation in which everybody is standing up to everybody else on the basis of

whatever force that they can muster and that is the recipe for anarchy. In other words moral considerations, social considerations, cultural considerations just go by the board. It is just "I'm going all out whatever the damage I do to the country as a whole, the economy as a whole, I am going all out to get what I want". And sometimes it takes such an extreme form it is as though "If I cannot get what I want, I don't even care if I destroy the whole economy", which means of course that "I won't even get what I want but I don't care". It becomes almost a sort of madness.

Marichi: I want to prove my point.

S: I want to prove my point. It is what we were talking about Insistence. Insistence on your own will. Yes this was antithetical to patience of course. The patience that we were talking about in the other study group. But it is a form of that. Your own will at all costs. I see more and more evidence of this in Britain in recent years.

Kaye: That is very asura like.

S: Yes, it is asura like, yes indeed.

Marichi: And it seems to be based on total lack of trust of other members of society. It is a very negative group.

Dhammadinna: That is almost like breaking down into tribal warfare.

S: Almost yes. It is quite interesting that often Trades Union leaders are referred to as "Barons" and the comparisons are with the wars of the Barons in British history.

Marichi: As though there are lots of little empires.

S: Indeed. It is as though the overall framework is almost I won't say it is in danger of breaking down, that would be an exaggeration, but it is certainly cracking here and there.

Bonnie: Malcolm Fraser, the Prime Minister in Australia, came back at the Trades Unions with their agitation. He came back and created a slogan which was "Life wasn't meant to be easy". Which absolutely inflamed them.

S: It is almost like the puritan work ethic isn't it.

Bonnie: And that is what he had. He would be considered one of the aristocracy in Australia.

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S: He is more equal than anybody else.

Bonnie: It reminded me of Marie Antoinette who was reported to say "Well can't they eat cake?"

S: "If you cannot afford silver, well why not ring for gold, there is plenty of it". But anyway what we are talking about is that we quarrel over wealth, so what is the solution of this? I mean there cannot be any purely economic solution, you have somehow got to get at the

individual, the individual has got to be aware of others as individuals, and there has got to be mutual adjustment. There has got to be co-operation, rather than conflict, and this is of course why we have co-ops. Co-ops don't exclude conflict in a positive even creative sense, because the members of co-ops, oh, have I put my foot in it? (laughter) ... the members of co-ops as members of co-ops are all as it were equal, each is entitled to his say, but within the framework of the co-op structure. I mean everyone is committed to the maintenance of the co-op structure, but that can involve quite a lot of plain speaking and even healthy conflict to get the whole thing going, or keep the whole thing going along the proper lines. But clearly without some sort of in a way common ownership, I think there is no solution to this problem of economic conflict. And there cannot be any sort of common ownership or co-operation except in relation to some kind of human ideal, some kind of spiritual ideal even, at least some clear conception of what we call the individual and individual development and what we call the spiritual community. So do you find that you are quarrelling over wealth, maybe not in the old fashioned primitive way, but certainly ... well almost in that way it seems some times. All right.

"And the misery of becoming enslaved by guarding it arises" Have you ever noticed this? How your possessions if you are not careful start tying you down. You just become the person who is servicing the things that you own.

Verne: I had a delightful time in New Zealand of giving away a lot the stuff that I had collected. It was just like stripping off layers of myself ...

S: You couldn't bring it all with you, could you? Except at enormous expense which you probably didn't want to incur.

Verne: Could feel a literal lightening.

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S: But isn't it amazing how much stuff that one accumulates? Even after leaving home? Even after going forth? It is amazing.

Paloma: But even if you just had a ruck-sack, you can be quite weighed down by that. I ...

S: It can get heavier and heavier all the time, a few more books and ...

Paloma: Even if there is just a little in it, you are always afraid that it is going to get stolen, because the only thing that you have so you really guard it, and if it gets stolen it is like you cannot understand that the thing has gone away. It is silly really whether it is something quite a lot or something quite a little, even if you reduce it to a minimum, you still guard it ...

S: So what you own or what you think you own really owns you, doesn't it? I mean perhaps not many of you or not all of you have been in the position of having enough property to feel that sort of way, but it is true. But you can extend it further than that. You can apply it to people. It applies to people to the extent that you regard people, other people as a species of property, when you regard other people as belonging to you and when you are concerned about keeping it that way maintaining your ownership so to speak of people. And then you are always guarding them and preventing them from giving you the slip or from running away from you. In order to keep them around you all the time, you have to be around them all the

time, so in order to deprive them of freedom you have to deprive yourself of freedom. In order to keep them locked up in the jail so to speak, well you have to become the jailer which means you are also confined to the jail. This is what is called the relationship. (laughter) But it is true isn't it. Or at least there is a good element of truth in it.

Bonnie: A big element of truth in it. Marriages can become like that.

S: They can, well any human relationship can become like that.

Verne: That isn't really relating at all is it?

S: No because it isn't relating to an individual. You are regarding the other person as a species of property, as an object. The other person belongs to you. I mean people can sometimes say quite proudly, couples say quite proudly, "Oh we belong to each other". Or you can look into someone's eyes and say, "I always had the feeling that you belonged to me" and the other says, " Yes, I'm sure, you belong to me" (laughter). Well don't they? You might have done it yourselves at some time or other.

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Kaye: The popular songs they are all saying "she is mine" or "he is mine".

S: Yes, right, "my very own", my exclusive property. Well isn't that terrible. I mean you can have, let's use the word relationship in a sort of neutral way for the moment, you can have a relationship with somebody else which isn't quite duplicated by any relationship which you have with any other person, but nonetheless that does not mean that the other person becomes your exclusive property or that you have exclusive property rights in them. But this is very often how we look at other people, even quarrel over other people.

Dhammadinna: Exactly, it is a jealousy and violence.

S: Jealousy and violence comes in.

Noel: We are encouraged to think in that way.

S: Yes, you are encouraged to think in that way or encouraged to think that it is right to think in that sort of way.

Kaye: And that expresses how strongly you feel, how much you "love" that person.

S: Right. A strong feeling is not necessarily a positive feeling.

Noel: It goes back to the family. When you grow up and leave home, your parents cease to own you.

S: Yes, or you think "my children" in a sort of unhealthy way. Well in a sense they are your children, and you are responsible for them in a way that you are not responsible for other children. You have brought them into the world, so of course you have a responsibility which others don't have, or you have a responsibility in a sense that others don't have. But the fact that you have a responsibility doesn't mean that you possess the children or should try to

possess the children in a selfish way and just use them to fulfil your own purposes, meet your own subjective needs. You help, if you are a healthy person, you help your own children to grow up so that they are their own people and relate to you freely as other individuals and not just extensions of yourselves. That is quite difficult very often.

Dhammadinna: Isn't there a Tibetan idea that every one has been your mother and that you have got lots of lives, presumably could have losing effect on that.

S: Yes, it could have.

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Dhammadinna: That you would bring up your own children but that would be in your mind.

S: Yes right, that they had brought you up once upon a time.

Dhammadinna: That they are not just exclusively yours for this one lifetime.

S: Or in that relationship with you for always, but just for this one life time.

Dhammadinna: Did you see a difference amongst Tibetans or Nepalese Buddhist in that sort of sense, less possessive of children?

S: It is very difficult to say. In the case of Tibetans perhaps less. And of course many Tibetans sent sons off to the monastery. In the case of Nepalese, family feelings are very strong amongst them. It is difficult to say sometimes whether it is unhealthy or healthy. Sometimes it is unhealthy. I knew from my own experience, young men coming to see me about the difficulties they had with their fathers. It wasn't hardly ever mother. Mother just didn't count. But it was father usually wanting to tell the grown up son what to do. Especially what sort of job he should get and that kind of thing.

Marichi: If Tibetans send their sons to monasteries, would they also make sure that they have other sons to look after them in their old age?

S: Yes, it was more a question of sending the eldest son to the monastery.

Marichi: Because it is obviously easier to let your children go if you haven't got a dependence on them.

S: Yes indeed.

Bonnie: If they let you go.

S: Well there is that to it as well. Sometimes they don't want to go. But of course one could carry it a stage further, well if they don't want to go, does that tell us anything about the way that they have been brought up?

Sulochana: It could do, but when the Dharma is mixed with it, it maybe that your relating on another level.

Bonnie: This is the other object isn't it, and I can see it in children with temper tantrums?

S: Yes, when they can't get their own way.

Bonnie: But adult's turmoil can come in more subtle forms of temper tantrum, but it is still temper tantrum that, isn't it?

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S: Can you give an example?

Bonnie: Long brooding silences.

S: Ah, yes. Or just cutting off ...

Bonnie: Cutting off, withdrawing, isolation, frigidity. It is like a cold fire.

S: Refusal to communicate, it takes all sorts of forms.

Bonnie: But it is still temper tantrums; at least with a child it is hot and outward going and it extinguishes itself by outward going.

S: So the danger here is that "we quarrel over it", wealth that is, "and the misery of becoming enslaved by guarding it arises, and in the life hereafter as a result of this misery we are born in evil existences".

But there is one thing that I wanted to talk about in connection with this whole question of wealth and property, that was sharing. And the institutions so to speak of the common purse. I think some communities do have a common purse, others don't have. Has anybody got anything to say about this? Have you noticed any particular effect, do you find that it does help? Are there any particular difficulties that have been experienced, has the sense of ownership diminished? Has the sense of responsibility diminished, I mean for the property?

Dhammadinna: I think Amaravati had a common purse and I did find that although I still had certain possessions that were mine in my room, but my attitude to them changed, because it was a common situation, and I think also that some things were neglected, common machinery!

S: That is not so much the failure of the structure as the individual concerned.

Dhammadinna: It did have a freeing effect.

Joan: I think that a lot of the energy that is invested in one's own property and one's own sense of security all came out among each other and those were all areas that we had to relate on, so they went on a deeper level, but I think that there was a lot of anxiety and things within those, but at least they were interacting more, than if you have invested back in your own things.

Dhammadinna: I think that also we discovered that it was difficult to [208] ... we would get reduced to poverty level, somehow it was connected with it being a common purse, that

individually we could have probably gone out and earned so many thousands a year or something, but something happened in that area, that (the work in the community was part of the common purse) that was why I was stirred up. think that changed after I left.

Marichi: To create self-responsibility more.

S: It took away initiative?

Dhammadinna: Yes. I think that that was a phase, maybe it was got over.

Marichi: Maybe if there had been more money in common, it would have been easier. It was a very small amount.

S: It is as though there is more incentive to work for oneself and one's own money than one does for the common purse.

Marichi: Well it was more like attitudes weren't clear enough. There was a sense of restriction in it, so that you felt that whatever you put in wasn't going to come out again.

Dhammadinna: Money sort of got swallowed up.

S: That everybody was putting in, but nobody was taking out?

Marichi: A bit like that yes.

S: Although actually it couldn't have been so. But that must have been the psychological feeling, that money that was put into the common purse was money lost, just thrown away.

Dhammadinna: (?)

Kaye: (?) (all talking at once)

S: But in a sense it was. In other words it was money lost to that sort of grasping self. Do you see what I mean?

Marichi: Well it didn't feel like that at the time. It felt more like that there were a lot of different temperaments with different ways of surviving, and we were all surviving on a very bare margin and by sharing it we didn't actually share the survival, something got lost, some ... it was very much the feeling of lowest common denominator.

S: Well that comes back to what I was saying, that the common purse becomes small because the incentive of contributing to a common purse is not as strong as the incentive of contributing to or earning money for that is your own private pocket.

Paloma: It is very strange to observe that at first there was quite [209] a lot of money in the common purse and then later it got smaller and smaller and then you could notice that some people would have their own food in their own rooms, and the common purse there would be a little money in it, but really in effect it wasn't like sharing ...

S: It was almost like a little black market.

Paloma: Yes.

Joan: But that wasn't common purse. We had a different thing in our community.

Paloma: It was.

Joan: Not in the sense that Amaravati was.

Paloma: Well I understand by common purse that we were sharing what we needed for our basic living ...

Marichi: Well this was sharing, which is more than sharing basic living.

Joan: Everything that you had went in ...

Paloma: But even for the amount that you put in for food which is your basic need in a way, we were putting money in, at first it was quite a lot, and then ...

S: So what it means is that when you see the private sector takes over more and more from the public sector, so as where in Amaravati perhaps there was only the public sector.

Marichi: Yes, there wasn't a private sector.

Joan: I think that the common purse works at its best when say the community is involved in the same co-operative, say, and the same business and that you are working on that business, that brings in that element of one's own industry or whatever plus the fact that it is expanding and following the ideals that you want to follow.

S: But I do know though that sometimes it has been successful that the common purse in another way in at least one community or in fact two communities that I know of, men's communities, there has been at least one community member who is a big earner comparatively but who puts back all his earnings into the common purse and there seems to be no difficulty that I have heard of, even though others are putting in much smaller amounts, but it seems to work.

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Paloma: So it seems to depend on the person. If you are like very greedy person, you will have a much more difficulty, you will always something there under your bed (laughter) ... or you put your that you agreed in public to put in, you put it in the box or whatever but you always hold back somewhere, it is like you are not really sharing.

S: Well it is a mixed economy clearly. This is what happens on the big scale, this is what happens in Russia, it is happening in Russia. People work in a collective of [one] kind or another say in an agricultural collective a collective farm, but they put a minimum of effort into it, they take time off and they go and cultivate semi-legally or semi-illegally their own sort of private patch, and sell the vegetables on the black market, and that is what they are really interested in doing, they are not interested in putting energy and time and effort into the

collective farm. I hope I'm not telling tales out of school, there is another little incident that happened at Sukhavati, about maybe two or three years ago, when it was all still being built. Subhuti wanted to get some urgent work done on a Saturday. So he asked for volunteers. Nobody was forthcoming, but it had to be done. So he offered five pounds a head. Oh, he had more than he needed. So I'm not saying this is a general criticism of Sukhavati, obviously this was an unfortunate lapse, but it did show to me the extent that people were motivated by the profit incentive. So this is why I started thinking very seriously that if you are in co-op situation or a common situation dispensing with the profit incentive you have got to be motivated by something equally powerful in order to make a success of the whole venture otherwise you will put less and less energy into it. So you must be motivated by the ideal for which you are working as strongly as you formally were perhaps motivated just by the profit incentive. If not your co-operative will not succeed. So you have got to make up your minds about that, the co-op will only succeed if your vision has got as strong an influence as formally the prospect of the gain for you had done. Otherwise a co-op will just run down; and less and less will go into the kitty, not only in terms of money but in terms of energy, in terms of you, less and less of you will go in, and in the end the whole thing will just fold up because it is no longer viable. I think this is very important to understand. Therefore really you can only have committed people working in co-ops. Co-ops are not for beginners, co-ops are not for new Friends, they are for Order Members and very experienced Mitras. I think this is also the lesson. You cannot run a co-op with uncommitted people. Because by definition they are [211] people who have got to be kept going by the ideal and the vision, not by the carrot and not by stick also. In Russia there is a big stick, so they keep things going to some extent by that. But by the very nature of our principles we cannot do anything with the help of stick, so that only leaves us with carrot. So if carrot is dispensed with, well what can keep the whole thing moving? Only the vision and the ideal. So if you haven't got that, don't even bother about a co-op, start up some other form of business organization where you all get your share, or your salary or whatever else it is that you want, but don't pretend that it is a co-op or that you are working for a co-op. Demand your carrot and nibble it or gnaw it quite openly and frankly and honestly.

Dhammadinna: Would you also say that for communities with newcomers and beginners it is best not to have a common purse, it is best towards it.

S: Well see the individuals. If people cannot really put themselves into the situation to that extent, you cannot force it. They will only find ways around it. Yes, they will have bars of chocolate under the bed and whatnot.

Marichi: Certainly when you look at it you realize the extent of commitment necessary and ...

S: At Padmaloka people don't have a common purse, but they spend on one another quite freely. It seems to work out. If someone hasn't got money for the cinema somebody automatically buys his ticket, it is as simple as that.

Marichi: But the difference seems to be that at Amaravati we didn't seem to have that sort of spare, we did behave like that, but we barely had enough money to get to the cinema, let alone to go in (laughter).

S: I can remember that I heard all sorts of pathetic stories.

Marichi: It was very difficult.

S: Enough money for the cinema ticket, but no money for the fare to get there and things like that.

Joan: Yes, but again when we were doing up the house and doing our own entertainments, we didn't kind of look to going to the cinema.

Marichi: Once it moved through that stage it did have to change

Joan: But then the co-operatives happened and that happened really slowly, so there was quite a long gap when it wasn't one thing or the other, and that is when people got kind of impatient.

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S: I must say looking back myself on the Amaravati experience could we say? (laughter) observing it, it did seem as though there wasn't really enough money around.

Dhammadinna: We started without enough money, and therefore we got trapped in that sort of situation, rather than trying to build up surpluses, and not wanting to necessarily to send people out to work, we got stuck a bit.

S: But still it was a grand success in many ways nonetheless, and I hope it will be repeated.

Kaye: And also I relate to ... like you need a strong ideal to work for, and I never had the ideal of working for money, so I never worked because I never had any impetus.

S: Working for money cannot be an ideal. You can only work for an Ideal and get money, and work for money to help you to carry out the ideal.

Kaye: That's right, but talking on say worldly terms, if people work either for ambition, position or for money, I never had that, so I never got that energy going, and in a way it was only towards the end of Amaravati that I sort of started getting in touch with that energy and then I had an idea to work with, that meant something to me, because it was the Movement, and that was quite liberating then, to be able to start using that energy.

Marichi: But it comes back to what you were saying about being rooted in the group, you've somehow cut off that rooting in the group and you needed that to connect with the Ideal.

S: Yes, that is true, to use for the sake of the Ideal.

Kaye: And Amaravati gave me that.

Marichi: And it is not that you are working for money, but you are working for money in order to do something with it, but not just for you, but for everyone.

Dhammadinna: It is a bit like something you said how sometimes people going out to work for the Movement discover the positive benefits of a Co-op or of working within them.

Janet: I think it is good that sometimes people do work outside.

S: Yes, I think it is not a bad thing if in a community you have got, well depending on the size of the community, one or two people who are working outside. I think that that is not necessarily a bad thing. For [213] instance we have had it at Padmaloka with Sona working outside, and I think there was somebody working outside. Abhaya for a bit. It didn't really interfere with the community.

Janet: It creates a balance.

S: Yes, and also there is a completely different aspect of the matter. That in a sense you don't want to cut the Movement completely off from the larger society, because in that society there are people who need you, there are people who could use the Movement so to speak, and unless you are entering into some sort of relationship with them, you will never be able to tell them anything about the Movement. So let there be some people, those who are able to, keeping up that sort of contact.

Dhammadinna: How do you work it at Padmaloka, do people have their own financial resources?

S: Things have changed a little bit recently. Formally they had a definite amount of pocket money, but now I think there is no pocket money at all, and if people need something they just ask Kovida for the money ... and they hardly ever ask apparently. Some just don't bother, or some times if they go off to the cinema, well whoever has got money just buys the tickets. On the whole people don't seem to bother about money. Certain things are bought out of the housekeeping, I'm not even sure where that comes from, somebody says I need some toothpaste, so Andy who is the housekeeper gets it when he goes into town. No one seems very bothered. I think it is partly because they are all quite happy, and they get what they need within the community.

Noel: That seems to be the message that seems to be coming through, if you have got the communication then it can work. You might be united with an ideal but the connection between you has to be good, if that is kept up you won't get privatization.

S: There isn't a completely common purse at Padmaloka because partly at least two members have got outside responsibilities, that is to support families, so clearly they have to have a separate account at least to look after that.

Anyway perhaps we should leave it there.

End of tape.

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Day 5

S: I think it's page 48. Would someone like to read Section viii just half way down the page.

Marichi: "That our friends do not follow is also stated in the spyod.'jug' (Bodhicaryavatara).

When the hour of death has come,

One's own children are no refuge,
Neither are father, mother or friends.
There is none to whom you can turn for refuge.

Thus friends besides not following us are a danger for life here and hereafter. The danger here is that we are afraid they may die and, overpowered by such fear, we come to great misery; as a result of which in the life hereafter we are born in evil existences".

S: "When the hour of death has come
One's own children are no refuge
Neither are father mother or friends.
There is none to whom you can turn for refuge"

In what sense is the word 'refuge' being used here do you think?

A voice: Security.

S: Yes, it's security, a permanent security. During one's life one tries to make one's children a refuge, a security, the same with one's father, mother, friends, but at the time of death you can't do that, you can't continue to do that even though you've been able to do it until then. Do you think this is very common? Do you think this tendency is very strong? Or is it just peculiar to India and Tibet? (laughter).

Marichi: No. Everyone does it.

Noel: People sometimes seem to have children as a way to keep their immortality in a sense, knowing that your children at least will carry on doing what you've done after you've gone. In a sense you carry on.

S: This is perhaps why people very often want their children to carry [215] on doing what they've done, because then they can feel their own continuity, their own continued existence in that, if their children repeat the same pattern. If they don't, they can't.

Marichi: This always reminds me of ordination in the Friends. You have to be prepared to be ordained on your own, you take refuge on your own. You have to be capable of standing on your own. You may not actually end up on your own.

S: At least you should want to go away on solitary retreat from time to time, and literally be on one's own, physically be on one's own.

Bonnie: The problem is that people misunderstand that they feel as though you've deserted them - you don't love them any more.

S: Or people think you're being anti-social, you don't like people.

Voice: You're selfish.

S: You're selfish, yes.

Dhammadinna: I think people spend so little time on their own that they just can't understand that you might want to spend a month on your own. It's very difficult to explain. My mother wanted to come with me on my solitary - she said she wouldn't talk! (laughter) I didn't believe her.

S: People usually think in terms of being left on your own. And they commiserate with old people for being left on their own, as though if you are left on your own you cannot but be bored and restless.

Dhammadinna: There's a man near the caravan there who has some animals, whom Manjuvajra knows. Sometimes you have to pass him going up the lane, and one day he stopped me and talked to me for a bit. He said, 'you can always come up and watch television with me and my wife if you like'.

S: He couldn't grasp you'd gone there just to get away from things like that.

Dhammadinna: He felt really sorry for me, I think.

Verne: You don't usually choose to be on your own.

S: You just get left on your own, abandoned, not wanted, rejected etc. [216] we know all about that don't we?

Dhammadinna: I think he also thought it was odd because I was a woman as well. He commented on one or two other girls who had been there I don't know if they liked it - I think maybe it's more usual for men to go off on their own.

S: Perhaps. Yes, at least when they go fishing. Nowadays you occasionally see women going fishing but it's still not quite as common as men going fishing.

S: But clearly you can't be reconciled so to speak to dying on your own unless you've been reconciled to living on your own. It's no use leaving it to the last minute when your children, parents, friends or whatever are just torn away from you. You may not actually literally leave them but at least you must develop a relatively detached attitude towards them, otherwise when you really do have to part you'll suffer quite intensely.

Voice: Does it matter what happens when people die? Do they feel they're being torn away from people so much?

S: I think it depends - I think perhaps very old people don't. But I suspect that quite often very old people drift into death gradually. They're I won't say glad to die but they're not sorry, they've not much energy to put up any resistance, they don't particularly want to struggle, they'd rather let themselves drift. But I think if you're not in that sort of state, if you're relatively young and healthy, and if maybe you're dying from some kind of illness or accident, then I think you can resist very strongly. I remember reading about this in connection with Emily Bronte. She put up a terrible struggle, she didn't want to die because she was so young, perhaps had so many things left which she wanted to do. I think also it's quite a struggle when you have children and perhaps the children are still young and you realize that you're having to leave them that can be quite a struggle, not only because of your own attachment, because

you wonder well, what will happen to them when I'm gone, who will look after them? and so on. Especially in a [217] country or under social conditions where there is no social security what will happen to them. Will anyone be kind to them? Will anyone help them? Will anyone look after them? In the past, many women who've died when their children were quite small have sort of wondered this - perhaps the husband will re-marry, maybe that's inevitable - will the step-mother be kind to the children, or will the children just be turned loose etc.? (Pause).

So "when the hour of death has come
One's own children are no refuge
Neither are father, mother or friends".

The fact that father and mother are mentioned suggests that under some circumstances, in some cases, the death is, so to speak, premature. One can't really speak of death as being premature but at least it seems a bit unnatural for the children to die before their parents. But that is what sometimes happens. There is none to whom you can turn for refuge. "Thus friends besides not following us are a danger for life here and hereafter." The danger here is that we are afraid they may die, and overpowered by such fear we come to great misery". It's said with regard to friends but perhaps it applies to others as well. Do you think that you're ever in the state of being afraid that your friends may die, and being overcome by fear of losing them? Is it actual death nowadays we tend to be afraid of, of losing our friends through death? Or losing them in some other way?

Joan: Perhaps if they're late back and you're expecting them back at a certain time, you start to imagine the worst sometimes.

S: Right, yes. Sometimes when that happens you can become aware of how attached you are to somebody, you start worrying about them, really worrying - what's happened to them, has anything gone wrong etc. Just like a mother does in the case of small children who are not back when they're expected and it's getting dark, she can't help imagining all sorts of awful things.

Marichi: Also if you're working close by with somebody and then it looks [218] as if that support might go, you realize to what an extent it might be a support, you were leaning on that person.

S: Presumably though, there's a distinction between friends in the ordinary sense to whom you are attached, and spiritual friends with whom there is some sort of spiritual ..

Marichi: Well there should be, but I think there can be overlaps.

S: Yes.

Marichi: You may not be aware of them till you see that that's what's happened. You see how people get caught up on each other's energy. It's not actually your own energy it's somebody else's.

S: Right, yes.

Marichi: Take that one away ... That's why I think we were saying yesterday ...

S: You've lost a few valves.

Marichi: You imagine you're really committed to being in a co-op or being in a community with a common purse. Take away someone's elements from that situation and you're on your own, can you do it on your own? (Pause).

S: So this also suggests that in ordinary friendships and presumably this includes what we usually call "relationships" there's quite a strong element of fear too, isn't there, because of the fear of loss of that person in one way or another, perhaps through death or perhaps they're separated from you for one reason or another or perhaps they leave you perhaps they get tired of you, perhaps they just go away. So very often there's that element of fear, of apprehension, of anxiety bound up with your so called affection. This spoils the friendship you're more concerned with losing the person than actually enjoying their company.

Bonnie: In that case you'd be experiencing a loss of identity with the other person.

S: Yes. In that sort of case it's as though you've invested a portion [219] of yourself in the other person. I think this quite often happens.

Bonnie: Yet there's a positive thing going on here as well isn't there? I'm thinking on an ideal level where you identify with the strength and good things in another person.

S: It depends what one means by identify. If you are projecting something from within yourself on to the other person and to that extent remaining unconscious of it within yourself, and not getting in touch with it and integrating it into your own conscious attitude, then that's an unhealthy situation isn't it?

Bonnie: There's a difference between identifying and projecting

S: Well you can identify in the sense of being encouraged by the spectacle so to speak of somebody else's positive qualities, they can help you and spark you off. But if you just remain dependent upon those instead of developing your own similar positive qualities, then that is an unhealthy situation. If you're always dependent on some other person to cheer you up, so you can't be cheered up unless that other person is around to cheer you up, you don't think in terms of ever cheering yourself up, then that is a relationship of unhealthy dependence. Or you think you couldn't possibly do anything on your own or you certainly couldn't do certain things on your own, you can only do them if that person is there, either to do them with you or to see you do them or give you moral support etc. Sometimes you feel weak and powerless without that other person around. Or perhaps you feel as though you need that person as your audience to watch you and applaud you and so on - otherwise you feel you can't do a certain thing.

Sulochana: There's also the feeling of people always wanting to help you when you want to be doing things for yourself.

S: I don't think that's a problem in the same way because you can always leave them, go away.

Sulochana: Well you can't always. If you have a child ... you can't ... always have the chance ... (inaudible)

Marichi: You have to help yourself faster than they can do it (inaudible) [220] (laughter)

Dhammadinna: I found it quite sad watching my mother trying to adjust to being on her own. In some ways it's OK, she's done quite well, but there's just some things she's never done on her own and she can't at the moment do them and it's no good me saying 'Well come along' you know ... because I'm used to doing things on my own ... it's a bit more difficult.

S: Some people can't go on holiday on their own.

Dhammadinna: Right, she can't.

S: They can't think of it - if they haven't someone to go with, well they just have to stay at home - this is how they think.

Dhammadinna: I invited her to stay with me in London and she said 'I can't go on the train on my own' - she's never done it. It's quite tragic.

Bonnie: It's not that they can't they think they can't - they actually can't.

S: But also in some cases it's that one doesn't want to. It's your protest against being on your own - 'Look how I've been made to suffer I've been left on my own - it's not fair, it's not right.'

Paloma: Sometimes you can't do something with certain people, it's like all your (?) to do something has gone.

S: If you really want to do something on your own and assuming you're not a child, you can go away and do it, I'm sure you can. Just tell the other people to get out of your hair, leave you alone, you're going to do it yourself, you're quite capable of doing it yourself. You don't need them around trying to do it for you.

Sulochana: ... (inaudible) Quite often.

S: Never mind, that's their problem, your problem is to get them out of the way and get on with it by yourself. One can do that - (Bhante laughs).

Marichi: That's quite a relief for people too. They can then get on with doing their own things.

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S: Yes indeed. It may be just mistaken friendliness on their part. Be rude if necessary, push them out of the door throw them out, push them down the stairs (laughter). You sometimes have to ...

Sulochana: They may be needing this person.

S: They may be needing you to need them - what a horrible emotional mess! (laughter)

Sulochana: Needing you for their purposes, whatever it is.

S: Don't let them do it, don't let them exploit you. In the guise of helping you, they're helping

themselves - that's a dishonest situation, throw them out, have nothing to do ...

Sulochana: You can't actually physically throw people out.

S: Oh yes you can! (laughter)

Sulochana: I've never managed to do that.

S: Well, you'll learn, Sulochana, you'll learn! (laughter)

Sulochana: I'm not strong enough to throw somebody.

S: If you really want to throw someone out you can. Wives have even thrown their husbands out, even thrown their children out, when they get really fed up, not to speak of anyone else - one can.

Marichi: It may seem very brutal but I mean otherwise.

S: Mothers throw their grown up sons out - they say, well look, you're 25, you're 30, you're still hanging around my skirts.

Sulochana: I've said that sort of thing to people but they don't seem to take it in

S: Oh well, you must make it really register. You can, I'm sure you can, anybody can otherwise you have to go away, disappear, not leave any forwarding address behind.

Sulochana: I've done that too. (laughter)

S: Well the thing is you mustn't come back! (laughter)

Sulochana: Well, one would then be a constant traveller.

Marichi: Only if you see one place as where you belong. If you go away ...

Sulochana: It isn't a place, it's certain situations.

Marichi: But you have to recreate them wherever you go?

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Sulochana: Yes that's what one does.

Marichi: Then travelling is no worry.

Sulochana: Travelling is no worry - it's what accumulates when you stop.

S: But you don't usually accumulate a husband and children wherever you stop (laughter).

Sulochana: No but people.

S: Well not often anyway (laughter).

Dhammadinna: Some people do!

Sulochana: You get dependent situations.

S: Well, I think it's not only a question of making sure one doesn't become dependent on other people, but not allowing other people to become dependent upon you.

Bonnie: It's ever so subtle isn't it. It's a tough one to ...

S: Because you also get more often than not a subtle satisfaction out of their dependence on you.

Dhammadinna; It gives you a pseudo-strength.

S: A pseudo-strength, yes. I've noticed on quite a number of occasions when couples have split up, whether married couples or just couples, very often it's quite surprising, the person who was supposed to be the dependent one, within the relationship has turned out not to be so dependent as the other one was dependent on him or her. Because usually someone says he's very dependent on me or she's very dependent on me therefore I can't leave, but actually one finds quite often that the one who makes that statement, who believes that the other one is dependent on him or her is the one who is more dependent.

Noel: It's role-playing.

Marichi: One person has put the other person in the apparent role of dependence.

S: Yes, an apparent role of dependence.

Marichi: And you're not attached because this other person is.

S: Yes.

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Marichi: Or in relation to that you're so conscious that the other person is dependent on you, you overlook the fact of your own dependence because you are apparently the stronger person in the situation and thus a quite misleading appearance can be created.

Verne: You can be dependent on someone being dependent on you.

S: Yes but without acknowledging it and without showing it. You seem to be the strong person who is just allowing someone else to become dependent on you, you are the free person if only you were allowed to be free this is what you'd like to present to the world.

Marichi: Well you are free, I mean you're not attached to this person.

S: Right, you're just staying for their benefit, you usually say they'd be too upset if you were to leave, and just out of kindness and consideration you continue to stay around.

Well yes one has heard this from people many a time. Occasionally it may happen to be true but more often than not it's a big rationalization.

Marichi: It might even initially be true.

S: In a relative sort of way.

Marichi: Yes, in a relative sort of way. Then it all sort of fades off.

Verne: This whole micchaditthi can keep relationships going for years and years and one person has been told, and the other has cracked up. I've heard of a married couple, the woman was having therapy, psychotherapy, and she made some breakthrough and left home and realized some of her own strength and the man cracked up and had to go for therapy when he'd got himself sorted out they came back together again and it was really nothing to do with her at all. He had been laying the whole thing on her.

Bonnie: There's an underlying real pocket of fear going on, the ground shakes ...

S: It is really one must admit a quite scary thing to be on one's own. I think quite a lot of people would admit if they have been living in [225] one way or another with some other person, and I think one feels it more strongly if its one other person, and then one is either left on one's own or for some reason finds oneself on one's own, one can if one isn't careful feel quite scared in that situation, feel very left very alone. You may not actually have been left but this is how it may feel to you.

Marichi: You may even have chosen that situation but may not always be ready for it.

S: Right, you may not have quite realized what you were letting yourself in for. You can feel as though the bottom has dropped out of your world, almost that there is nothing to live for and that shows you have really taken those other people or that other person as your refuge. If you die in that sort of state with full consciousness and not wanting to go and not wanting to leave those people, not wanting to give them up, you can suffer quite a lot.

But it seems in the let's say normal way of things if you die at a ripe old age and [have] been getting progressively weaker over a period of time, you don't feel it quite so much, as I said at the beginning perhaps you are quite glad to go, just to sort of go with the flow so to speak.

Kay: Sometimes the thought of leaving somebody is worse than actually doing it, sometimes you might find it is horrible to be left alone but if people actually did it they might not find it so bad.

S: Well what people sometimes find and this is what I've been told by several people is that when you leave, when you finally leave someone to whom you have been quite attached, you do feel a sense of pain, of loss, of deprivation and all the rest it, but you also feel a sense of freedom, of liberation because you have been tied down to them, rather, you have tied yourself to them. You have not only had the neurotic satisfaction of being with them and them being with you but you have also had a restriction on your freedom on your movements. Maybe you didn't dare to go round the corner, or go away for a few days because what would happen to them in your absence? What would they do?

But when you leave, yes there is the pain of leaving, but also there is the freedom, "I can do anything I please! I'm free!" So you can have an ambivalent experience, you can be quite sad to be leaving, even quite upset, but at the same time be happy to be free. You can have the two things at the same time. Quite a few people do report this. Or the two can alternate. You can be feeling really miserable one instant and really exhilarated the next. It can go like [226] this for a few days or a few weeks.

Sulochana: Or other people may tell you you ought to be apart and it may not be actually essential for that particular relationship. It may be a creative alliance.

S: It does occasionally happen one must admit. (laughter)

Punyavati: Relatives put pressure on you on the basis of that relationship. If you're a mother or father or wife or husband they feel you owe them something and it is very difficult to break away from this. They feel you should be to some extent dependent on them or they can be dependent on you, it is quite subtle ...

S: It is as though they don't want you to be free to choose. They don't have the faith in your choice perhaps.

Punyavati: What about children? Children are dependent upon parents. How is that positive?

S: I think that it is positive only to the extent that the dependence is an objective dependence. The very young child is obviously dependent. It depends for its life virtually on the parents especially the mother but I think what you have to be careful to do is not to encourage undue emotional dependence. There can be emotional dependence in a healthy sense at least up to a point because an ordinary human being cannot always completely nourish himself or herself emotionally - you need to be in contact and communication with some other human being. But the emotional dependence itself, though admissible up to a point, shouldn't become extreme and should not be allowed to become neurotic to such an extent that the child or person is crippled if deprived of that, or able to get it only from one person. It is quite a fine point. It is very difficult to know sometimes just where to call a halt, but I think children, especially very young children, have to be allowed to be emotionally dependent. I don't think you can expect, well you certainly cannot expect them to be emotionally independent when they're very small that has to come gradually. But you have to encourage the signs of emotional independence, which I think will emerge naturally when they do start manifesting, and not discourage them because of your own emotional dependence on the child. If you have got a child, especially maybe a little boy, be happy when he starts showing signs of independence and wanting to do things on his own and not wanting mother to interfere, be pleased because he is growing up and becoming independent, becoming emotionally independent.

Punyavati: It is something that happens more naturally.

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S: I think it does tend to happen naturally. If the child has had a natural bringing up a natural childhood. And then one must encourage that and not discourage it.

Marichi: But I think if you push children out too soon they can get very weak.

S: Yes, you mustn't push them. It has the opposite effect - they have a pseudo independence. It is precocious and quite brittle. I think when the child needs to depend, then let it depend and give it full emotional support, but as soon as it starts showing natural signs of independence then encourage the child to be independent, but don't insist on it being independent in a premature sort of way. There are no rules one can lay down. One just needs great tact and great understanding and awareness in order to help the child make the transition from childhood to maturity.

Verne: There is a mitra at home in New Zealand who had a baby last year and she is been reading this book called The Continuum Concept.

S: Dhammadinna lent that to me to read. I haven't read it yet I must confess though I have dipped into it, but I will read it.

Verne: But Joan has actually tried to follow that through and really saturate that baby's dependencies during the first twelve months. It will be interesting to see what sort of child Jonathan turns out to be.

S: I saw the baby a few days after it was born, in fact I saw Jean the day before it was born. Jonathan certainly looks a happy healthy child.

Verne: She really gave herself to him completely during those first twelve months.

S: I remember she was around on Buddha Jyanti day, very very pregnant and I think she was almost hoping the child would be born there on the premises.

But it is easy to go to extremes isn't it, it is so easy to encourage dependence when the time for independence had come, it is so easy also with a false idea of independence to deny to somebody the opportunity of dependence that they objectively need.

Paloma: Why is it always so violent when you realize that you weren't only just dependent but also imprisoned say in a relationship you realize this. It seems that the only way to get away from it all is very violent ...

S: Because so much energy has been blocked by that and you can feel quite [228] desperate, you have prepared to sacrifice everything, you have prepared to risk any misunderstanding, any quarrel, but you just want to be free, you cannot stand being tied down in that way any more, you have just had enough, you want to assert your freedom. I'm assuming that that person can be relatively healthy and always that it is a genuine urge for freedom and not just individualism.

But I think if you have been tied down maybe for years in some kind of relationship or other you start getting restive you start overcoming your own neurotic dependence, your own addictedness and you start realizing the possibility of freedom, then you can be ready to burst out, to break out, and you won't let anything stand in your way, that is an entirely healthy impulse.

Kay: It seems awful to encourage the dependence of other people. I have a cousin who has two small children and she is a very insecure woman and she's always encourag[ing] their

insecurity and dependence on her and it just seems tragic because not only is she damaging herself but she is also encouraging them to grow up crippled people.

S: It is sort of handed down from generation to generation and it is quite difficult to break that chain.

Marichi: Does she think she's being protective?

Kay: Yes she think she is really nurturing them and giving to them.

Marichi: So it is quite a subtle balance somehow.

S: Yes indeed. There can't be any general rule. You just have to be aware of the individual child and do what ever seems best for his or her needs. Some children for reasons which one cannot comprehend seem more dependent than others. Some seem remarkable independent again for no apparent reason.

But this taking refuge in others as the text calls it is really very common. It is understandable within the context of the group at least up to a point but in the case of anyone wanting to be an individual one has really to be able to stand alone. You won't really be able to relate to others unless you can relate to them as an individual, because you want to relate to them, because you enjoy relating to them, not because you desperately need them and cannot get on without them. Relating to others should be fun. Often things are very other than that.

Liz: If you have been sort of neurotically dependent for a very long time, you cannot be not dependent on anything. So you have to be [229] dependent on something more positive.

S: That is true, yes. I don't think you can just give up an addiction in the human sense without finding something more worthwhile for the sake of which you can give up your addiction, otherwise why should you? You cannot give up the addiction for the sake of a vacuum just because in the abstract it isn't the right thing to do.

Bonnie: I think that is a really important point.

Marichi: I think if you did create a vacuum something would come into it so you can choose what it is you are going to allow in.

S: Usually I think when people begin to feel that they should not or need not be neurotically dependent in the way that they often are it is because they are thinking in terms of individual development and that implies there is some sort of ideal, at least an ideal of a more perfect state of the human being. You may not be thinking of Buddhahood but at least you are thinking of trying to be a more happy healthy and whole human being.

Paloma: It is almost as though you feel more fuller and richer. It is like you don't need ... usually you need another person, to criticize or to like the person or just to do something because you cannot do it do it yourself, you cannot criticize yourself or you cannot like yourself, you cannot do anything with yourself, but once you can it is easier.

S: Obviously there are certain things you can only do with other people. There are certain

aspects of your own individuality let's say that you can develop only in relationships with other people, but at the same time you shouldn't use other people to do for you those things which you should be able to do for yourself. Other people should not be a substitute for your inability to be with yourself. Other people should be valued as other people not substitutes for one's own self. One should beware of a sort of cold self-sufficiency, this is a great weakness. There is the refrain of a song: "I care for nobody, no not I, and nobody cares for me". What is that?

Sulochana: The Jolly Miller of Dee.

S: The Jolly Miller of Dee. Well you shouldn't be like that, Not sort of houghty toightly, "I don't care for anyone, I'm not dependent on anyone, I'm not dependent on anyone. I can get on perfectly well on my own". Well perhaps you can but it doesn't seem very healthy.

Dhammadinna: It is not individuality is it?

S: It is not really individuality.

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Dhammadinna: Because that implies (?).

Verne: Would that be individualism?

S: I'd call that something like individualism rather than being an individual. It is individualistic.

Verne: It is a near-enemy.

S: Yes, indeed.

Bonnie: The reverse goes too. This implies that you shouldn't allow somebody else to use you as their support in an area that they should really be trying for themselves. That is more subtle.

S: Certainly give them the support they're not able to give themselves even as a healthy human being, but certainly don't give them the support that they should be able to derive from themselves. One has to be really careful of what one asks, what one expects, what one demands from another human being.

Verne: I know in the whole sort of field of, not really encounter groups but that type of thing, before I got into Buddhism it became clear to me that the word 'supportive' was a very sticky word, because there was a fine line between when a person genuinely needed support, when it was a healthy thing to give them support, or when it was reinforcing their own neurotic feelings towards themselves.

S: Sometimes sympathy can be quite misplaced. "Oh you poor thing, how hard done by you are". This can be the wrong sort of attitude. People sometimes need a more bracing sort of attitude.

Marichi: It puts me in mind of that Stanley Holloway story, "You do look ill", he gets iller and iller as a result of this.

S: Well some people feel it to be a genuine expression of sympathy. They say, "Oh you are not looking very well, oh you are not looking as well as you did the last time I saw you". This is supposed to be a genuine expression of sympathy.

Marichi: To what extent can you ask anything of anybody else? What can you ask?

S: Well if one is thinking in terms of rights - nothing at all. Because as an individual you have no rights, you cannot exercise rights over others. It must be a completely free gift as it were. If they give as it were back fine, if they don't fine. Yours, whatever you did, your attitude was a completely free gift. But one knows with practice there is a sort of reciprocity of free gifts which can be quite delight. [231] But you have to be very careful you don't sort of get into the habit of enjoying that reciprocity of free gifts and expecting it or being disappointed if it isn't kept up. One can very easily make that sort of mistake.

Verne: Isn't there a bit about this in "Crossing the Stream"?

S: That one should think in terms of duties rather than rights. But one shouldn't even think in terms of duties in a sense.

Verne: If you have been liberated from that even.

Marichi: But sometimes people can state their needs and you can recognize them and see them as something you can do, but sometimes you cannot do anything.

S: Well sometimes you have to accept your own limitations and see that yes there is an objective need on the part of that person but unfortunately you are not in a position to fulfil it.

Marichi: So both sides have to be brave enough to state their position.

S: Yes, right. Someone might say, "Well, I need you, I cannot live without you". You say, "I'm sorry well that may be so, but I've got other things to do". (laughter)

Anyway one shouldn't hesitate to take from others what one genuinely needs if they are happy to give it, but equally you shouldn't take or try to take from others what they've no business to be giving you because you should be giving it to yourself. There is a lot which we can give ourselves, much more than we realize and when we've done that, well, then we can start giving to others and without being in any sense a demand that will spark off others giving to us and thus a sort of reciprocity of free gifts. Not some sort of struck bargain. All right, if you do this for me, I'll do that for you" as is what is usually it is like. "If you give me what I need then I'll give you what you need but otherwise not, which is usually the implied agreement isn't it?

Bonnie: Martyrdom carrying on.

Bhante: Yes.

Paloma: What annoys me when people say like "I really need you" and you say "I have to do something else", then it is quite funny in fact they are able to do things on their own. If you really state you go and you go you come back a week later and you see they've been doing fine.

S: They've survived, of course they have!

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Paloma: They don't actually need you, they have been doing fine

S: It is just a ploy very often. It is like the story told by the child psychologist. He was once observing children and he was watching a little boy of four playing and the little boy playing fell down and hurt his knee quite badly. He thought this mother was watching so as he got up he just prepared to let out a terrific howl. Then he saw his mother wasn't there, she wasn't watching, so thought the better of it, he didn't let out a howl. (laughter) It is very often like that, we can usually cope on our own.

Liz: He may have wanted to cry because his mother was expecting him to cry.

S: It may be that too.

Paloma: Why does one feel guilty when like there is a person says, "I really need you" and then you decide you have to do something else, you don't want them to hang on you and you go off, and say, you have been away for one week, two weeks, you start thinking, but may be really ...

S: Well you cannot really be sure, in all one's decisions there is an element of risk, you have to take a chance. Sometimes it is them against you or you against them, your freedom against theirs, your happiness against theirs, you cannot always be sure. Perhaps when you have left them they will commit suicide, perhaps, you have to take that risk.

So it is natural, there should be a little uncertainty or a little guilt if you are not careful about whether you have done the right thing or not. Because with the best will in the world you don't always know what the effect of your action is going to be on other people. You just have to sensibly consider the situation and do what you think best. If things do go wrong and something unfortunate happens well you mustn't blame yourself. Supposing somebody does threaten to commit suicide if you go away, well what are you to do? Are you to remain around forever completely at their mercy? Well you might agree to stay around a little longer to make it easier for them if they will co-operate and accept that you are leaving; but you cannot indefinitely yield to that sort of emotional blackmail.

Marichi: Do you think you can also be afraid that if you did yield at that point you are even more trapped, you are playing into the hands of them?

S: You can store up great resentment. Might even end up murdering them. (laughter) It does happen! You can feel very bound, very tied down, [233] that can make you very frustrated and very angry and almost anything might happen. It is no accident that I think I'm correct in saying that the majority of murders certainly in this country take place within the family circle. So what does that mean? It means that there is so much pent-up energy there, so much

frustration. Looking at it positively. There is a positive side, some one is just trying to be free at all costs, someone can't stand it any longer, there's an explosion. In human relationships very powerful emotions are locked up, and a lot of energy. That is why one has to deal with them quite cautiously. If you get into the wrong sort of relationship, progress for you and individual development for you can be blocked indefinitely. On the other hand you cannot play safe by eschewing human contact altogether. That course is not open to you either. You have to steer a very difficult and dangerous middle way.

Paloma: I notice that once you have experienced those sort of things about relationships, grasping and tying down and you have actually discovered and defined it for yourself that is what is happening and you get away from it through an explosion or something, it is your freedom, and you wander around and don't want to settle down anywhere. You really get afraid.

S: Sometimes of course you do repeat the same old pattern over again, that happens too, hoping for the best this time or thinking it was all the other person's fault the first time, and if only you could find the right person well, it would be OK. Sometimes you think like that for five, or ten or twelve times in the course of your life! You still don't learn the lesson, this can happen too. So one has to be very careful.

Paloma: It is when you don't make the effort any more. You might discover that you really got free now, and you make your efforts to develop, then somehow you don't and there comes a moment when you get tired, because it isn't that easy and then you don't make that much effort.

S: It is in a moment of weakness you slip back into the old ways and the old unawareness. This morning we were talking about virya, energy, and that is never ceasing to make an effort, never resting on your laurels, never resting on your past attainment, but always trying to go forward that is what one needs to do. It is very easy to rest on your laurels, you have done so much, you have reached a certain point. So you have been ordained you have been an order member for three or four years, you have settled in nicely, you are helping to run the centre. [234] It is quite easy in personal terms just to settle down there, it is very very easy, especially if you are staying in a community that suits you, you have got a job in a Co-op that you find congenial. It is very easy unconsciously insensibly just to settle down at that level and though you are quite active and doing quite well, really you are not making an effort any more. It is quite easy to get into that sort of state.

Verne: It is a little bit complacency.

S: Yes, it is complacency. You have achieved quite a good positive level you have certainly progressed, but you have become content with that, satisfied with that. Yes, you are maintaining your position, you are maintaining your level you attained, but you aren't really making an effort to go further. It is as though you think, "Well this is good enough, this is good enough for the time being", or even "This is good enough for life", this is what you are implicitly saying. "I'm healthy, I'm human, why bother about enlightenment?" It becomes a bit unreal. You are in a sort of devaloka state. If the Movement in England gets a bit too much like that, with too many people finding comfortable niches the best thing to do is send everybody out to India. (laughter) That will alarm them! Just to share Lokamitra's 10' x 12' vihara ! All of them.

Marichi: That would do terrible things to Lokamitra!

S: Well there'd be an explosion and you'd be scattered all over the Maharashtra, all over Western India, in your own little 10' x12' vihara!

It is as though in the search for security, in the search for a refuge, people really do tie themselves down so much, bind themselves down, they shackle themselves, they shackle themselves with possessions, they shackle themselves with relationships, people. If you are not careful your whole life is dedicated to just servicing a few sticks of furniture. That is your whole life. You are shackled to them. In some ways it is much better to let everything fall to pieces around you just crumble, never mind, you just get on with your meditation and your sutra study. Let it all tumble down! You won't be able to take it with you anyway. Not a single stick, not a single stone, not even your best cushion covers! (laughter) They will just stay behind. They can put them in the coffin with you but that is about all. (laughter)

Noel: I remember a verse we sang at school, something to the effect that slaves to the world should be tossed in a blanket and sunk to the bottom of the sea!

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S: We really do only too often sacrifice the essential to the unessential. This is what people are doing in ordinary life. It is easy to joke about the housewife and her attachment to her three piece suite and all that but everybody practically is doing it, sacrificing the more important things to the less important things. If psychologically a clean neat house or flat is important to you then keep it clean and tidy by all means. But that you should just slave resentfully to keep things in order and expect others to do the same and get nothing out of it; if it doesn't help you psychologically then what is the point of it all.

Dhammadinna: You should hear some of Anoma's stories about cleaning in St. John's Wood. They are quite horrific. They are really fanatical about cleaning, cupboards, and cupboards of different cleaning materials and cloths.

S: Once again one can quote the New Testament, it has a few good sayings; "The body is more than raiment" the body is more than clothing.

"Thus friends besides not following us are a danger for life here and hereafter." The danger here is that we are afraid they may die "and over powered by such fear, we come to great misery, as a result of which in the life hereafter we are born in evil existences". States of suffering, states of downfall, dugatis.

All right on to with ix;

"(ix) That our body does not follow means that neither it nor its qualities accompany us. In the first place we should realize that however strong and powerful we may be, we do not escape death; however swiftly we may run, we cannot outrun it; and however learned and eloquent we may be, we cannot talk death away. We are like someone who cannot stop or catch hold of the sun when it sets behind a mountain.

That the body as such does not follow us is expressed in the 'sPyod.'jug' ('Bodhicaryavatara):

This body gained with many difficulties
And preserved by food and clothing,
Will not accompany you. Birds and dogs will eat it.
It will be consumed by a blazing fire.
Drowned in water
Or hidden away in a grave in the earth.

Thus the body besides not accompanying us is also a danger for life here and hereafter. Here it is unable to stand disease to suffer heat, cold, hunger or thirst; is afraid of being killed, fettered or flayed, and from this fright there comes great misery; as a result of which in the life hereafter (20a) we are born in evil existences."

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S: So it is much the same with the body as with friends. The body does not follow us neither the body itself nor its qualities, and even during life itself the body is a source of danger. Is unable to stand disease or suffer heat, cold, hunger, thirst and so on. The body gets in the way. Of course this is only one side of the picture that Gampopa is directing our attention to. What is the other side of the picture?

Dhammadinna: We have a human body therefore we can gain Enlightenment.

S: It is the working basis. So it is all right to use the body as a means as an instrument but not regard it as an end in itself or become over attached to it. Here also a middle way is very important. It is important to maintain oneself in health and strength, to be free from diseases free from illness, keep the body smoothly functioning so that you don't have to spend extra time looking after it, but on the other hand you must not pamper the body, just keep it fit and serviceable. Don't you think people in modern times in the West at least pamper the body too much?

Voices: Yes, quite excessively.

S: In what sort of ways do you think?

Dhammadinna: People trying to stay young is one way.

S: Or to stay looking young. Look at cosmetics, cosmetics are totally unnecessary. All you need is soap and water actually, but fortunes are spent on cosmetics. I don't know how much it is but I think it is about a couple of billion pounds a year in England. It is all wasted. The women who use cosmetics more often than not ruin their complexions which certainly wasn't their intention. Cheap cosmetics actually damage the skin.

Dhammadinna: Not just cosmetics, but that kind of over extreme trying to stay young, plastic surgery, face lifts, hormone injections, too much exercise like working out in the gym, it is more American than English.

Bhante: Dyeing the hair.

Marichi: They say that jogging is proving a danger to health.

S: I'm not surprised. It looks dangerous. I shudder when I see people jogging. A nice sedate walk is more like it, a little stroll, up to the river and back. (laughter)

Dhammadinna: It is all a way of trying to cheat death.

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S: It is really. It is really pathetic to see elderly people, even people who are really old trying to look young and they don't succeed. In the case of an old woman, it doesn't look like a young woman until you look closely, it just looks like an old woman painted to resemble a young woman, which is pathetic. It is not accepting the fact that the body is changing and one is growing old. It is a pathetic attempt to keep up pseudo appearances. And I mean apart from that old age has its own attractiveness just as youth does. Maybe it is not as attractive in the same way, perhaps not so strongly one must admit, but a natural graceful old age has its own attractions.

Dhammadinna: I see it connected with obsession with sex and sex appeal and sexual attraction?

S: Yes, it is as though one cannot gracefully accept the fact that one is no longer sexually attractive, not so much at least as one was thirty or forty or fifty years ago.

Marichi: Or not in the same way anyway.

S: Or not in the same way anyway, well lets say for the sake of argument, well not at all! Lets face facts! (laughter)

There is a time for everything surely. I mean surely one doesn't have to go through the whole of life being sexually attractive at every stage. Well let's have a change for once, at least the last ten or twenty years of life free from this, well what a relief. You can relate to people on an honest objective basis without these perpetual tensions coming between. It is not a bad thing, so yes, accept it. The fountain of youth and all that is dried up. Well never mind, just accept it.

Marichi: Sometimes it seems that when people wear a lot of make-up, they lose touch with what they actually look like underneath.

S: Indeed they do, they want you to as well. (laughter)

Noel: They cease to look like people.

Marichi: Well they cannot just drop it, if they take that away they sort of ...

S: I do believe, correct me if I am wrong, that some women refer to their make-up as 'war-paint'. War-paint, like savages paint themselves with before they go into battle to frighten the enemy. (laughter)

Kay: I used to feel I wasn't dressed until I had make-up on. When I was in my teens and wore a lot of make-up I used to feel that in the [238] morning I'd have to put on make-up before I could see people and that I wasn't dressed properly until I had it on.

S: So why do you think one feels like that? Is it a sort of persona?

Dhammadinna: You can look quite different with make-up on, you can create quite a different ... it is more emphatic, you feel more sophisticated more confident.

S: Yes, or just older.

Bonnie: Actually it is projecting an image.

S: Rather than being yourself.

Dhammadinna: What is so crazy is when you get a fashion for make-up that is actually meant to look like you haven't got any on.

Marichi: Some, if it seems to be to do with defining things, making your features a bit more definite so if you feel a bit pallid you can put on make-up and seem to be more there when you actually aren't.

S: Or if you are looking a bit unhealthy, a bit pasty, rub on a bit of rouge or something like that. It is keeping up appearances.

Kay: It is working from the outside.

Paloma: It is all so strange, because I view beauty at a more ... Or more just jewellery, the more beautiful you look. Now I find that people who are really beautiful, they ...

S: That is perhaps a matter of taste. One sees this with Indian women, they wear a lot of jewellery and sometimes it does from a purely aesthetic point of view enhance their appearance. More often than not they are not "made up" in the way women often are in the West.

Joan: More adorned.

S: Yes, adorned. I think beauty can be adorned, it doesn't always have to be just natural beauty.

Marichi: Make up can do that too, it is the extent to which you use it.

S: Perhaps if it is used skilfully and artistically rather than sort of plastered on in thick layers.

Marichi: That is where it starts to seem so grotesque particularly on older people.

S: Yes, it does nothing to enhance. They'd look better just scrubbed if you see what I mean. But anyway we're basically looking at this from the point of view of giving the wrong sort of attention to the [239] body. You should certainly look after the body, certainly care for the body. Maybe massage the body, exercise the body, but not pay attention to it in an unreal and unhealthy sort of way or expect others to pay attention to it in an unreal and unhealthy sort of way. If you are healthy I think you will have a certain natural charm and appeal regardless of the sort of features that you have got. I think this is a little bit by the way. I've thought for

some time, modern Western fashions tend to make women look grotesque, apart from making them look more attractive, if anything they make them look less attractive. It is as though women don't have, maybe this is generalizing a bit, but one gets the impression looking at the fashion pages women don't have enough confidence in their natural attractiveness or well just what they naturally are and somehow talked into buying these grotesque fashions which more often than not don't suit them and make them look really awful. Sometimes you get the impression the people who design the latest fashions really hate women and just want to make them look ridiculous.

Marichi: I don't think they are designing for women. I think they are designing for a moving shape.

S: Designing for the advertising industry.

Marichi: No, I think there is a certain plastic sculpture behind fashions but it is not to enhance femininity, it is to enhance just an image.

S: A figure in space. If you notice some of the models who model clothes especially recently they have the most unattractive expressions. What is fashionable nowadays is the sulky or the aggressive or the sneering or the supercilious. There is certainly nothing positive about it. So I think women who are trying to be individuals should resist these sort of impositions. It is as though an image is being imposed on one for one reason or another and to that extent one is prevented from being one's natural self as an individual.

Marion: I know when Anoma went out to work she had to conform to some extent to what the people she was working with expected her to be.

S: I got a letter, in fact a couple of long letters from a Friend, a Mitra now, from New Zealand who was working as a receptionist in some quite up to date firm in Auckland and after she got involved in the FWBO she stopped dressing very smartly, she stopped wearing make-up, she stopped doing her hair and all that sort of thing, not that she started looking slovenly, she just didn't dress and behave in the sort of way [240] that a receptionist was expected to, so she was relieved of her job. They were very nice about it, but they made it clear that she wasn't the sort of person any longer that they wanted to have as a receptionist in their office and their firm.

Bonnie: She actually started to look nicer and nicer. We watched the transformation.

S: I'm sure she did, she looked a natural human being instead of a little dolly bird, this is the expression that she used in the letter to me.

Verne: Each time she came along she dropped something else.

S: She had false eyelashes, stiletto heels and all the rest of it, and she is only about twenty.

Verne: The first time she came along she had these great big lips!

S: She dropped her lips eventually!

Verne: She just got prettier and prettier.

S: I can believe it. After all beauty is much more than skin deep and if you are emotionally positive and happy whatever your features are like you will look beautiful for want of a better word and it is that sort of beauty surely you are aiming at if you are aiming at beauty at all, not the sort of hideous grimace of the professional mannequin. I think that women should take a firm stand; well I don't want to lay the law down for them. They should take a firm stand on their own natural selves and I think they would find they are more acceptable to everybody including themselves which is most important, their own natural selves.

In any case, "this body gained with many difficulties and preserved by food and clothing will not accompany you. Birds and dogs will eat it." And that is very salutary to remember! We spend so much time pampering and cosseting it and looking after it, but what is it going to be, food for the dogs, well in Buddhist Tibet, here it was food for the worms with luck, or just ashes scattered on somebody's rose garden. Perhaps we could have a special little rose garden up here at Padmaloka for scattering peoples ashes, we'd probably get beautiful roses. You could plant a special rose in memory of different people, you know maybe a big red rose in memory of so and so, a little yellow one in memory of so and so, or a particularly thorny one in memory of so and so (laughter). And every week you could have someone [241] arriving with a little bag of ashes and joyfully scattering them. Well that was old so and so, he is gone at last, and our little rose garden would be getting bigger and bigger and we'd be getting really lovely blooms. Well this is the way we should do it. It is better than putting away the corpse in the earth. It is not quite nice somehow. I'd much rather have ashes scattered or just mixed with the soil and used to nourish the blossoms, human manure as it were.

Dhammadinna: Some people said after the Convention when we burnt kesas that they would like if they were going to die they'd quite like to be burnt in the open air.

S: What do you mean "if"? (laughter)

Dhammadinna: When.

S: Yes, it is so much better. Otherwise it is a stuffy little chapel jabbing a little button and the old coffin goes trundling through the grating to the incinerator and you have tape recorded Bach organ music playing at the same time. No, let it be out in the open air. I suggest when people feel the time approaching they go off to India and die there peacefully there in a cave or whatever.

Marichi: Have their ashes sent back to Padmaloka.

S: Yes or have them scattered over Lokamitra's little rose garden.

Dhammadinna: You have to follow certain rules in this country. You cannot be burnt in the open air or in a tree or whatever. (laughter)

S: Well even in India there are rules, especially in municipal areas. But it is much freer there, with luck if someone were to die in Poona they could be cremated on the bank of a river. If we do get our vihara a couple of miles out of Poona, there is a certain area of land we couldn't use for building purposes, it is too near the river. I don't think there would be any difficulty

about using that for cremations. I think that would be possible.

Dhammadinna: We'd get parties of aged Order Members ... (laughter)

S: Charter flights of aged Order Members going out to India to spend their last weeks or last months, to die in peace, you know what a blessing, no hospitals, they just let you die there. No one's going to try and keep you alive by force even if you don't want to die. Go out there, take up residence in a little cave, what a beautiful way of ending one's days. You have got to leave everything sooner or later so you might as well bow out gracefully in that sort of way. Just take [242] a small packet of food and there you are, that is all that you need. Fade away gracefully until nothing is left but the smile of enlightenment. But if one thinks about it it is a quite serious possibility. Supposing you were old, supposing you'd done your bit for the Movement and you were reasonably satisfied with your own mental state, would you really want if you became ill and had certain complications would you really want to spend weeks and months in a hospital. Would you really, assuming we didn't have our own FWBO hospitals, would you really want to end your days like that? Would you not rather just while you can still walk say, get a one way ticket to India and just say goodbye to all your friends and say, "Well I'm just going to end my days there. I may have a few months, I may have a few weeks". And no one's going to collect you by force and make you go to hospital they haven't got enough hospital beds anyway and the local Buddhists will just cremate you.

Marichi: Wouldn't the difficulties that put you hospital here still go with you?

S: Yes, but you wouldn't do anything about them.

Marichi: Well why couldn't you not do anything about them here?

S: Well you couldn't be allowed to not do anything about them while staying at home so to speak, if you were in contact with a doctor. Also there was another thing, if you were living in a community and suppose you didn't see a doctor and died there could be an inquest and perhaps a certain amount of unpleasantness and people in the community could be blamed or even found culpable for not taking you to hospital.

Marichi: Well if you had actually taken yourself out of that situation.

S: Well in India no one's going to bother. People are dying all the time at home or by the roadside, they are not going to bother, the authorities aren't going to bother.

Marichi: You would need to be quite brave if you were going to die by the roadside in India then?

S: I'm not suggesting you necessarily die by the roadside but in a little vihara somewhere or a little cave somewhere.

Marichi: You would have to sort of set it up wouldn't you?

S: Well I don't think it would be difficult.

Sulochana: The climate is quite pleasant. you wouldn't have to have a lot of ...

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S: Right, I'm sure that would be better than months if not years of hospitalization in this country.

Joan: My grandmother took [had] a heart-attack and the death rattle was in her throat and they took her to hospital and kept her alive for months, the whole time she was in a very bad state it was like a living nightmare for her and the state in which she died was really bad because of that. Perhaps if she'd just gone that evening in the house with us there it would have much more peaceful.

Verne: The same thing happened with my grandfather when he had a perforated ulcer. When it happened he said, "I've had a good life", and his mental state was good. Two weeks later when he had been hospitalised he was just shattered and so his mental state at death was so much worse. If he had died when it had first perforated the moment of death would have been much more peaceful.

Sulochana: (?)

Punyavati: Marion and I were talking about dying in hospital yesterday and it is not very pleasant at all because usually the body is taken straight into the postmortem and it is not very respectfully treated. Also there seems to be a lot of distress around them when they are dying from the relatives and ...

S: And a lot of disturbance which you don't want at that time, you just want to be left alone.

Punyavati: I remember in one case a man had a coronary and two or three times his heart beat just disappeared and they kept bringing him back and then one of the girls, the nurses, she was fairly new, she was standing aside not involved in it, she just burst into tears. She said "Please let him go" and she ran out of the ward, she couldn't bear it.

S: How long can you keep a person back? It may be a week, or two may be a few days, it isn't worth bothering.

Punyavati: They are like vegetables, there is just heart beating.

S: Anyway, have your tea ...

Teabreak

S: You should all of you make a will. In the will you should name an executor because the executor is responsible for carrying out the funeral arrangements. The executor does not have to be a relation. So if you want to be sure of a Buddhist funeral, make a will and [244] name a fellow Order Member if you are an Order Member or an Order Member as your executor. You can name more than one executor if you wish and they have the responsibility of deciding in what way you should be cremated, buried or whatever, whether there should be a service and so on. It is a sensible thing to do. Otherwise if you have Christian relations they could have you buried with the usual Church services which wouldn't matter very much but it is not the sort of thing one likes to think of happening. Other Order Members or Friends would be much happier giving you a truly Buddhist send off.

Punyavati: Does this will have to be drawn up by a solicitor?.

S: You can draw it up yourself, you can buy a will form. You are better especially if you have any legacies or anything of that sort to consult a solicitor. I think it costs about twenty pounds to draw up a will.

But also your own doctor may feel that you need a certain special kind of treatment which is only available in hospital and pressure may be put on you to go to hospital to receive that treatment.

Punyavati: (?)

: They seem to think that you cannot cope with it. I know that when my mother was dying and they wanted her to go away from me and in the end she went into a nursing home instead, so that someone else could look after her.

: My experience of nursing homes was very good, because matron looked after all the time for the last week of her life, and me and my brothers and sisters were there all the time until she died. It was all right, because she was so caring about the whole thing.

S: I think the complications or the unpleasantness arises when you are being kept in hospital just being kept alive and have no real life and cannot really do anything, you are just continuing to exist. But are not allowed to die, and you are not in a position to do anything about it, decisions are made for you, decisions are made on your behalf, so you have that sense of having lost your freedom. You are just a body being shunted around, and people are doing to you whatever they think is best, you are not really consulted.

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Marichi: There is a sense of frustrated energy.

S: Yes.

Marichi: Because I remember my grandfather dying when I was about three and half, and it all seemed entirely natural, he was just upstairs and I remember going up and looking at him and coming down again.

S: Well this is how it used to happen.

Punyavati: Also, like if we knew that they were dying, we weren't allowed to tell them, it was considered unethical, and we used to get into trouble if you even gave an inkling of it, and until the last moment some of them just didn't know. It was quite brutal.

S: In other words you are not allowed to prepare for death, because when the time comes you know that you are dying, but it comes as something unexpected as a shock and you have to sort of cope all in a matter of minutes perhaps.

Punyavati: The worst thing was when we had to tell them that they were going to be all right, and when they knew they were wasting away in the case of cancer, it was awful.

S: Yes, the reassurance was supposedly part of the treatment, I suppose. But not treatment to get better, but just to stay alive a little longer.

: That would only increase the fear of dying. Like with my father, he obviously knew that he was dying but they kept saying, "Oh you'll probably go home for Christmas".

Marichi: Wouldn't you get very confused, you feel one thing and everybody else is telling you something else.

Sulochana: You really need the truth.

S: Yes.

Punyavati: It is so insensitive.

Dhammadinna: It is like there is a fog around everybody. That happened with my father, nobody told me that he was dying, but I knew something was going on. It is like everything is cloudy, and there is no direct communication.

S: So in a sense in the wrong sort of sense the dying person dies alone. [246] Because no one has been truthful, no one has communicated.

Marichi: They just die in a sort of fog.

Dhammadinna: I wonder why it is that people won't face up to it in that sort of way.

Joan: Or is it science gone mad.

S: It seems a bit like that, because I think ordinary people do face up to the fact of death.

Marichi: It is perhaps sometimes the possibility of a recovery, if somebody said you were dying, you might give up and go, and actually if they said you are all right ...

S: I am sure there are cases where the doctors are absolutely certain, where there cannot be any hope. If you are a person in middle age and you are just going through a serious illness, you might feel that you are going to die, well, the doctors may well have the confidence that you could recover, they might feel well it is touch and go, we don't want a person that even he may die, because that may effect his chance of recovery, one can understand that, but to make an invariable rule of it, seems to be quite nonsensical.

Paloma: I found it interesting with this advance in technology that people don't let you heal yourself. I think that in this society it is like that, because when we were talking about make-up, I think one reason why people wear make-up is because they just cannot be just themselves, and when you cry sooner or later someone comes along and tries to interfere, you just cannot just be ...

S: Well it depends on the situation, doesn't it, sometimes you can be, I think there are many situations where you cannot be.

Paloma: It is always like one is on stage, like theatre, the whole of life, with some people it is like that, you never actually see them, they are always hiding, you are always being pushed to hide, and so when you die, it sounds very much the same, still then ...

Marichi: Still then you trying to live up to somebody else's ideals.

Paloma: You are not let, either you are trying to, or not let to be yourself.

Marichi: If yourself is a bit sad, somebody saying, "Don't be sad, it doesn't have to be like that" you're dying now, don't die now you'll still be alive at Christmas".

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Verne: In Trungpa's book on The Tibetan Book of the Dead, he [said] something about death being unacceptable, that people can be almost made to feel guilty for dying.

S: As though it is bad manners, or it is inconsiderate, especially if you die at an awkward time, when everyone else is wanting to have a good time, "you spoil it all".

Verne: He makes the point that it is the cruellest thing to do at the moment of death, and that is what we do, that is the custom.

Dhammadinna: They have got them to be borne between nine to five I suppose we should die from nine to five.

S: Five to nine.

Bonnie: The kind of program where you live your life in this way, you die in this way, you are borne in this way, they are trying to control you kind of thing.

Noel: Even in this country it is difficult to be borne at home.

S: You can be if you insist, or rather it the mother insists. You have to be a bit bloody minded it seems, you have to fight for your rights.

Bonnie: Suggesting that you are endangering the child.

S: Well I did read an article in the newspaper a few days ago which stated that it was a fact that it was safer for a baby to be borne in hospital than at home, I think very marginally, but this is what it stated.

[Confused voices.]

Sulochana: I read somewhere that it isn't.

Bonnie: I know Megha would have died if she hadn't been borne in a hospital, but she never jolly well wanted to live, and it took years and years to convince her that it was an OK thing to do, she almost grew progressively smaller and smaller for a period of time, she literally did, and it wasn't until she was about eleven that she decided that ...

S: She might as well. It was less trouble to go on living than die I am sure that she is glad of it now.

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S: All right lets carry on then with 2. I think this is a long section that needs to be read all at once, from 2 right to the very end. And then we can consider it all together.

"(2) to draw the conclusion of our death from the stream of life of others, is the development of concentrated attention on death by having seen, heard or remembered that someone has died.

Having seen somebody dying means the following. When the body of one of our relatives, who formerly was strong, had a radiant face, was feeling well and never gave a thought to death, is today stricken with a deadly disease, when his strength gives way and he cannot sit; when his face becomes colourless, parched and grey; when he feels pain and is helpless by this affliction of disease and fever being unable to endure his suffering; when medicines and medical treatment do not take effect and all medical devices and religious ceremonies are of no avail; when he knows that he must die and is without strength to work; when for the last time he is surrounded by his friends, takes his last meal and speaks for the last time, then we should think: 'I also am essentially the same, of the same nature, and character and not beyond this nature.'

Then immediately after his breathing has stopped, however handsome he may have been and however much he has been seen fit to stay indoors, no one will have him in the house, be it only for one day. He is laid down on a stretcher, bound and tied crosswise and the corpse carriers take him out; some people in his household embrace the corpse and pretend affectionately to cling to it, and others weep and pretend to be dejected, others again fall to the ground in a faint, while still others say that the body is but earth and stone and that you, acting in such a way, have little sense. As soon as the corpse has been carried over the threshold and we see that it will never return to the house, we should recollect all this and think that we come to the same end.

Thus when the corpse has been brought to the cemetery and thrown there, and when we see it devoured by dogs, jackals and other wild beasts and its bones scattered, we should recollect all this and think that this will also happen to us.

Having heard that someone has died we should remember and think that this will also happen to us.

Bearing in mind that in our country, village or house an old man, young person or friend has died, we should remember this and think that it will also happen to us in a short time.

Therefore it is said in a Sutra:

Since it is uncertain which will come earlier

Tomorrow or the world hereafter

Without striving for tomorrow

One should get ready for the hereafter.

The advantage of having developed concentrated attention to the significance of transitoriness is that by having understood that everything composite is transitory, you turn away from hankering after this life. Moreover, confidence is nourished, you strive energetically and having become free from attachment and aversion the foundation is laid for the comprehensive understanding of the ultimate sameness of all constituents of reality."

S: There is one point that strikes me there is simply this right at the beginning, "to draw the conclusion of our death from the stream of life of others is the development of concentrated

attention on death by having seen, heard, or remembered that someone has died."
Having seen that someone has died. Nowadays you just usually don't [249] see anybody die, or don't even see a dead body. Whereas in most civilizations, formerly in most cultures, it was the normal thing, as it still is in India.

Marichi: Has this been due to the development of the nuclear family?

S: It is perhaps partly that.

: Hospitalization.

S: Hospitalization and maybe less willingness to accept the fact of death.

Sulochana: You don't even see animals, you don't see markets of animals, it is all hidden away now, you don't even see them going to market.

S: You never see anything slaughtered. You might eat chicken every day of the week, but you never see a chicken having its neck rung or anything like that, as you did in the old days, when you bought your chicken live and killed it.

Paloma: I think if people were able to see, it would inhibit many more people. I also find it very strange in Bethnal Green you pass these butchers shops and all these bodies are hanging out and people walk in and buy whole bits, and carry it over their shoulders, and I find the feel of it sort of ...

S: I used to feel this as a child when I used to go out shopping as a very small boy with my mother. I didn't like going into the butchers shops, sometimes I wouldn't go in.

Sulochana: I remember (?) coming in with me into a butchers once and saying "And this is a dead cow, Mummy" in a loud voice and everybody looked round and there was a sort of silence.

S: Well he probably just realized that this is what it was, it is not just beef, it is a dead cow hanging up.

I remember when I was living at Castle Acre on the other side of Norfolk, there was a butchers shop in the village, and more than once I saw slaughtered pigs being carried into the shop, carried over someone's shoulder from the van to the shop, and it just looked like a human corpse, really extraordinary, all sort of pink, and one could very easily feel that one was eating human flesh, it seemed almost cannibalistic these sort of corpses going into the butchers shop.

Punyavati: The first time I went into a butcher's shop I nearly [250] fainted with the stench of flesh, blood and death, and I just couldn't stand it, I had to get out.

S: I remember as a boy I didn't even like passing in front of the butchers shop because you could smell this, quite horrible.

Sulochana: Butchers always have a strange complexion, pasty, beefy looking.

Bonnie: (some story about working in abattoirs in Australia)

S: Well this is quite a problem in New Zealand too, because so much of the economy depends on the export of meat. If the FWBO ever got really established, this is one of the things that it would very much come up against.

Bonnie: New Zealand couldn't support itself if it stopped growing meat. Because a lot of the country is used for sheep, and is unsuitable for anything else.

S: I remember the first time I was in New Zealand and I looked at some of the local newspapers, I was very surprised to see all the advertisements for slaughter housemen, they always seem to want slaughter housemen, all over New Zealand.

Paloma: What do you think that the economy will be able to do for New Zealand.

S: I don't know, because I haven't really put my mind to it yet, because in a way the time hasn't come, but some alternative would have to be found. I am not so sure that that land couldn't be used for any other purpose, because it is mostly deforested land, which the sheep are grazed on, presumably one could at least grow timber which one could export, there is a shortage of timber in the world, there is a shortage of wood pulp, and paper, perhaps one could switch to that.

Bonnie: They are already doing that in areas, areas in which farming didn't work.

S: I did see on my last visit that in certain areas the process of afforestation has begun on a small scale, in some cases with the usual sort of pine plantations, but in some areas it is regenerated native bush, which from at least the scenic point of view is much better.

Sulochana: There are a lot of food trees aren't there?

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S: Anyway how did we get on to that? The difficulty of actually seeing death, I mean according to this teaching to observe the fact of somebody else's death, and then apply that to yourself, that you too will one day die, but in order to do that, you have to see somebody die, though it also recognizes the possibility of doing it by not only seeing it, but hearing of someone dying or remembering that someone has died, but clearly it would be more vivid and effect you more deeply if you saw someone die, or at least if you saw the dead body.

Punyavati: (?) in this country?

S: They are not encouraged I think.

Noel: (?)

S: It was quite interesting that the other weekend Kovida got knocked down, but rather he fell off his bike, his chain snapped late at night, and he got thrown and was concussed and admitted to hospital for the night, and when he came to, one of the things that they asked was the name of his next of kin, so he gave his mother's name, and they at once wanted to phone her, and he said no, the last thing I want is my mother to find out, don't tell her, and he

wouldn't give them the address or telephone number, but he said they were quite insistent that they wanted to get in touch with his next of kin, though he wasn't at all seriously injured, but he was quite impressed with this. Your friends as it were don't count in law. You may not have seen your relations for years, you may be estranged from them but the people with whom you live, your real friends they just don't count for these sorts of purposes, which seems extraordinary, quite inhuman.

Bonnie: ... next of kin as being nearest to you that you would want to know.

S: I am not sure about that, I think there is some latitude, I think if you presented yourself at a hospital as the next of kin in that sort of way, I think they would ask you what the relationship actually was, I don't know about now, but there used to be difficulty if you weren't even the legal wife. If you were the legal wife, fair enough, you were at once admitted, you could see the person, but if you were merely the woman that somebody lived with, and even if you had the effrontery to say so, which perhaps [252] you might not in the past, you would have said "Well I am just a friend". You wouldn't be able to say, "Well, I am the woman he lives with, unless you were a real hussy.

Sulochana: When my husband died, I'd lived with him for about fifteen years, and he married again, and when he died, I wasn't any relation, so nobody told me, I only heard by chance, technically I wasn't a relation.

S: You were not even a friend. A blood relative even though estranged is still a relative, just as they would inherit from you in the absence of any will, however estranged you might be.

Noel: On another occasion a friend of mine who I was actually living with, had a relationship, she drove my van and crashed it and broke her back, and when I arrived at the hospital they wouldn't let me in, even though I tried to explain that we shared a house together, they wanted to get in touch with her parents, who lived in Sheffield, across the other side of the country, and she didn't want that because she wasn't on good terms with them.

S: This is usually what happens in effect, I don't know whether the law or at least practice is being changed in any way. I suspect there is a little more latitude than there used to be.

Marichi: It is a sort of distrust of friendship isn't it?

S: I think it is more than that, I think it is a non-recognition, a refusal to recognize. Friendship doesn't count, whereas you notice here the reference is to friends, I mean relations are not given any special position in a way, at least not in some quotations, "thus friends besides not following us" you see? To go back a bit "there are also three reasons for the fact that we die without being followed by anything, our wealth, friends, and bodies do not accompany us." You see friends in this passage at least are given, not only the first place, but only friends are mentioned, it is as though relations are [a] kind of friend, husband and wife are a kind of friend, but the inclusive term is friends, that is what counts, people you know really well, people that you live with, get on with, care about. But if you were to present yourself at the hospital, or in a court of law and say, "Well, I am that person's friend", that would mean nothing at all. It would give you no locus standi, which is deplorable. So Friendship is not recognized ...

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Paloma: Even if you had said that this particular person was your next of kin?

S: Well, I am not sure about that. But I think there might be some difficulty even if you had named someone as next of kin, it should be a relation by blood or marriage.

Marichi: It is family.

S: It is family, yes.

Marichi: And that is based on economy.

S: Yes, I think if [you] gave simply the name "N. Smith" as your next of kin, and it was just a friend, well, they would write it down, but under the impression that it was a relation, and they might even ask "Well what is the relationship, what kind of relationship, is it your mother or father or Sister or brother or spouse or child?" That would be perfectly acceptable; if you were to say "Well it is my friend" under certain circumstances, I think it wouldn't be accepted. They would say "No, we want your next of kin".

Sulochana: When I looked in to see my friend, and I wasn't a relation at all, and they asked me what relation was, and I said "Well, I am a kind of daughter" and I got away with it and I got in.

S: Well, perhaps for instance in the case of someone being committed to a mental hospital, perhaps it is the relations that are having them committed, and perhaps it is the friends who can help them not to be committed. Perhaps it is the friends who know that they shouldn't be committed. Sometimes relations want to have people put away, sometimes that happens. But it is really astonishing that friendship has no recognition.

Marichi: Is that because it has so many levels of intensity, and if it is family it has got a label, it has got a legal definition, it is that clear, surely there must be something between a mother and her children?

S: In some civilizations, some cultures, friendship has a quasi-legal status, which in ours it doesn't, the fact that you are friends with someone means nothing. Perhaps in some ways that is not a bad thing, because it is good to have some relationships which are not institutionalized, legalized, that is good too, but there are disadvantages.

Marichi: There might be a point where we can make the sort of relationships that happen in communities to be recognized as sort of family relationships.

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S: Yes, I think for certain legal purposes, I am not quite sure which, that members of a community would not get the advantages say that a family occupying that same building would get. And this seems unfair.

Marichi: We see that when houses are rated as a hostel, not a family dwelling.

S: I don't know whether that affects the rating, or anything of that sort.

Marichi: It is as though certain sorts of relationships aren't recognized.

S: Or, I think if a family wants to rent say a house or a flat, they can do that, but it is much more difficult for a community to do that, because they are not recognized as a sort of legal entity in the way that a family is.

Marichi: Can a religious community get an exemption from rates and things like that.

S: I think they do, yes. Well I am not sure about a religious community as such, I am doubtful about that, but if a building or part of a building is open to the public for religious purposes, then that portion of the building if it is only a portion can be exempt from rates. I don't think religious communities as such, I remember I went into all this when I was at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, and the portion of the building occupied by the monks could not be exempt from the payment of rates, but only that part that was used for lectures and classes for the benefit of the members of the public. Members of the Public means that anybody must be able to enter, it must be a public place of worship, or place of public worship. But it is strange this, it is absurd that friendship has no recognition.

Noel: (?)

S: But sometimes it does happen that your friends do take responsibility for you during life and your relations don't, but even if that has been the situation after death the relations have all the say, not to speak of inheriting from you if you haven't left a will, your friend is nowhere.

Marichi: Don't they legally also have a responsibility? Your next [255] of kin have responsibility of your death or your funeral?

S: Normally it does, but it doesn't have to. If people die intestate usually the practice is that relations take over.

Marichi: But they don't have to?

S: They don't have a legal responsibility. In that case it falls on the State, and you are given a paupers funeral. Or the State acts as Executor, and deducts the expenses of your funeral from the estate. If your relations want to have nothing to do with it, as occasionally happens, they cannot be forced to. But as I said if you die intestate, they can come forward and claim your estate, claim to be your heirs, even though you have been at enmity with them for years, and a faithful friend with whom you have lived and who has supported and helped you can be left without anything at all, has no right whatever. And I am not sure about this, but if you have left a will leaving money to a friend, I think it can be challenged by your relations regardless of the terms on which with them.

Paloma: Maybe this is because if society regarded friends as the same as family it would mean they would have to accept the individual. Because we don't accept by having it all institutionalized relations as individuals, they are treated as part of your ... they are just part of an object which you can put your structure. You have them in a certain position. The individual is never in a certain position never sort of fixed. You cannot fix down whether you should have responsibility or you should relate to a certain person if you are an individual, but

in society your responsibility and your function can be institutionalized.

S: Yes, well, sometimes it is convenient. But the situation is developing in England in which it would be convenient if other relationships than those which have been recognized hitherto were officially recognized for some legal purposes, that would be fairer. I mean it is still difficult getting a mortgage if your marital or domestic set-up is rather unconventional, let us say.

Marichi: I know that I shall inherit money from my mother and uncle but I don't feel I particularly deserve it, I would rather have money from my friends. (laughter)

S: Well, I am sure you will.

Marichi: It is nice, but it is irrelevant to the sort of relationship that I have with them, [256] that I have with them.

S: One finds that one's older relations feel under a definite moral obligation to leave their money to you. And even to save money so that they can leave it to you. And you can even say to them, "Well no, spend it on yourself, enjoy it" but, no, they have got this firm conviction that they ought to leave you, it is their duty to leave you a certain amount of money. And some will even deprive themselves to be able to leave more to you.

Marichi: It is not actually relevant to the existing situation.

Bonnie: I think that that can be sometimes be some kind of insurance that you are going to hold them near and dear after they have gone ...

S: You are going to remember them because they left you something

Bonnie: That they will remain alive.

Dhammadinna: There are some people who have difficulties because their relatives want to leave them money but they don't want it to go into the Friends, there are quite a few people in that sort of situation.

S: Yes that is right.

Sulochana: My mother said to me, "Well you don't like things anyway".

S: If your mother had left you her tiara or whatever, you wouldn't have worn it would you? You would have sold it straight away, and given the proceeds to almost anybody (laughter).

Dhammadinna: People actually want to give their money to their children.

S: They want to leave their money to their children, they want that their children should keep that money for themselves and spend it on themselves in the sort of way that their parents would approve.

Sulochana: Yes. Strings.

S: If they spent it even gambling they wouldn't mind, but if they were to give it to the FWBO they wouldn't be happy, that is the truth of the situation in certain cases.

Marichi: Yes, it is almost as if that money could be given over now, why wait until later!

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S: Anyway we are still on the subject of death, is there are any further point in this passage that requires any attention? There is a sort of summary at the end.

"The advantage of having developed concentration to the significance of transitoriness is that by having understood that everything composite is transitory, you turn away from hankering after this life. Moreover, confidence (S: Presumably, confidence means faith) is nourished, you strive energetically and by having become free from attachment and aversion, the foundation is laid for the comprehensive understanding of the ultimate sameness of all constituents of reality."

This is perhaps a rather technical way of saying, realization of the truth, enlightenment.

Paloma: When it says here "and having become free from attachment and aversion," I wonder whether you do become free from aversion when seeing someone die, because I can imagine that ...

S: I don't think the suggestion is that this is how you conquer completely attachment and aversion and attain enlightenment, because we are only concerned here with one particular stage of the path. There is still the practice of the six Paramitas ahead, these are just sort of preliminary considerations.

Marichi: I find all this going on about (?) and stuff and you turn away from hankering after this life, makes me think, "Well I'd rather hanker after this life", I wonder what the point of it is by the time it has gone on this far. At the beginning of the Chapter it makes sense, but it is just sort ...

S: Well perhaps there is a little resistance is beginning to build up.

Marichi: A bit. I can see the point of seeing that everything is transitory and changing and moves on, but somehow ...

S: But not taking it too seriously?

Marichi: Could be.

S: Well it is a question of a middle path, one doesn't dwell on, doesn't want to dwell on it to such an extent one becomes as it were discouraged or cynical, but on the other hand you don't want to forget it to such an extent that you just involves yourself blindly.

Marichi: I think it is this line that one should get ready for the hereafter without striving for tomorrow. I mean I feel that you have got to do both.

[258]

: (?)

S: Yes, it mustn't be sort of striving for heaven in a sort of worldly sort of way.

: I like the bit that says, "moreover confidence is nourished and you strive energetically".

S: Yes. One mustn't forget the confidence and faith and positive mental state and the upsurge of energy because contemplating death or even corpses can be quite an exhilarating experience.

: Kind of liberating

S: I am going to write quite a bit about this in one of the chapters of my memoirs that I am hoping to write, to get down to shortly. There is going to be one chapter devoted to certain notable funerals that I have officiated at in Kalimpong all in a short space of time. Certain people died who I knew quite well. I want to say something about the way in which they died and what they looked like when they were dead, and how we cremated them. So it made quite an impression on me at the time, it was about 1952/3 ...

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S: ... one of them was a middle-aged English Buddhist woman whom I had got to know in Kalimpong, she was about 54 when she died, then there was Prince Latthakin of Burma who was married to the second daughter of the last King of Burma, with whom I stayed for six months when I was in Kalimpong at the beginning. He died two years after that, I performed his funeral ceremony, and then there was a doctor whom I knew, with whose family I was very friendly, who died quite suddenly, an old lady from South End who died, who on her death bed handed over her two grown up children to me to care for, they were both quite grown up, the daughter was unmarried and about thirty, but the mother was convinced that they would both need looking after by me, so she sort of handed them over. They came to me regularly and depended on me for at least advice and help all the time I was in Kalimpong. And there were one or two others. So I am going to have a chapter about all these deaths and relations. They were all quite different and all very interesting in their own way.

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Bonnie: (?)

S: Well they say "A rolling stone gathers no moss", but you have rolled a bit in the last few weeks, haven't you? So it is not surprising if a bit of moss, not to say a few cobwebs, have got rubbed off, you have rolled half way around the world.

Bonnie: I think I should have started rolling years ago.

S: Well, better late than never.

But you know to a sensitive person or in the case of a sensitive person, you don't need even to see a dead human body, you can see a little dead bird or even a dead leaf. I mean if you are very sensitive it is enough, it conveys the same message.

Bonnie: I came around a corner quite suddenly in the middle of Melbourne one day and saw a dead dog in a gutter, and it was quite a shock, and for a split second I saw the dog alive, jumping up and down. I just had the feeling of this live thing that had gone dead.

S: One sees that sort of thing on the roads of Norfolk in the autumn unfortunately, so many pheasants are run over by cars and so many rabbits, it is quite unpleasant to see.

Punyavati: Often people's first contact with death in the West is with their domestic pets.

S: Yes, Yes.

Verne: (a story about one of her pets which had died)

S: They were expecting you to sit up all night probably.

Verne: I think so, it was my ...

S: Any birds that break a leg usually do die. Anyway perhaps we should end it there.

[end of chapter 4, Jewel Ornament of Liberation seminar]

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