

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

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR
THE MANJUGHOSA STUTI SADHANA

Held at: Padmaloka

Dates: 22nd - 24th October 1977

Those Present: Not noted on the tapes but voices recognised by the transcriber include:

The Venerable Sangharakshita, Sagaramati, Subhuti, Devamitra, Abhaya, Vimalamitra, Aryamitra, Vajradaka, Asvajit.

*Please note that Pali and Sanskrit diacritic marks
are not used in most cases in this transcript.*

SANGHARAKSHITA: Just a few words about what we're actually going to be doing over the next three days. This morning we're going to study the actual sadhana text, and I hope we can complete the whole of it. We'll be going on until twelve or even twelve thirty with just a little break for a cup of tea or coffee. Then when we come to the five o'clock meditation we'll be doing the mettā bhāvana as a sort of introduction to the visualisation which we'll be doing after supper starting at eight o'clock. We'll be doing a guided visualisation practice, and then with the puja following at nine. If people want they can sit on after the puja for a further session just individually. We're having the puja at nine to synchronise with the community's puja so that while one set of people is meditating you don't hear another set chanting next door. With luck we shall obviate that.

Then tomorrow in the morning during the study we shall study a chapter, maybe a little more, of the 'Ratnaguna'. Then in the afternoon again the mettā bhāvana, again in the evening the visualisation practice.

Then the third day the programme will be the same, except that in the evening we shall do the recitation of the stuti and the mantra and the visualisation in the course of the evening meditation and puja. That will be a bit different from the previous two evenings.

So in this way we should have a reasonably sort of basic grounding in the practice as a whole and what it signifies. So this morning we're going to be dealing with the text of the stuti, going through it fairly minutely, if not even word for word.

First of all the title which in English reads,

'A cloud of worship pleasing to the protector Manjusri, (Being) the way to practise profound stuti sadhana of the holy Manjughosa.'

Anything there that anyone feels need explanation or comment? I can think of at least three or four points.

_____ : What is a stuti sadhana?

S: Stuti is a sort of hymn of praise. I use the word hymn for want of a better one but the essence of stuti is that it praises. You can have a stuti in praise of a king for instance. A stuti in praise of a Buddha or Bodhisattva or in Hinduism of a god or goddess. A stuti essentially extols. It enumerates the positive features or glorious attributes of the object of the stuti.



So a sadhana of course is a spiritual practice. A systematic spiritual practice of a devotional cum meditative nature. And a stuti sadhana is a systematic spiritual practice which embodies as its main feature the recitation of a stuti. Do you get the idea? But the epithet 'profound' is prefixed because you might run away with the wrong idea that just because it was a stuti sadhana it was a quite elementary practice, which in a way it is but this happens to be a profound stuti sadhana. Profound in meaning, profound in respect of the spiritual realisation to which it conduces. [Pause]

_____ : What is the difference between Manjusri and Manjughosa?

S: No difference at all essentially, but iconographically there is a difference. Manjusri in a way is the basic original form, the generic form if you like, and iconographically he's depicted flanked by two lotuses, on one of which there is a flaming sword, on the other of which there is the book of the Perfection of Wisdom. Manjughosa is that iconographic form which displays the wielded sword, and the book pressed against the heart, which of course is the form that we are concerned with here.

Vajradaka: Both Manjusri and Manjughosa are mentioned in the title.

S: Yes, 'a cloud of worship pleasing to the protector Manjusri'. The generic form is mentioned first, and then 'The way to practise the profound stuti sadhana of the holy Manjughosa'. That in the actual practice, the form of Manjusri with which one is concerned is the Manjughosa form, i.e. not the basic form with the lotus and book on either side, but the form in which he wields the sword in one hand and presses the book to the heart with the other.

Vimalamitra: The form there and the form I've got he's wielding a sword and he's got the book on the end of a lotus. That's something like an in between.

S: I don't know about that. It might even be iconographically incorrect. I don't remember a form like that with a particular name. One can look it up in one of the text books, but these are the two most usual forms certainly.

You may remember that Tsongkhapa is regarded as a manifestation of Manjusri and he too is flanked by the two emblems on the two lotuses.

What about this expression 'cloud of worship', *Pujamegha*? What do you understand by that? This is an Indian, a Sanskrit idiom.

_____ : Is it to do with the fact that you burn incense when you worship?

S: No, I don't think it's that, no.

_____ : The worship isn't offered (?)......

S: But why a cloud? Why not a flood of worship?

_____ : It has the same effect as a cloud. It rains.

S: You could say that. But actually it's a straightforward sort of metaphorical expression. It means an abundance. Just as clouds sort of spread. You see for instance at the beginning of the rainy season, first of all the sky is clear and then a little cloud comes up, then it grows, it spreads, then eventually the whole sky is filled with cloud. So a cloud of worship is an abundance of worship that spreads in all directions which constantly expands. This is the idea. [Pause]



Sagaramati: Is there any reason why Manjusri's called a protector? The other bodhisattvas are not usually called protectors, are they?

S: Yes they are. For instance there is the well known group of the three protectors first of all. That is to say Avalokitesvara, Manjusri and Vajrapani. This is the famous set that you get as a set of three throughout Tibet and Nepal, and there's a set of three because they correspond to three Buddhas, and originally of course there were three Buddhas rather than five. In Mahayana broadly speaking you get triads of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Again broadly speaking in the Vajrayana you get a fivefold set. You get pentads. Or you can have a Buddha and two bodhisattvas. In a sense the idea being that you have the central form flanked by the two main aspects, as it were. For instance you might have Amitabha flanked by Avalokitesvara representing compassion and Mahastamaprapta representing power. This is a very popular triad in China. So in the same way you had a triad of bodhisattvas - Avalokitesvara representing compassion, Manjusri representing wisdom, the central one, and Vajrapani representing power. So later on the number of Buddhas was, as it were, increased to five, and the two Buddhas who were added - the original ones being Vairocana for the centre, then Amitabha for the West, Akshobya for the East - the two Buddhas who were added, that is to say Amoghasiddhi for the North and Ratnasambhava for the South, are comparatively shadowy figures. Do you see what I mean? They don't seem to be so fully individualised as the other three. Partly because they aren't so ancient, in a manner of speaking.

In the same way the three bodhisattvas are much more prominent than the five bodhisattvas, who are nathas, that is to say. There are five nathas, just as there were originally three bodhisattvas and three Buddhas, eventually there are five Buddhas and five nathas, but the other two nathas aren't so prominent as these three. Who are the others anyway? There's Ratnapani for the South and for the north who is the bodhisattva? I think it's Visvapani, but I'm not certain of that.

So you can see that they are much more shadowy figures, aren't they? But what is a protector, Natha? The Buddha is also called natha. In the puja we speak of the protectors, the nathas. It clearly means Buddhas and bodhisattvas. So even though the most famous set is a set of three, the three nathas, of the three main kulas, it's not an exclusive term. It's usually translated protector, sometimes saviour. It doesn't seem very Buddhistic at all, does it. Let me give you a few examples of the way in which the word is used. It might throw some light on the meaning. For instance there's Anathapindaka, the Buddha's famous disciple. Now what does that mean?

_____ : The protector of orphans.

S: The protector of orphans. No, it doesn't actually mean quite that. Pindaka is one who feeds, one who gives food, one who gives food in balls or food in lumps, because that's how the Indians eat their food, isn't it. They knead it into a lump and then lightly toss it into the mouth. So one who gives Pinda, one who gives balls of food is one who feeds, who supports, who brings up, but what is Anatha? Anatha is one without a protector, that's the literal meaning. So Anathapindaka is the one who gives food to those who are without a protector or a guardian. That is to say especially children who don't have any parents, who don't have any guardians. In other words orphans if you like, though they may not be literally orphans in the sense of their parents being dead. So when you are a child your parent or your lawful guardian is your natha, your support, your protector, your guardian. So that sort of idea is transposed to the spiritual plane. The Buddha is your natha, the bodhisattva is your natha, your protector, your guardian. Almost your refuge.

But then again in the Dhammapada where it says, 'Atta no nathi' (?) etc. Where it says the self is the lord of self. The word here which is translated lord or master in English is 'natha'. The self is its own protector, the atta is its own natha. What other natha could there be. You see. So this is the way in which the word is used. So what does it mean when we say that the Buddhas or bodhisattvas are our nathas, our protectors? We recite this every day in the Sevenfold Puja but what do we mean by that, by evoking Buddhas and bodhisattvas as nathas or protectors. What sort of protection are we looking for? What sort of protection do we expect. Do we think about it at all? And the Dhammapada tells us that we're our own protector, so why do we evoke the Buddha as our



protector or the bodhisattva as our protector? Isn't it contradictory or is it just a simple conflict between Hinayana and Mahayana? If so which is right?

Devamitra: You're feeling the protection of the state of mind that the Buddha or bodhisattva symbolises.

S: Later on in the course of the sadhana one will see that the bodhisattva is not just a state of mind.

Sagaramati: Aren't you trying to be receptive to some influence?

S: Ah, you're trying to be receptive to some influence, yes. Which could be regarded, in a manner of speaking, perhaps not speaking very Buddhistically, as some other dimension of your own being. In that sense a state of mind, but not a state of mind in the sense of being just an idea within your present consciousness or an idea even within a slightly higher level of consciousness, or even a very much higher level of consciousness.

So one is not invoking protectors for worldly protection or anything like that. We'll be going into that a bit tomorrow morning when we come to the '*Ratnaguna*'. You are opening yourself to something spiritual, something transcendental. They're your spiritual protectors in the sense that you can learn from them, be guided by them or inspired by them, influenced by them. But for that to be possible you must be open. So in hailing them as your protectors you are expressing your openness to them, your readiness to receive. Not that remaining as you are you're invoking them to protect you, to grant you the things that you want or help you to get the things that you want in your present state of unenlightened being.

So the protector, Manjusri or Manjunatha.

Sagaramati: It seems that it's better to see these forces as being real. Some people usually rationalise it and say well it's only an operational concept.

S: Yes, right, or just a state of mind in the ordinary sense. 'It's just subjective, there aren't really any buddhas or bodhisattvas, they just personify states of your own mind'. This is true in a way but it's very dangerous to think like that prematurely. It's much better to think that there are bodhisattvas actually out there who are thinking about you and wanting to help you. That in a way is not only more helpful but is actually nearer to the truth, crudely though it may be expressed. It's a bit like what I used to say with regard to animism, that it's nearer the truth to say that everything is alive than to say that everything is dead.

Vimalamitra: Is the reason why it's better to think of bodhisattvas as outside yourself to break down the subject/object.....

S: Yes, it does eventually have that effect, yes.

_____ : Whereas the danger is if you think of them as a state of mind you remain subjective.

S: Yes you just remain within your own subjectivity.

Sagaramati: It must be hard to get a feeling for something you believe is just the state of your mind.

S: Yes, that would be a bit of a spiritual gymnastic, yes. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas are out there just as much as Nirvana is out there, and in our present state of consciousness they are all out there, they're not in here. That's only a concept at best. No doubt eventually we will realise that the out there is the in here or that the line of division between them is ultimately unreal, but for the present at least, Nirvana is out there, it's something that we're working towards. Buddhas are out there teaching us from out there, or bodhisattvas are out there helping us from out there etc. No doubt one day that dichotomy will be resolved, but for the time being the



dichotomy is real and we have to function within that framework. We have to accept the framework in order to deny it eventually.

What about the names? Manju-sri, Manju-natha, Manju-ghosa. Do you find any significance in that 'Manju'?

_____ : It's very soft.

S: But do you think it's just an accident that the bodhisattva of Wisdom, so to speak, has this sort of name? It means soft, gentle. So Manjusri is the softly or gently, auspicious one. Manjunatha the softly or gently, protecting one, or the soft, gentle protector. Manjughosa, the one of soft or gentle utterance. Does that suggest anything in particular or is it just fortuitous do you think?

_____ : Maybe it's because of the level on which it operates, prajna, which is quite subtle and imperceptible.

S: Yes. We did touch upon this I believe in the course of the '*Ratnaguna*' didn't we. It is something that sort of sidles into the mind. There's no sort of direct frontal attack as it were, though we might speak in those terms. It's as though it comes from one side. You hardly see it coming. It's also a bit like the still small voice as it were. It's very quiet, it's very soft, it's very gentle, but on the other hand it's more powerful than a thunderclap. You could say that the Manjughosa is the nearest you can get to silence without actually being silent. And you remember in the Vimalakirti Sutra, Vimalakirti remains silent, but Manjughosa has the last word before that silence. So it's as near as you can get to silence without being actually silent. It's the last utterance of speech before it disappears entirely. The subtlest possible utterance. If you are to speak at all this is how you speak. If you were to speak any less you would be silent, if you were to speak any more you'd depart from the truth. So it's that - Manju-ghosa - this is what it really conveys or communicates.

Sri is also glory. You could look at it in a sort of rather literal way and say that Manjusri is the gentle glory, in the sense of radiance. Manjughosa is the gentle speech, the gentle sound. So you've got both the visual and the oral elements. You could look at it like that. And obviously Manjughosa is the most appropriate because speech, communication, teaching, wisdom, these are all interconnected. It's a little akin, though I don't like to draw too much of a parallel, to the Western conception of *Logos*. So that Manjughosa is that still small voice that just trembles on the brink of total silence. It's the last whisper that communicates the ultimate wisdom before you merge altogether into the silence of the void. That's one way of looking at it. A rather dualistic way but it does convey something of the meaning of the name Manjughosa.

Holy is of course 'Arya'.

And what about 'pleasing to the protector Manjusri'? Why should this cloud of worship be pleasing to him? What's the significance of that? Does he require to be pleased? Is he liable to get angry if you won't please him, or what?

Subhuti: It gives conditions under which he can respond.

S: Yes, right. It's a bit like in the course of the Vajrasattva mantra - 'Sutosyo me Bhava Suposyo me Bhava' - be pleased with me, be contented with me. You are trying to establish a harmony between yourself and the particular bodhisattva. You are trying to lessen the gulf between you. It's not that he's a person whom you're trying to placate or rub up the right way as it were.

Vimalamitra: It's quite important to have a good relationship with your yidam.

S: If you feel that the Buddha is angry with you what does that suggest?



_____ : Authoritarianism.

S: But what does it suggest about yourself? [Pause] All right put it nearer home. Supposing you get the feeling that the whole Order is angry with you. What would that suggest about yourself?

_____ : Guilt.

S: Guilt, yes. But why should you feel guilty?

_____ : You've just got that guilt and you rationalise explanations for it.

S: But why do you have the guilt usually? What is guilt?

_____ : Past conditioning.

S: Yes, but not just that. Suppose it's an objective guilt.

_____ : You think you've done something wrong.

S: Yes, you think you've done something wrong, or maybe you have done something wrong. So then you start thinking that everybody's angry with you. So if you think that the Buddha is angry with you what does that tell you about yourself?

_____ : That you've done something wrong.

S: You've done something wrong. If you think the Buddha's pleased with you what does that tell you? [Laughter]

_____ : You've been a good boy!

S: Right, so a cloud of worship pleasing to the protector Manjusri. So the two things go together, that is to say if you are doing puja and you're in a positive mental state and you're meditating, if you then think of Buddhas and bodhisattvas you'll have the feeling as though they're pleased with you and happy with you. The one is the objective correlate of the other. You might even feel the whole world is pleased with you, it's a happy place, people are friendly, they like you, but if you've got something on your mind or if you feel guilty you might feel that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are not angry - they don't get angry, you know that - but a bit annoyed, a bit aloof, and you might feel that your good friends in the Order etc., aren't very pleased with you or they're looking down on you or something of that sort. But all on account of your unskilful mental attitude or something wrong that you happened to have done.

I'm leaving out of consideration the possibility that it's all due to a misunderstanding etc., etc. That will only complicate the issue. But do you see the point I'm making. The cloud of worship pleases Manjusri. It must please him. If you still feel that Manjusri is rather annoyed with you or aloof from you well you're not offering your cloud of worship properly. Maybe you're just going through the whole thing mechanically. I'm sure everybody's had the experience of getting up after a good session of mettā bhāvana and feeling that the whole world is a much more pleasant place.

_____ : And the reverse as well.

S: And the reverse, yes, but you're not concerned with that, not practically!



Sagaramati: It does seem a more naive approach. It saves a lot of problems. Not naive but in the sense of not being too cynical and too mental about the whole approach.

S: Or not being too anxious. This is what it really boils down to. Being simple in a child like sort of way. [Pause]

All right then, so much for the title. Now the text begins with

Namo Guru Manjughosāya!

Well that's a bit significant isn't it. What have you to say about that or to ask about that? Why is he being addressed as Guru Manjughosa? Why are you saluting him as Guru Manjughosa?

Vajradaka: You're just seeing him as one who is imparting truth to you.

_____ : We said earlier this morning he was outside of ourselves.

S: So you could say that Manjughosa is the guru figure among the bodhisattvas, par excellence, which is in a way only to be expected because he is the bodhisattva of wisdom. It's really much more than that, we're saying bodhisattva of wisdom for short, but it's really more than that. It's as though Manjughosa embodies in a really ideal form, the guru principle, the sort of archetypal guru principle, archetypal in a super spiritual or transcendental sense, not just a Jungian sense.

_____ : But I thought Padmasambhava was the archetypal guru.

S: Yes and no. Don't forget that Manjughosa belongs to the Mahayana whereas Padmasambhava belongs much more to the Vajrayana. Padmasambhava is an historical figure. Manjughosa isn't an historical figure. Don't forget the alignment of the three family protectors with the three Buddhas. I pointed out in a lecture that originally you had just the one Buddha, Shakyamuni. Then you had a sort of ideal Buddha, Vairocana, then flanking him you've got your Buddha of compassion and your Buddha of wisdom, that is to say Amitabha and Akshobya, and then you've got the three bodhisattvas corresponding to them, that is to say from left to right or from west to east, Avalokitesvara, Manjusri and Vajrapani. So Manjusri is the bodhisattva of Vairocana. He's in alignment with him. So in the original Buddha it was the wisdom aspect which is prominent. The Buddha is one who gained Enlightenment, Bodhi, and so on. So it's as though Manjusri is the central bodhisattva. That is to say he embodies in bodhisattva form the central Buddha, and the central Buddha is the Buddha of wisdom, of light, of en-light-enment and so on.

So in a way Manjusri is the most important of all the bodhisattvas. He occupies this position in the '*Vimalakirti*', where he alone dares to go and interview Vimalakirti, the old householder bodhisattva or bodhisattva householder.

Vajradaka: So does Vajrapani correlate to Akshobya?

S: Yes. Yes, in this system.

Vajradaka: And Avalokitesvara to Amitabha.

S: That's right, yes. So inasmuch as Manjusri embodies the Buddha in bodhisattva form, as it were, represents the Buddha in bodhisattva form, he's the embodiment of the teaching principle, the principle of communication of truth, and this is where the epithet 'guru' comes in. [Pause]



So traditionally Manjusri or Manjughosa represents spiritual wisdom as communicated, as taught. Represents also culture because in the Mahayana culture is a medium for the transmission of the Dharma. In fact you could say the transmission of the Dharma is analogous to the transmission of culture. So Manjusri or Manjughosa is the patron of all the different arts and sciences and so on. [Pause]

Subhuti: We usually translate 'namo' as homage, I think. Can you say any more about that?

S: It's more like salutations. For instance if you meet anyone in India you say 'Namaste' which is from the same root. I don't know what the root of that is. It might be interesting to look it up.

In Blakean terms, if anyone is interested - let me get a little word in for Blake - Manjughosa is Urthona Loss but of course raised to a much higher spiritual power as it were. Urthona Loss. Urthona, the Zoa of imagination, and Loss the sort of archetypal artist and seer and visionary. Luvah will give you the spellings.

_____ : The root is nam. The Sanskrit of namo is nam which literally is to bow.

S: To bow.

_____ : To worship

S: Bearing in mind of course that worship isn't quite the loaded word in India that it is in the West. You bow to your parents, you bow to the gods, you bow to your guru, you bow to the earth, etc., etc.

Sagaramati: I thought it would be Urizen. Urizen would have been the Blakean character. Not the fallen version of Urizen but the.....

S: One could say that too, except that - this goes a little further into Blake - that it seems that even in their unfallen form as the four Zoas of eternity they form a hierarchy, and Urthona is at the top with Luvah next, Urizen third and Tamas right at the bottom. So from that point of view they don't quite work out in this way. But it is true that in his unfallen form Urizen is the prince of light, intellect. But apparently unfallen intellect is subordinate to unfallen imagination. For Blake it is the imagination which is the true spiritual faculty, not the intellect, even in this unfallen form. Though you might also say - not being quite so cut and dried as that - that in another sense the unfallen intellect coincides with the unfallen imagination. You could say that too. And also Urthona is sort of hidden and mysterious and that ties up a little better with the Buddhist notion of wisdom. Something rather occult in the literal sense, mysterious.

But there is a tie up with Urizen inasmuch as there's a tie up with solar symbolism. In the case of Urizen and also in the case of Manjughosa as we shall see, through his connection with Vairocana.

Vimalamitra: Why is it that all the bodhisattvas are represented on a moon mat, instead of say as in Padmasambhava a moon mat and a sun mat?

S: Usually it's said that the moon mat represents means, the skilful means or compassionate means and the sun mat represents wisdom, but wisdom in its sort of fiery, rather energetic, aspect. So usually peaceful Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, though this isn't universal, are seated simply on the moon mat, and wrathful deities are seated or stand on the sun and moon mat both. Padmasambhava is classified in a way as a wrathful deity on account of his wrathful smile. But whether peaceful or wrathful all the bodhisattvas really embody both aspects. You can't be too literal minded about this. Just as Manjughosa is not the bodhisattva of wisdom, which means he hasn't got any compassion as it were, or that the bodhisattva of compassion hasn't got any wisdom. All the bodhisattvas are every bodhisattva. Every bodhisattva is all the bodhisattvas. But you for the purpose of your own particular practice or in accordance with your own particular outlook, you pay attention to this aspect rather



than to that.

[End of side one side two]

Traditionally in India the term 'guru' is explained as the one who gives light. That's not a scientific etymology but it's a popular traditional etymology. So you have the conception of the guru as the giver or the bringer of light, the illuminator. And that also ties up with Manjughosa.

_____ : So it's as though Manjughosa has more in common with Lucifer.

S: Right yes, the unfallen Lucifer of course. Lucifer literally means 'Light Bearer'.

So you get the general sort of idea or the feeling as to what Manjughosa represents? In the early days of humanity, the cultural tradition was very important. It was of course an oral tradition. There were no books. Traditions were very carefully preserved. Knowledge was very very important, very precious, sacred, even secret. So the teacher was very important, the guru was very important, the person who handed down to you this precious secret knowledge, as it were, and in those early days there was no distinction between sacred knowledge and profane knowledge. It was all knowledge, it was all useful. So there's something in us which responds to this idea of wisdom and the hander down of the wisdom, the teacher, the guru, that responds very very strongly, and Manjughosa represents this raised from the cultural to a high spiritual and transcendental level. The hander down of light, the communicator of spiritual wisdom, the initiator, etc., etc. Of course in cultural terms, on the cultural level, the guru was usually an old man, wasn't he? The reason for this is obvious. But on the spiritual level, Manjughosa is never represented as an old man. On the contrary he is represented as a sixteen year old youth, because this is the wisdom which is eternally young, it's the wisdom of eternity as it were. It's not the wisdom of a long passage of time.

So it's a youthful guru, which in cultural terms is a contradiction in terms. You can't have a youthful guru in say a tribal society. A young man is never listened to and his job is to listen. It's only on the spiritual level that you can have a youthful guru. Because wisdom, true wisdom, Transcendental Wisdom, takes no account of age.

All right let's go on then.

Whatever intelligent being,

being possessed of mind. This will be *sem-pa* in Tibetan, being endowed with mind.

*for the sake of acquiring Spotless Wisdom [*Vimala-jnana],*

When you get in these sort of texts a Sanskrit term with an asterisk immediately before it and the whole within brackets, what does that mean, do you know?

_____ : (unclear) spotless wisdom?

S: No, actually not. What scholars mean by this is... For instance you've got spotless wisdom in Tibetan, just as you have it in English, so the - what shall I say? - assumed original of this or correlate of this in Sanskrit is Vimala-jnana but they don't actually have a Sanskrit text which has Vimala-jnana say, but this is just their hypothetical reconstruction of the Sanskrit, or this is what the Sanskrit would have been had there been a Sanskrit original but so far as they know there isn't. The little asterisk signifies that. But if there wasn't the asterisk it would mean that there was a Sanskrit text in which the expression Vimala-jnana did occur and that that had been translated into the Tibetan. In other words Tibetan sometimes developed its own Buddhist terms in Tibetan which don't have any direct Sanskrit equivalent but they can sometimes construct one, and this is



what is sometimes done. And of course always a text might turn up which did contain Vimala-jnana. That's what that means. Not to take all that too seriously.

which is the root of all the virtues making for obvious advancement, [i.e. birth as man or god], and the true Good, [i.e. Nirvana]

The distinction between these two is of course very important, that is to say the distinction between obvious advancement, that is to say a superior position within the Samsara, within the Wheel of Life, and the true good or Nirvana which lies outside the Wheel of Life altogether, which transcends the Samsara entirely.

But in what sense does the spotless wisdom make for obvious advancement? Does it necessarily make for obvious advancement? This is sometimes assumed in Buddhist texts, especially Tantric texts, that if you follow the spiritual life, that will be of material advantage to you as well as of spiritual advantage, but is it always necessarily so do you think? What is material advantage anyway?

Subhuti: ... satisfy your desires.

S: So will the cultivation of Spotless Wisdom enable you to satisfy your desires?

Vajradaka: If you haven't got very many desires, yes!

S: There's a naive way of looking at this which is merely naive. I think not in very justified way. For instance it's often thought in the East that if you do good deeds well they'll ensure you long life, a good rebirth and also help you on your way to Nirvana. But the assumption seems to be that the two never come into conflict, but is that assumption correct?

_____ : The two what don't come into conflict?

S: The obvious advancement and the true Good. For instance just to give an example, all right you practise the sadhana, you practise or develop Spotless Wisdom, which presumably brings you nearer to Nirvana. As a result of your practise of that spotless wisdom you also become more wealthy because you acquire more merit. So you could say well in a way you are gaining in both respects. There is the obvious advancement and there is the coming closer to Nirvana. But supposing that wealth obstructs your spiritual progress, then does it really add up to an obvious advancement?

Vajradaka: Need it be taken in such a material way though?

S: It is actually, traditionally.

Sagaramati: I would take virtues as being that you have a reasonable and intelligent mind and you are fortunate to be born in a situation in which you'll come into contact with the Dharma.

S: What it seems to mean really is that for spotless wisdom to be developed or anything transcendental to be developed, you need, practically speaking, a basis in mundane positivity. So it's to that extent that the cultivation of Spotless Wisdom results in both. As a result of cultivating the spotless wisdom you develop those mundane skilful states which are the necessary bases of the transcendental insight, as well as the transcendental insight itself.

_____ : I've been recently reading 'The Middle Length Sayings' and there's one of those where a king comes and asks the Buddha what in this life have your monks got to show, and the Buddha lists a whole lot of things - they're calm, they're tranquil, they achieve the first dhyana, they achieve the second dhyana; they've got



all sorts of practical results from their practice.

S: Yes, so these would be mundane, just the dhyanas. But perhaps one should see this against the background of later developments in India, especially more popular Tantric developments. The standard, not to say classical, approach was that if you wanted to develop spiritually you had to give up worldly things. It's the old crux or the old conflict. The Tantra in its more popular form, both Buddhist and Hindu, tended to say or seems to say that if you follow the Tantric path there was no such conflict. You could enjoy all the things of the world, in fact better than ever, more than ever. At the same time make spiritual progress, and that a Tantric sadhana gave you both. So clearly this could be exaggerated, but there is an element of truth in it inasmuch as you do need a basis of mundane positivity, that is to say within your own mind, as a basis for the development of the transcendental insight. You don't necessarily of course need worldly goods and pleasures and enjoyments in a lower sense, but this was how many people took it, that the Tantric path didn't require you to give up anything. You could go on enjoying wine, women and song - at the same time make spiritual progress.

Taken literally in that sense of course it's a travesty of what the Tantrayana or at least the Vajrayana really teaches, but there's an element of truth in it inasmuch as you do need a basis of that mundane positivity in order to be able to develop the transcendental, but the mundane positivity consists mainly in your own positive mental state via the dhyanas, not in a state of pleasurable satisfaction due to the indulgence of all your worldly desires.

You could say that at best the Tantric approach saying 'Oh you don't have to give up anything, you can go on leading a worldly life and at the same time you can make spiritual progress. In fact through the Tantric sadhana you'll have a better worldly life as well as making spiritual progress...' - this is a sort of accommodation to the needs of the beginner you could say, to get him started. It isn't strictly true.

Vimalamitra: So this mundane refers really to a spiritual rather than a worldly....

S: Yes it refers to spiritual in the strict sense, inasmuch as spiritual is distinguished from transcendental, yes. But it could easily be misunderstood.

Subhuti: It's rather reminiscent of the TM approach.

S: Indeed it is, yes. Which is justified up to a point. But sooner or later people begin to see well there is a conflict, at least at the next level, that you can't make actual spiritual progress without giving up or dissociating yourself from certain things of a mundane nature. You can't have all this and heaven too!

So

Whatever intelligent being, for the sake of acquiring Spotless Wisdom, which is the root of all the virtues making for obvious advancement, [i.e birth as man or god], and the true good, [i.e. Nirvana]...

wishes to practise the sadhana of the "Srijnana-Gunaphala [-nama] Stuti", composed by the siddhacarya rDo-rje mThon-cha [Vajrayudha] should previously have duly received the Bestowal of Science.

I haven't been able to find out anything about this particular Siddhacarya. It seems that he is a Tibetan. He's not mentioned in 'The Blue Annals', so possibly he's a relatively late figure. [Pause]

So whoever wishes to practise it, should previously have duly received the bestowal of science. Science here is 'Vidya'.



for this from a guru in the succession.

Vajradaka: Is it an initiation?

S: Ah wait a minute, we're going into that.

_____ : What's the term for 'science'?

S: 'Vidya'. 'Vidya' literally means 'knowledge'. We talked about Vidya, didn't we on the *'Mind in Buddhist Psychology'* seminar, in connection with 'Avidya' and in connection with what Guenther had to say about what 'Vidya' really meant, which we found quite helpful. 'Vidya' is from a root 'Vid' meaning to know, from which we also get 'Veda' in the sense of the four 'Vedas'. It's sort of spiritual knowledge, you could say. There is a slightly more technical flavour. This is why it's quite appropriately translated as 'science'. It's more like spiritual science. It's something rather precise and specific and not something vaguely or dreamily idealistic. The bestowal of science that is mentioned here is not the - what shall I say? - is not the so-called Tantric initiation in the sense of the 'Wongkur', as it's called in Tibetan, the 'Abhisheka'. It's more like a proper explanation or proper teaching.

_____ : Can you repeat that.

S: Bestowal of science here means not so much the Tantric initiation in the sense of the 'Wongkur' or 'Abhisheka', but something more like a proper explanation of the real meaning of the practice.

Tantric initiates, by the way are sometimes known as Vidyadharas - bearers of 'Vidya'. If you like inheritors of Vidya, spiritual science. The word has got quite a different flavour from say 'Bodhi' or 'Prajna' or 'Jnana'. It suggests even something slightly esoteric, or something spell-like. Sometimes 'Avidya' means a spell because it's the secret knowledge about a particular deity, a particular god. It's something also like magical knowledge if you like. 'Vidya' is sometimes very close to 'Dharani'.

'From a guru in the succession', that is from a guru who has received it from his guru who has received it from his guru and so on. Of course from a purely transcendental point of view there can't be anything handed down or handed on. One must be very clear about this. This in fact is what the 'Diamond Sutra' says, where the Buddha says the Tathagata has nothing to impart. You can think of spiritual transmission by way of the analogy of cultural transmission where something is handed on or handed down. Some piece of ancient law, but you can't really think of a spiritual transmission in that sort of way. As something, whether a doctrine or teaching or even an experience literally handed on, handed down from one person to another all the way down the line. That's only a manner of speaking. There's nothing handed on, nothing handed down. The Zen people make much of this - the 'transmission'. But if they take it literally then they're completely mistaken. It becomes a form of authority. I've got it from my guru, he had it from his guru and back, back, back, back, he had it from the Buddha! You see. So that invests you with a tremendous weight of authority, as it were, which has got nothing to do with spiritual life. It's just a sort of establishing a spiritual legitimacy.

Sagaramati: There are occasions when you do that. People who say pick up meditation out of a book and you say well you should really have a teacher....

S: Yes.

Sagaramati: Well what would qualify him as a teacher? Well he's got teachers who taught him meditation etc.

S: Yes, this is what one says or one may be justified in saying. But you can have a whole series of teachers who have all got it wrong! [Laughter] So that isn't the ultimate reason as it were. We can point to successful results.



The whole Buddhist tradition can do so, but we must realise that from a spiritual point of view it isn't a question of just handing something on. That can be a sort of vehicle, even a quite appropriate and trustworthy vehicle, but in the last analysis there's nothing which is handed on. It's very difficult to say what that is if it isn't something that is handed on. You could speak of a re-creation of an experience but it's not even that. It is in a way something completely new, something completely novel each time. It's not a thing at all. Even though we speak of say well the Buddha got enlightened and then his disciple got enlightened. In a way it's the same enlightenment but even that is only in a manner of speaking.

So it's only in a manner of speaking that the same experience is transmitted. It's equally true to say that their experiences are all completely different. They're all unique. The experience isn't a thing or enlightenment isn't a thing, either of which everybody has in common or which is handed down from one person to another. But we can't help speaking in that sort of way. Only we mustn't be misled by our speaking in this sort of way.

_____ : In the Tantric lectures series you speak of the transmission from a guru to a disciple as being like an actual charge of energy flowing between them...

S: Yes.

_____ : How does that fit in with what you've been saying about nothing really being transmitted?

S: Well what is a charge of electricity? Is there a thing? When the electricity flows. I don't know really anything about electricity but I don't think there's a sort of lump of something which sort of jumps across the gulf from here to there, is there? What happens when electricity is transmitted?

Sagaramati: The electrons in the outer shells of the atoms move.

S: They do actually move?

Sagaramati: Well they say they move. But electricity is what moves them. Without they just...

S: Yes, but that in a way doesn't occupy space as it were. So it is a bit like that then. [Laughter] So the experience is of something moving from, as it were, place to place. You can't help experiencing in that way because here are you and there is the guru. You are functioning within the subject-object duality or framework, but in reality that is not what is happening in a way at a deeper level. But you cannot help experiencing it like that and the experience is valid as an experience, yes. Just as you feel or you see or you hear the guru speaking to you. But it goes beyond that. It isn't just speech or it isn't just thought. It isn't even just experience. Then there's that invisible, sort of inaudible element, like the electricity which isn't within space, which makes all the difference and which is the all important thing, and that isn't transmitted. It doesn't need to be transmitted. In a way it's already there. In a way again very much in a manner of speaking. Don't think it's a thing that is already there.

_____ : It's like the difference between relative and absolute truth.

S: Right, yes. And in a sense all truth that can be expressed is relative truth. That was the meaning of Vimalakirti's silence in a way. Anyway let's go on.

So

Then in a state of powerfully generating the moods of Aversion and Great Compassion, he should start on the sequence of the devotion.



This is quite important, this generating the moods of aversion and great compassion. The word for aversion is interesting. It's 'nisarana' which is the exact opposite of 'sarana'. It's not Going for Refuge. Not only not Going for Refuge, not just sort of standing still and not Going for Refuge - actually going in the opposite direction and withdrawing. We don't have a proper word for that in English, do we? What's the opposite of a refugee? Who goes in the opposite direction from a refugee? We just haven't got a word really. It's someone who doesn't run to take refuge in something but who runs away from it and doesn't want to take refuge in it. Do you see what I mean?

_____ : They'd be an exile, could it be that?

S: Yes, he's self-exiled. So how does that work out here? We know what is meant by Going for Refuge to the Buddha, don't we? What is Going for Refuge in a very general sort of way, if you go for refuge to something, or you take refuge with something?

_____ : Support.

S: Support, yes. So what do we usually take refuge in? We don't usually take refuge in the Buddha.

_____ : T.V.

S: Yes, right. In what sense can it be said that we take refuge in them? We're running away from something. Maybe we're running away from ourselves. We're taking refuge in something else. As you say taking refuge in TV, taking refuge in sport, taking refuge in sex, etc., etc. You bury yourself in those things. So we usually take refuge in the world. So when we Go for Refuge to the Three Jewels we completely reverse this. So usually we go for refuge to the world but we are not to take refuge in the world. We are to withdraw from the world. We're to have an anti refuge with regard to the world, and this is 'nisarana'. It's not just aversion but it's withdrawal, disentanglement, disengagement.

But on the other hand the Great Compassion. The first is supposed to represent the Hinayana attitude, the second is supposed to represent the Mahayana attitude, and both of these are exemplified in a work of Tsong Kha Pa. There are some famous verses here which we did on a study retreat. I'll read these two verses. One represents the 'nisarana' and the other represents the Great Compassion.

Tsong Kha Pa says,

"When you do not for an instant wish the pleasures of samsara, and day and night remain intent on liberation, you have then produced renunciation."

Here it's translated renunciation - aversion, nisarana. It's a bit like in the positive nidanas, nibbida, the nivrid, the disentanglement, the disengagement, the withdrawal. Then.

"Renunciation, without pure Bodhi mind does not bring forth the perfect bliss of unsurpassed Enlightenment. Therefore bodhisattvas generate excellent Bodhi mind."

In other words bodhicitta.

So both are necessary according to Tsong Kha Pa. The disengagement from samsara and the commitment to the ultimate, enlightenment, not for one's own sake only but for the sake of all, i.e. out of compassion. So on the one hand there must be renunciation, on the other hand there must be compassion. There must be disengagement, there must be compassionate commitment. So what are the two dangers if you try to have the one without the other. Supposing you try to cultivate nisarana or even do cultivate it but without cultivating



compassion, what is likely to be the result?

_____ : You dry up.

_____ : (unclear)

S: You may just have a cynical attitude towards the world. You may actually hate the world and hate people, which means of course you're still bound by them. Suppose you try to develop a Great Compassion without disentangling yourself from the world, then what is likely to happen? Well you're just cultivating attachment and calling it Great Compassion.

Devamitra: Presumably it's like someone who's merely a mundane philanthropist.

S: Right that too, yes. So both of these are very important. This is a basic feature of Tibetan Buddhist teaching, especially the teaching of the Gelugpas and Tsong Kha Pa. The need to develop this attitude of 'nissarana', of not going for refuge to worldly things, and the attitude of Great Compassion. You notice it said Great Compassion and not compassion. What's the difference?

Sagaramati: One has Sunyata....

S: Yes, it's a....

_____ : Does it refer to the Bodhicitta?

S: It does in a way, yes. The compassion which is a component of the Bodhicitta is the Great Compassion. That is to say the compassion which is born of the initial realisation of voidness.

Vajradaka: (unclear) compassion (unclear) of the Four Brahma Viharas.

S: Right! Yes, exactly, which is the compassion of the positive, mundane mental attitude.

_____ : Could you just say a bit more. I've never heard that distinction before.

S: Ah. In the course of the four Brahma Viharas you develop Metā and then you develop Karunā. Here your state is positive but it's mundane in the sense it is not conjoined with wisdom and therefore can be lost. But in the case of the Great Compassion of the Bodhisattva, his compassion springs from his realisation of voidness, and it's a sort of emotional aspect of his transcendental experience. It can't be lost because it's grounded in wisdom. So this is the difference between Karunā and Mahā Karunā. Mr.Chen used to say that Mahā Karunā is that Karunā which has been purified in the fires of Sunyatā. That used to be his expression.

_____ : Would the move from the Brahma Viharas to the Great Compassion be the arising of the Bodhicitta?

S: Well you could make the transition by developing wisdom, by developing vipassana. If for instance you were to do the meditation on death or the meditation on the twelve nidanas, and to the extent that you develop wisdom or insight, your mettā and karunā are transformed in Mahā Maitri and Mahā Karuna. In other words it's the distinction between the kindness of a basically egoistic person and the kindness of a non-egoistic person. You can be, as it were, kind as a result of your attachment and your desire to get on well with people or your fear of hurting them, you'll be kind. But when you have the Great Compassion you are kind, as it were, because you no longer feel - at least don't feel so strongly - the difference between yourself and others. [Pause]



_____ : Before we go on Bhante, can I just go back a bit to this thing about bestowal of science. Is this a bestowal of science and what exactly does that involve?

S: Yes you could take this explanation itself as a bestowal of science, though when we actually do it and one is actually led through the practice, then this is a bestowal of science in a more effective sort of way.

Sagaramati: What you said about the mettā, I've always had a bit of difficulty with that in the sense you're developing mettā but it's almost in the back of your mind I'm aware that this is quite mundane, it's not real mettā. I thought that normal human kindness, you could say, ego-based human kindness, wasn't mettā, it was just kindness. But mettā was something quite distinct from normal human kindness.

S: I think it is distinct, but it still isn't transcendental. It's much more highly developed, it's much purer. There is attachment there but it isn't a gross attachment. Especially if say there's no sexual attachment there, but it can still be mundane even though the sexual element is not there because sexual distinction doesn't operate in the Brahmaloкас or the higher dhyanas, but they're still quite mundane. One could, if one wanted to be metaphysical, say that in the heart even of mundane mettā, there is a spark of non egoity, inasmuch as all beings are fundamentally Buddhas, but I think it would be very unwise from a purely pragmatic point of view, to stress that too much, because people are only too ready to see their quite mundane attitudes and emotions as spiritual, even transcendental things. [Pause]

Anyway we'll just do this little introductory paragraph and then we'll pause for a cup of tea or coffee.

So

This in turn,

that is to say the devotion, the sadhana,

comprises preparation, main matter, conclusion, [defined respectively, for practices so arranged, as cittotpāda,

that is to say the development of the Chitta, the development of the Bodhicitta.

anālamba,

which means support. The main practice being your support,

And parināma].

or the turning over. The dedication of merits. So we'll be going through these one by one in a few minutes' time.

Subhuti: What about Srijnana Gunaphala?

S: I don't know anything about him. I assume that the stuti was composed by an Indian teacher called Srijnana Gunaphala and that that stuti was incorporated in, or arranged as, a sadhana, by the Tibetan teacher rDo-rje mTshon-cha. This is my assumption, but I've not been able to find out anything about either of these. On the other hand Srijnana Gunaphala may not be the name of an original Indian teacher but simply the title of the stuti, and the stuti might have been actually composed by that Tibetan teacher. That is possible, but certainly the material is thoroughly traditional.

Vajradaka: Is it part of systematic teaching? (unclear) for when you receive the Vidya. Is it systematically



after the attainment... For example did you have that prior to going through the stuti with the teacher, is it all worked out?

S: No, it isn't very systematic in that sort of way, no. One of the features of Tantric practice, in a way, though only in a way, isn't systematic. You don't necessarily get a higher initiation because you're more highly developed or a lower one because you're less developed. You may get a higher initiation because you're less developed and you need an extra charge, as it were. The Tantra doesn't work in the way that maybe the Hinayana and the Mahayana work. You could say it tends to follow the path of irregular steps quite a lot. I'll check whether I have among my notes any details about the lineage of this practice. I might have.

[Tea Break and end of tape one]

Tape two

Vajradaka: One feels that (unclear) Buddhas, could you say that it means that subjectively you have a good conscience?

S: Yes you could very much, yes, but a good conscience in, as it were, the objective sense, not merely that you're keeping your super-ego happy.

_____ : Could you give examples of the difference?

S: Well I distinguish say sometimes between subjective guilt or neurotic guilt and objective guilt. There's been a bit of misunderstanding in the movement vis a vis this distinction because we have, quite rightly, criticised the feelings of guilt with which people have been left on account of their Christian upbringing, but some people have misunderstood that to mean, misunderstood that critique to mean, that you shouldn't ever feel guilty, but in fact that is not so at all because supposing you do perform an action which is objectively unskilful, you should feel uneasy and unhappy about that, and that feeling of unease and unhappiness is objective guilt. Your objective conscience is operating.

Vajradaka: So do you then relate that same principle to the positive aspect as well?

S: Yes. This is in a way quite positive. It's a sort of check on unskilful action.

Vajradaka: I wasn't quite sure what you meant by the super-ego.

S: Just in the ordinary Freudian sense. The super-ego is in a way the voice of the group interjected, telling you what's right and what's wrong, which is what the group thinks right and wrong, so the guilt that you feel when you disobey your super-ego is not necessarily, though it may be sometimes, a sort of skilful objective guilt. Or to the extent that you merely react out of fear of disapproval of the group, this is not skilful in itself. That's not, as it were, objective guilt. Objective guilt is when you recognise that you've done something unskilful which you yourself recognise as unskilful and do not wish really to do, and which you have done because you were unmindful or you were forgetful or divided etc.

So the bodhisattva that you please doesn't represent a sort of super-ego that you are satisfying.

All right,

Preparation, the Taking Refuge and Generating the [Bodhi]citta:

This is what one actually says or recites at the beginning of the practice. One says it three times.



I and all else that moves, until enlightenment take the guru and the triple gem as Refuge. In order to gain perfect Buddhahood for others' sake we practise the Manjusri-stuti-sadhana; whereby may sentient beings possess happiness with its causes; be parted from all grief with its causes; not become parted from the happiness wherein no grief is; and dwell in the condition of Equanimity.

So there's a Going for Refuge and then there's a cultivation of the four Brahma Viharas, which are not themselves the bodhicitta, but which provide the basis, the support, for the arising of the bodhicitta. So "I and all else that moves, until enlightenment take the guru and the triple gem as refuge." All else that moves. All other living beings. Living beings that are not anchored to one spot, like plants. Not only all sentient beings exactly but all living and moving beings. "Until enlightenment take the guru and the triple gem as Refuge." This suggests that the refuge continues until you gain enlightenment. That the only person who doesn't need to go for refuge is a Buddha.

In the Vajrayana there are of course six refuges - well there are more actually - but in the exoteric Vajrayana or comparatively exoteric Vajrayana you can say that there are six. There are three extra refuges which are not different from the ones usually known but which are their more - I won't say esoteric but more - specific forms. Do you know what those three equivalents are? You've got the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and then corresponding to those in the Vajrayana you've got the Guru, Yidam and Dakini. So why does one have the Guru refuge in addition to the Buddha refuge? What does that mean? Is it a separate refuge or what is it?

_____ : You don't have any experience of the Buddha but you do have experience of the guru.

S: Right, you don't have any direct personal contact with the Buddha but you do with the guru. So within your immediate context, your smaller, more limited, more restricted context, the guru functions as the Buddha. In other words he's somebody who knows more or has had more experience than you have.

And then what about the Yidam as the Dharma? Well the Dharma is very vast. It contains all sorts of abstruse and recondite teachings. There's the Abhidharma, the Madhyamika, Yogachara, all sorts of things. But so far as you are concerned it's your Yidam that is the Dharma, because you have direct contact with that. That's what you actually practice. The visualisation and mantra recitation of that Yidam. So for you the Yidam is the Dharma. It all boils down to that. That's what you do every day. That's the point at which every day you come into contact with the Dharma. So the Yidam for you is the Dharma, for all practical purposes.

Abhaya: I'm not quite sure of the precise meaning of Yidam.

S: Yidam literally means 'oath-bound'. 'Dam' is oath or contract or agreement. 'Yi' is bound. It's not very easy to explain. Well let's go back to the Sanskrit equivalent. That might be helpful. There's no direct Sanskrit equivalent. Yidam is a Tibetan word, it represents a Tibetan idea in a way, but it's used as the equivalent of the 'Ishtadevata' but it is not a translation of that, it means something quite different, but it's used as equivalent. 'Ishtadevata' means the chosen deity, the deity that you particularly like, the Buddha or bodhisattva to whom you are particularly drawn. It's a Hindu idea as well as a Buddhist idea. It isn't a specifically Buddhist term. So Yidam is used as the equivalent of that, but it isn't a translation of that. So when you choose a particular deity which implies in a way that the deity chooses you, there's a sort of connection between you - there's a sort of agreement, a sort of contract - and sometimes the contract is expressed by saying that you undertake to do the sadhana, the deity undertakes to give you the results. There's a sort of contract between you. So he is the one to whom you are bound by contract, bound by oath as it were. He is bound by an oath, as it were, to give you the results of the sadhana that you do. The sadhana, that is to say, centred upon him. This is the way the Tibetans look at it. I think this is a rather specifically Tibetan way of looking at it. It is probably better to look



at it more in the original Indian way in terms of a chosen deity.

Subhuti: In the Pali Canon the Buddha sometimes says, 'I will stand surety for you'.

S: That is indeed true, because he has followed the course and gained the result so he can stand surety. He guarantees and he's your guarantor. Yes, the oath bound one is like the guarantor, yes. It's the same sort of idea. The Tibetans, by the way, are very strong on agreements. I noticed that when I had my first dealings with them. They are very slow to give their word - I think I've mentioned this before - but once they've given it they absolutely stick by it. You can't move them, but it's not easy to make them give their word, quite naturally, because they do take it so seriously. But once you've got them to give it, you really can rely on them after that. But this is perhaps why they like this sort of contractual language, this language of agreement between you and the Yidam as they call it.

So from the Vajrayana point of view, certainly what we may call the early stages of Vajrayana, it's very important that one has a Yidam, that is to say a particular Buddha or bodhisattva of whom one is, as it were, particularly fond or to whom one is particularly drawn, and that one carries out the practice, the sadhana relating to that deity, regularly, that is to say daily. That is to say you don't have to stick exclusively to that deity. You can supplement that practice with practices associated with other deities but that remains the main one. There may even be a shift of emphasis over the years if you practise for many many years, but the usual way of practising is if you, for instance, have been doing Manjughosa and then you switch to Tara, you don't really switch to Tara. You as it were imagine or you visualise that Manjughosa assumes the form of Tara and that you are doing the sadhana of Manjughosa still but in the form of Tara. In that way the continuity is maintained but differences of approach are allowed for.

Vajradaka: So if there's someone who, for example, has quite a Theravadin approach the Buddha himself could be like that Ishtadeva.

S: Indeed, yes, right. Several people in the Order do have the Shakyamuni visualisation.

Aryamitra: But it says your chosen deity but that doesn't always happens, does it? You give the deity.

S: That's right, because you don't know what you want very often, whereas the guru knows what you want, in the sense of what you need. What you need is what you want, did you but know it. In fact I think I've mentioned before that the Tibetans have got three ways of determining Yidams. One, that the guru tells you; two, you cast lots, and three you choose yourself. Choosing yourself is considered in a way the least satisfactory. Not necessarily always because you may have a strong spiritual affinity for a particular deity and know that and feel that, so obviously that is to be respected and taken into consideration. But sometimes people have sort of transient fancies for particular deities that they've seen posters of, for no real, solid, spiritual, reason at all. They might just like it because it's an esoteric one or it's a Yab-Yum one or they think that nobody else has got it so they'll be rather special, etc., etc.

In Tibet there are just a handful of deities that are very very popular. The rarer forms are left to specialists. It probably wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that two thirds of the monks have some form or other of Tara as their Yidam. Tara is very very popular as a yidam.

All right the Yidam or the Ishtadevata, and then the Dakini. What does one understand by the Dakini as the more specific form of the Sangha? What is the function of the Sangha?

Vajradaka: To inspire.

S: To inspire and guide, yes. So the Dakini represents a single individual person with whom you practice, and



whose company you find extremely inspiring from a spiritual point of view, and the Dakini here is in the feminine gender, it being assumed that you're in the masculine gender, because the presence of woman is stimulating and inspiring in a worldly sort of way, and the Dakini is stimulating and inspiring in a spiritual sort of way. The possibility of the Dakini being an actual living woman isn't excluded but clearly here we tread on quite dangerous ground. So it would be better perhaps to regard the dakini as something more like the Kalyana Mitra. You have two Kalyana Mitras but supposing you had only one or you were much closer to the one than to the other, well that Kalyana Mitra would be fulfilling a sort of Dakini-like function you could say.

There's obviously room for a great deal of rationalisation in areas of this sort. That is to say to make out you're receiving spiritual inspiration when you're only receiving fleshly titillation.

On the other hand one can't rule out the existence of actual Dakinis who are women in the literal sense and whose company is even spiritually inspiring. That possibility does exist, one mustn't exclude it, but one hardly ever meets a Dakini in that sense in this country I may say. One of the characteristics of a Dakini of this kind is that she's deeply committed to the spiritual life and spends much of her time in meditation etc., etc.

Aryamitra: But then wouldn't one be able to find a more spiritually evolved woman who would then be like a Dakini?

S: Well that's what I say, you can. You can find a Dakini who is actually a woman in the literal sense. I don't want to exclude that possibility, but they are rare in this country, that's all I'm saying.

Vajradaka: Would it then be more appropriate that the woman had a magazine called 'Daka' than 'Dakini' if the woman sort of inspires say for example the male, then surely it's the other way round and...

S: No, I think it's very good that they inspire one another and that therefore they have a magazine called 'Dakini', but from what I remember of the original discussion about this, they take 'Dakini' in the higher sense of a Buddha in female form, and they say, and no doubt quite rightly say, that it's easier for them to think of Buddhahood in female form. It gives them more encouragement that they too can become enlightened. So they think of Dakini in this sort of sense. We talked about that on the Songs of Milarepa seminar. Because you can have Dakini on different levels. You can have the Dakini as a Buddha in female form. Dakini as a sort of supernatural heavenly being, a sort of goddess, and then Dakini as this inspiring kind of human female.

So, 'I and all else that moves until enlightenment, take the guru and the triple gem as Refuge.' Here, as in so many Mahayana cum Vajrayana sadhanas, you imagine as it were all living beings Going for Refuge with you. There's a sort of movement of cosmic Going for Refuge. You just don't do it in isolation. It's not necessarily that all others consciously Go for Refuge with you, but inasmuch as you're all interconnected your Going for Refuge is reflected in a way in all of them. In a way they all participate in it because you're all bound up, one with another. So you reflect, you feel that it's not just you as a solitary individual Going for Refuge, but in fact all other living beings are Going for Refuge with you, and sometimes in the course of the prostration practice you do this as a visualisation - you visualise your father on your right and your mother on your left, sometimes sitting on either shoulder, while you are doing the prostration practice. Your father at the head of all men, your mother at the head of all women, and you do the prostration practice on behalf of them all or even with them all. They are all doing it with you. So even though you are functioning as an individual, you feel your solidarity with all other individuals and potential individuals. You are not cutting yourself off from them by virtue of your individual practice. You are not cutting yourself off from the rest of the human race, even though you are staying in a cave in the mountains somewhere. You feel that all other living beings are participating in your practice. You are doing it on behalf of them all. They are with you as it were. With you incipiently and ideally, even though they may not be conscious of the fact or conscious of you and your practice at all.

Vajradaka: The first time I came across that was in Lama Govinda's book where he met that lama deep in the



wilderness and the lama was crying with happiness when he discovered there was someone else practising compassion. Yet it seemed such a paradox that he was in the middle of nowhere, no people around, yet he considered himself as practising compassion.

S: Well just as in the course of the *Mettā Bhāvana* you direct it to people who aren't actually present.

All right then. 'I and all else that moves until enlightenment, take the guru and the triple gem as Refuge. In order to gain perfect Buddhahood for others' sake.' So what is there to be said about this line - 'In order to gain perfect Buddhahood for others' sake'. How literally must you take that? What about your own sake? Does that come in at all, if so where?

_____ : Wouldn't you include that in that?

S: Well if you had said 'for all beings' sake' you could be included, but actually it says here 'for others' sake', as if to exclude you, but are you literally aiming at enlightenment for the sake of others without bothering about yourself?

Aryamitra: Well at the beginning you said 'I and all else that moves'.

S: Yes.

_____ : But it says in order to gain perfect Buddhahood.

S: So you could say that this is an example of popular Mahayana language. Popular Hinayana says develop yourself, gain enlightenment, then you can think about others. Popular Mahayana says don't think about yourself, gain enlightenment for the sake of others, or it even says help others to gain enlightenment, lead others to enlightenment. Don't bother about yourself, don't bother about gaining enlightenment yourself. So there is a sort of contradiction between the two popular versions, but popular Hinayana assumes, as it were, that there is a self separate from others that can gain enlightenment. Popular Mahayana assumes that there are real others separate from you that can be led to enlightenment, but in the last resort, in the ultimate analysis well there's no self and no others as utterly distinct, you can't really separate the two. When you really and truly work on yourself to gain enlightenment for yourself you also help others. You can't help helping others. In the same way when you're really and truly trying to help others you are helping yourself as well at the same time. The two are really inseparable, so that sort of antithesis that we find between the popular Hinayana, the popular Mahayana is really quite false, quite baseless, but there's an emphasis this side or an emphasis that side according to whether we are more inclined to individualism or more inclined towards altruism. More inclined to be introvert or more inclined to be extrovert. But eventually we have to achieve a balance and see that the two don't really constitute a valid antithesis.

But popular Mahayana or basic Mahayana anyway is definitely other oriented but that is not to be taken too literally any more than the self orientation of the Hinayana is to be taken too literally. The Hinayana really is no more selfish, properly understood, but that doesn't mean to say that Hinayanists may not be selfish, than the Mahayana is altruistic, literally speaking.

And how can you gain perfect Buddhahood for others' sake when in the experience of Buddhahood or in the realisation of Buddhahood there is no distinction of self and other? But anyway, 'in order to gain perfect Buddhahood for others' sake we practise the Manjusri Stuti sadhana'. A note here says that there's no personal pronoun here in the original. It could be 'I' but the translator has rendered it 'we'. 'We' is probably better.

'Whereby may sentient beings possess happiness with its causes; be parted from all grief with its causes; not become parted from the happiness wherein no grief is; and dwell in the condition of equanimity.' So what have



we got in these four lines? What do these four lines represent?

_____ : The Bodhisattva Vow.

S: No.

_____ : The four Brahma Viharas.

S: They represent the four Brahma Viharas, so how is that? 'May sentient beings possess happiness with its causes'. This is the wish, the aspiration that others may be happy and this is mettā. Mettā is the wish that others may be happy. May they possess happiness, but it adds 'with its causes'. That's a very important qualification. Why is that?

Vimalamitra: You can't mettā without its causes. You can't develop mettā.

S: No, the reference is to happiness. You can't have happiness without the causes of happiness.

Vajradaka: Is this referring to Marga and Phala?

S: Yes, in a way. So when you wish happiness for others you wish that they may cultivate those skilful actions which will inevitably give them happiness. You wish that they may follow the spiritual path. Not just that happiness may fall down on them from heaven, that they may be happy just through luck, accident, good fortune - no. You are wishing that they may perform skilful actions, and thus be happy. So this is your mettā bhāvana - that all beings may follow the white path, perform skilful actions and be happy. So this is the practice of the mettā bhāvana.

And then that they may be parted from all grief with its causes. Here your compassion comes in. This is the karunā bhāvana. You wish that all their sorrows and sufferings may be removed which means removing the cause which only too often is their own greed, hatred and delusion. Not always but only too often. And you also wish that they may not become parted from the happiness wherein no grief is. That they may continue to enjoy the happiness which they have at present without any admixture of grief. You rejoice in that. You've no jealousy, you don't want to take it away from them. In other words you develop or you practice muditā, muditā bhāvana, sympathetic joy. And finally you wish that all may dwell in the condition of equanimity. If you wish that all equally may dwell in the condition of equanimity, well you yourself are in a state of equanimity then. You don't distinguish between others. You wish that they may all equally enjoy equanimity. [Pause]

Vimalamitra: Is that what is meant by upekkha then? Mettā which is....

S: Yes, I've spoken about this at other times. There has been in the past misunderstanding about upeksha or upekkha. It's sometimes been translated as indifference, but the point is equanimity or upeksha does not exclude mettā, but when you develop mettā equally towards all, so you don't prefer one to another. You're even minded in your attitude. Then equanimity inevitably results.

Vimalamitra: So that's the real meaning of it. There's no distinction between....

S: Yes. Supposing you like one person more than another. Supposing you like someone very much and you're expecting to see him but instead of that person coming through the door somebody else that you don't like comes through the door, what happens to your equanimity?

_____ : It vanishes.



S: Yes, but supposing you feel the same towards both those people. Then supposing the one that you were expecting doesn't turn up but the one that you weren't expecting does, then if you like them both equally, where's the disappointment? You're just as glad to see the one as the other, so there's equanimity. So when you have the same mettā towards all, your balance of mind cannot be disturbed in respect of persons, or in the respect of things if you like, as it were, all circumstances equally. If you welcome the rain as well as the sunshine, you're equally happy whatever happens, so equanimity. And with regard to people you like them all equally so you're glad to see them all. It doesn't make any difference whether one comes or t'other. Equanimity.

_____ : Ah, so he doesn't really mind whether everything goes wrong one day.

S: No he doesn't, no. Though at the same time you may work to make things go right in a skilful way but you won't be upset even by the failure of your skilful actions. It doesn't mean that you'll just sort of settle down and say, 'oh it doesn't matter what happens, no need to do anything', no, that's [Laughter] quite wrong. In the same way that having equanimity towards people doesn't mean not caring who comes because you couldn't care less anyway! You couldn't care less so far as everybody is concerned - it isn't that. You've got mett ā towards all equally. You're equally positive towards them all. So it doesn't matter who turns up.

Vimalamitra: So a kind of balance is inside yourself. Equanimity is inside you.

S: Yes, right. But anyway suppose one day you're waiting for your favourite girlfriend to turn up. You've been looking forward to that all the evening, and instead of that some other person turns up, maybe asking to do something, well what a disappointment. Why? Because there's a difference of attitude between the two people.

Aryamitra: At the same time though a person who's developed equanimity would surely still have likes and dislikes.

S: Not really.

Aryamitra: be mentally disturbed by....

S: No, not likes and dislikes but he will see differences. He will for instance see well that person is behaving quite badly, that person is behaving quite well, but he won't like one and dislike the other. He'd recognise difference, even see that one is really better than another or more developed than another, but still there's no liking or disliking, and this is why we say with reference to the situation within the Order, you can't help starting off by liking some fellow Order members more than others just because of your human limitations or your particular type of conditioning, but inasmuch as all Order members are committed and are all trying to be individuals, all on the same path as you are, your aim should be to like them all equally, quite literally, and that's why you do the Order Mettā Bhāvana. Your equal mettā towards all Order members is not to be confined to that one hour of the month. You have to try to develop it whenever you meet them, and not say, 'oh I don't get on with him' or 'I don't get on with her very well' and just try to avoid them. Try to get on equally well with all and like all equally, so that in a way it doesn't matter. You go on a retreat, say an Order retreat, and whether it's A,B,C who turn up or X,Y,Z who turn up it's equally good, it's equally positive, you're equally pleased. Not feeling all disappointed because your favourite Order members aren't there. 'Oh what a drag it's Upasaka X or Upasika Y, how awful! What a let down'.

Aryamitra: From my own experience it's almost like two things going on at the same time. One thing is my personal likes and dislikes and I don't even want to lose them, and at the same time....

S: You will! [Laughter]

Aryamitra:there's something else going on which is although I have my personal likes and dislikes there's



something that overrides....

S: Well clearly both are functioning at the same time. The likes and dislikes are there but you can see quite objectively at the same time and this is what usually happens for quite a while, that we're in that intermediate state, but after a while we not only see equally but we'll feel equally. We'll see the inequalities but we won't feel them in the way that we used to.

Vajradaka: Does that mean that you can feel friendliness for someone, but if you see faults you don't condone them necessarily.

S: Exactly, yes. I mean unfortunately people very often can't take it like that. If you point out a fault, they take it that you don't like them, and that your pointing out of the fault is an expression of dislike and is an expression of rejection on your part. They take it like that very often because of their own insecurity. Occasionally it may be like that but it certainly need not be like that. You can point out the fault of someone that you really do like and maybe you point it out because you like them.

_____ : Maybe you can only point out faults if you do like somebody.

S: Well put it this way, if you don't like someone be very careful about pointing out his faults to him, because he will pick up on the dislike, no doubt, people being sensitive, and almost use that as an excuse for ignoring or not taking into consideration the fault that is actually there and which you have pointed out. So you can be much more confident pointing out the faults of people you like and who know that you like them and you know that they know that you like them. You feel much more confident then about pointing out a fault. It doesn't feel like pointing out a fault. It's just a sort of friendly drawing of attention to something.

[End of side one side two]

Just a few general points. These lines, these eight lines, represent the Going for Refuge and the development of the four Brahma Viharas as the foundation of the bodhicitta, but usually in Tibet, certainly nowadays, these lines are just recited and this is one of the things that Mr. Chen used to emphasise quite a lot, that the Tibetans, many of them, had strayed away from the real Buddhist tradition and instead of actually Going for Refuge and practising the Brahma Viharas would simply recite these verses, and that they neglected the preliminaries which according to him were essential, neglected the Hinayana and the Mahayana in their haste to get on to the Vajrayana, the Tantra.

So it isn't enough just to recite these verses. We have actually to Go for Refuge with all that that implies, maybe do the Going for Refuge practice, the prostration practice, and actually practise the Brahma Viharas. This is why we're doing the mettā bhāvana which is the basic vihara in the afternoon at five o'clock before we do the visualisation later on. Mettā Bhāvana's a very good foundation for visualisation. When you're happy and in a positive mood you feel creative.

So there are quite a lot of things like this that we shouldn't just sort of gabble our way through. We should actually stop and practise them. These are summaries of practice, not substitutes for practice.

_____ : Is it relevant to do any of the other Brahma Viharas other than mettā?

S: In a way it isn't necessary. In a way there is only one Brahma Vihara. There's only the Metā Bhāvana, but when you, with your mettā, happen to come in contact with pain and suffering, the mettā automatically, or rather spontaneously, becomes transformed into Karun ā. When it comes in contact with the joy of others it automatically becomes transformed into sympathetic joy, and similarly when your mettā is extended equally towards all there is equanimity. So you look after the mettā and the other three will look after themselves. You



don't have to think about them. They depend upon circumstances. We speak of the Buddha more as compassionate than as - more as Karunikā than as - full of maitri because the Buddha is in, as it were, the midst of the world and he sees everybody as suffering, from the Brahmaloкас downwards. So his mettā is almost totally suffused with the suffering of others and therefore is experienced as Karunā. In our case there's not such a great possibility of Karunā because we cannot appreciate the subtle suffering of the Brahmaloкас. To us it looks like just bliss. It's only a Buddha who can see it as suffering. It's only a Buddha who can feel compassion for the poor Brahmas in the Brahmaloका. We can't. It's impossible. We can only experience compassion for people who are experiencing very gross suffering, very obvious suffering. It's very difficult for instance for us to feel compassion for the rich. We're more likely to feel envy and jealousy. Or at best contempt which is the near enemy of compassion.

_____ : Contempt?

S: Yes. It's sort of looking down, so when you are compassionate you look down on others because they're suffering, but if you look down on others and feel sorry for them without any real basis of mettā then this becomes akin to a sort of contempt, or to a looking down on them because they're less happy than you. Sometimes you find, you can meet people who are very enthusiastic about their own happiness - 'oh how happy I am, tra la, tra la' you see, and it's a form of superiority complex. It enables them to look down on others who are miserable. 'I'm so positive, I'm always high, I'm always on top of the world', and they can then adopt a patronising attitude to those wretched and unfortunate people who aren't as happy as you. That is not karunā.

Devamitra: Is that what you would describe as pity?

S: You could reserve the term pity for that. There was a good example of this sort of thing in Shaw's play "*Candida*" where the do-gooder clergyman had very much this attitude - 'oh I'm the happiest man in the world, therefore I've got to help others' etc., etc. By evening time he'd changed his tune - after three acts. But that's how he started off in the morning. Proclaimed his happiness. Because he was so happy he just wanted to make everybody else happy, but clearly it wasn't a mettā based compassion or anything like that. He was just full of himself, full of self-satisfaction and complacency, and out of that the sense of superiority that that gave him was doing things for others.

So you must be very careful not to hit people over the head with your so-called positivity. If you, for instance come across someone a bit sad or a bit down, it's not good saying, 'feeling sad, what on a lovely day like this. I'm feeling so happy, come on!' [Laughter] That can sometimes be quite, if not sadistic, but certainly so thoughtless as to amount to being quite unkind. You are just sort of plugging your own positivity at somebody else's expense or showing off your own positivity. Real positivity wouldn't show itself off in this sort of way. If real mettā came anywhere near you and you were feeling sad, that real mettā would be transformed into karunā, not this sort of extrovert jolliness which is so irritating when you feel a bit down.

All right, any questions on what we've done. I think we'll have to stop there. We haven't done as much as I thought we would, and do the whole of the visualisation tomorrow morning. I think we can get through it before the coffee break, and then do the 'Ratnaguna' study after the coffee break. But just go back and see whether there's anything that needs to be gone into more. [Pause]

Sagaramati: In the bit where it says, '*In a state of powerfully generating the moods of aversion and Great Compassion*', when I do that it's very hard to see them both integrate together.

S: One should in that case do them successively. Tsong Kha Pa described them successively. First of all turn away, develop the mood of turning away, and then after that develop the mood of great compassion. As if to say well why am I turning away, not just for my own selfish benefit but so that I can free myself to do something good for all. They are regarded as successive steps, though when you cultivate the second, you don't,



as it were, really literally leave behind the first. So in that way they both come together in the end. Just as first Hinayana, then Mahayana.

Sagaramati: Almost it corresponds to the development of individuality. Aversion would be the sort of individualistic attitude, and then the Great Compassion would be the rest of you integrating with that.

S: Right. [Long Pause]

Vajradaka: I'm always a bit stuck for terms in English to describe rejoicing in merits.

S: Yes. Any suggestions? Appreciation of the positive qualities of others. Appreciation is rather a weak, not to say tepid, sort of word, but it is something like that, though raised to a higher power. You really do rejoice in the positivity of others, the skilful actions of others. Perhaps it's a bit of a commentary on the present state of affairs that we find it difficult to express this or envisage this even.

Aryamitra: I suppose it's to do with appreciation of oneself in the first place.

S: Probably it's very difficult to appreciate others really positively and not in a projective sort of way unless you do, to begin with, appreciate yourself and have presumably something objectively to appreciate. Otherwise you can only admire others perhaps objectively, admire or worship or look up to. Again not in a too projective sort of way. But sometimes people feel threatened by the good of others and therefore react to it rather negatively instead of rejoicing in somebody else's merit. If he feels 'somebody else has done something good well that makes him better than me, that means he puts me down, as it were, he looks down on me' even, 'I become a sort of worm, then I squirm' and start getting all poisonous and resentful.

Aryamitra: It also seems to tie up with generosity.

S: Yes.

Aryamitra: It's like you were too mean.

S: Also it just occurs to me to say that competitiveness gets in the way of rejoicing in merits. If you're competing with others it's very difficult to rejoice in their merits. So you have to be quite non-egoistic to be able to rejoice in other people's merits. At least your ego needs to become a bit attenuated.

Devamitra: We seem to have had quite a lot of discussion over about four or five years around this whole area of rejoicing in merits. It seems to be something which needs to be continually commented upon - the fact that it doesn't take place.

S: Perhaps it takes place in other areas and one can make a start there. For instance when you read some really great poet and really enjoy it. You not only enjoy the great poetry, you think 'oh what a marvellous poet he must have been, what a marvellous man. How wonderful that he wrote this'. So that is a sort of a rejoicing in merits. Or you can feel like that when you read the life of Milarepa. You can really rejoice in Milarepa's merits. Or when you read say a story of someone's self-sacrifice and so on, you can really rejoice in their merits and really appreciate what they did, but it's perhaps a bit more difficult to appreciate the merits or rejoice in the merits, of the people with whom you come into more intimate contact, because very often you're not in the present with them and with what they do. Quite a lot of your own past comes up and gets in the way. You don't see them as they are. You see them in terms of your own past. Maybe in extreme cases as your mother, father etc., etc. [Pause]

Vimalamitra: Is that anything to do with what Naropa said about samsara as finding fault with others?



S: I think it's stronger than that. Someone quoted this the other day. Padmavajra did, but it was more strong than that wasn't it. The suggestion was that finding fault with others was the chief fault of all. The basis of worldliness. If you just stop finding fault with others well you'd be very near Nirvana, very near enlightenment. Wasn't it 'Samsara is the tendency to find fault with others'? Yes. [Pause]

So in the same way you could say that Nirvana is the tendency to rejoice in merits. [Laughter]

_____ : So if you see something about somebody which you don't like or think is quite negative, perhaps a better way of going about doing something is to relate to the positive aspects of that person and try and encourage that, rather than coming out and saying, 'look you're like this, you've got to change'.

S: Right.

Devamitra: But in actual practical situations it doesn't seem to work like that. Sometimes you do actually have to point something out directly to people....

S: Well it may be getting so much in the way.

Sagaramati: It really does depend on how you feel towards that person.

S: Yes, I think it's just a basic thing.

Sagaramati: If you feel negative I don't think you should say anything.

S: We know it's difficult enough for most people to take even criticism that is offered in the most friendly way, and with genuinely friendly feeling, so how much more difficult to take criticism, even though objectively justified, which is offered in a rather negative spirit.

Mahamati: I notice that maybe sometimes that principle's applied and because one doesn't want to say it directly to somebody what you think about them, because you feel negative towards them, you tell everybody else what you think, so you end up telling everybody except for that person.

S: Yes.

Mahamati: Because you feel so strongly about it you've got to get it out somewhere.

S: Which means that that other person hears about it sooner or later anyway, and usually it's second hand and possibly exaggerated and feels that you've not only been criticising them but doing it behind their back.

Sagaramati: I think the trouble with it usually is that there's a sort of righteousness behind it. You feel you are quite right. That's the danger. It's not like you say what I'm experiencing is a quite negative thing. You think that what I'm actually saying is quite true about that person, therefore it's right.

S: Well it may be part of the truth but the unfortunate thing is that often we speak as though it was the whole truth about them.

Sagaramati: Not just an aspect of them.

S: Yes, or just maybe a state that they're passing through.

Sagaramati: So the righteousness is a sort of absolute.



S: Yes, and therefore sometimes the person that we are speaking to feels our criticism not just as our being not very happy with a particular aspect of themselves but as a total rejection of them, as them. It may be that sometimes. At other times they may simply take it in that way due to their own weaknesses and limitations. So in pointing out the fault we must be very careful not to reject the person. In other words feel positively towards the person before pointing out the fault. [Long Pause]

All right then let's leave it there for the present.

[End of Session and end of tape]

[Tape Three Second Session]

S: All right this morning we come onto the main matter, which is the meditation and recitation of the mantra.

So the main matter begins with the words:

*One should say and think:
'Om Svabhavasuddhah Sarvadharmah Svabhavasuddho' Ham.*

Now what does that mean? I take it that one knows the literal meaning of the mantra. *Om* of course is *Om*. *Svabhavasuddhah* is 'pure by nature' or, if you like, essentially pure. *Sarvadharmah*, 'all Dharmas are pure by nature' or are essentially pure. And then *Svabhavasuddho Ham*, 'I' - in other words 'I too' am pure by nature or essentially pure. 'Pure' is understood here not morally but metaphysically. [Pause] Pure means empty or void. *Suddha* is understood to mean *Sunyata*. All Dharmas are empty in their essential nature. Though not that they have a nature which is emptiness.

Vajradaka: Sorry not that they have.

S: Not that they have a nature that is emptiness.

Devamitra: You said *Suddha* is understood as *Sunyata*.

S: Yes, this is why I say it's a metaphysical, not a moral, purity. You could say it consists in it being pure from all concepts. So the whole mantra says, in a way, that subject and object are of the same nature. *Sarvadharmah* - all Dharmas, meaning all objects and the *Ham* representing the subject. So the subject and the object or rather the object and the subject, are of the same nature. Both are pure by nature. Both are void. You could regard this as asserting that the twofold *Nairātmya* of Dharmas and of *Pudgala*. I take it everybody's familiar with the twofold *Nairātmya* - the twofold selflessness of Dharmas, that is to say the ultimate constituents of phenomena objectively considered, and of the *Pudgala* or self, or person literally. This is basic Mahayana teaching.

Vimalamitra: What was that called again, that teaching?

S: The twofold *Nairātmya* (spells the word) with a long a - *Nairātmya*.

_____ : The emptiness of...

S: Of Dharmas or ultimate constituents of phenomena objectively considered, and of *Pudgala* or the self, the subject, literally the person.

Devamitra: So in this mantra *Dharma* refers to *Dharma* as obje..... (*obscured by loud sneeze!*)



S: Yes, because even when you are analyzing yourself into your constituent Dharmas, you make yourself, as it were an object, and then you see yourself out there, as it were, and divide yourself or analyze yourself or break yourself down into your constituent Dharma. So the purpose or the function of this mantra is, as it were, to reduce everything to Sunyata. So that at this point you're left only with Sunyata which is symbolised of course by the blue sky, the empty blue sky.

Aryamitra: Could you just say again what *Svabhava Suddhah* was.

S: *Svabhavasuddhah* is 'pure by nature'. *Sarvadharmah* - all things. All things are pure by nature. I am pure by nature. Or, the real meaning as it were - All things are void by nature, I too am void by nature. One is asserting, as it were, a non-difference. Not an ontological identity but a non-difference of subject and object.

Vajradaka: Ontological identity?

S: You're not asserting that there's one substance which assumes two different forms- subject and object. You're asserting the non-reality of the very distinction between subject and object, but you're not asserting a common reality behind them in which they both participate as a substantial entity.

Guenther, as I think we've seen on a previous seminar, sometimes renders - one can't say translates but renders - Sunyata as 'openness of being'. This probably gives one a better sort of feeling of what it is all about than a purely conceptual rendering. Or the 'open dimension of being', that's right, the 'open dimension of being'. That is quite expressive.

It seems to me that there needs to be, not necessarily taken by me, a study retreat of some kind or some kind of regular study in Conze's 'Buddhist Thought in India'. Has anybody ever considered that? I think this is a really basic sort of work and it needs to be gone through. Otherwise it's very difficult to understand things like this.

_____ : 'Buddhist Thought in India'?

S: Mmm (affirming). I just get the impression quite a lot of people as regards Buddhist philosophy have done very little homework indeed. I think we need generally to know a little more. It's a very readable work. It's not very easy but it's very clear.

Sagaramati: There is a slight problem with that and that is that they tend to use a lot of Western philosophical jargon like 'ontological this' and usually if you haven't read philosophy then you get stuck there.

S: That's true, yes.

So here a question arises which has arisen before which is that if one is isn't careful one skips over a whole stage of practice with just a few words and I remember Mr. Chen used to say that this mantra really summarised the whole of the Mahayana, especially the whole of the Perfection of Wisdom. The purpose of the Perfection of Wisdom teaching being to reduce the whole of existence to Sunyata, which really means to loosen up all one's rigid categories, to loosen up all one's rigid modes of being, to cause one not to think of oneself as being definitely this or definitely that. To, as it were, loosen up one's whole experience of existence, in a very very radical way, to make one much more open. Not just psychologically open but metaphysically open, if you see what I mean. And he used to say further, and I've quoted this before, that unless you have some experience of Sunyata your visualisations are no better than vulgar magic.

Aryamitra: If you haven't had experience of Sunyata?

S: Mmm (affirming). Because the visualisations of the Vajrayana after all belong to the Vajrayana. The



Vajrayana goes beyond the Mahayana. So the Mahayana is the vehicle of Sunyata. So in a way you go beyond Sunyata. In a way. So that means you've got to have the experience of Sunyata first. So in the same way it isn't enough just to recite these verses, 'I and all else that moves until enlightenment take the guru and the Triple Gem as refuge'. You've got to have an actual experience of Going for Refuge. That's got to really mean something to you, and in the same way it's not enough to just recite the lines 'may sentient beings possess happiness with its causes.' It's necessary actually to practise the four Brahma Viharas, especially the basic vihara which is the Mettā Bhāvana. So in the same way it's not enough just to repeat this mantra - Om Svabhava Suddha - and so on, but there must be some experience of Sunyata, that is to say there must be some experience of Prajñā or some experience of vipassana. One must have had some experience of the limitations of one's empirical being and have transcended that empirical being to some extent. You need to have had some experience of the Mahayana, of Sunyata, before passing on to the Vajrayana, if one is to practise this as a real Vajrayana visualisation practice.

So how is one to do that. Well in a way all vipassana practices and experiences pertain to Sunyata, but perhaps the one that pertains most dramatically in a sense is the reflection or meditation on death and the Six Element Practice. In concrete terms this is what the experience of Sunyata means. Do you see what I'm getting at? In other words there's got to be, before one can do the visualisation properly and effectively, a sort of breaking down of the empirical ego or dissolution of the empirical ego. There's got to be a sort of death - what the Zen people call the 'Great Death', otherwise there can't be a spiritual rebirth.

So the Going for Refuge represents the basic orientation. Then the practice of the Brahma Viharas represents the development of a highly positive, though still mundane, consciousness, and that of course serves as the foundation of the bodhicitta, and then the recitation of the mantra represents the death of the empirical ego and the experience of the open dimension of being or Sunyata, which of course leads to the further developments of the Vajrayana, or further experiences of the Vajrayana. You see the sequence?

The great danger is with Sunyata type practices that it remains merely conceptual. That you just reflect on the four kinds of voidness etc., etc. Well you can get by with that but it doesn't give you a very deep experience. If you look at the different meditations on voidness you notice they are all pretty conceptual, and it's better to get away from that and that's why it's probably better to do the meditation on death and the Six Element Practice where you give back the earth element in your body, your personal being, to the earth element in the universe etc. You are much more likely to get a real sort of Sunyata type experience in that way than just reflecting on the teaching of Sunyata as it's presented say in the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. That's a very conceptual presentation and it's very easy just to take it conceptually and turn it over in the mind in that sort of way, without it having a very deep or radical effect on one.

Devamitra: So would you recommend preceding this particular visualisation by those two practices?

S: Yes, if one was doing it fully. If for instance one was on a solitary retreat, yes definitely, and even spacing throughout the day. For instance in the morning you could do the Going for Refuge and prostration practice, let's say after breakfast - presuming you get up early and have an early breakfast. After breakfast you could do the Going for Refuge and prostration practice. After breakfast you could spend an hour or more doing the Mettā Bhāvana and then you could do, say after lunch, the Six Element Practice and then in the evening get down to the visualisation practice. Do you see what I mean? This would be a very good way of doing it. You'd be doing it really quite thoroughly then. And maybe, having done the Six Element Practice, if you just wanted to fill in time, you could read some of the Perfection of Wisdom texts just to reinforce your experience or your impression.

Sagaramati: I was under the impression that you had to do the whole sadhana always in one go, but you've actually divided it up?



S: Oh yes. In a way it is best if you do it at one go. That is without getting up from your meditation seat, but that's obviously difficult. But also don't forget one thing, that the practice of the Vajrayana assumes that you've had a very thorough practice and experience of the Hinayana and the Mahayana. So in a way you have to make up for that lost time. So supposing you practise like that on retreat, on solitary retreat, then when you come back and do the whole thing at one sitting, some of your experience on the solitary retreat will stay with you when you do it in the more concentrated form. So that even supposing you've only got time to recite those four lines - 'may sentient beings possess happiness with its causes....' - on account of your previous more intensive practise of Mettā Bhāvana and so on, the recitation of those four lines will revive something of that within you. So in a way in order to be able to practise it in one session, you have to practise it in a number of sessions.

So strictly speaking when you recite this *Om Svabhava Suddhah* and so on, you should have the experience of voidness in its fullness and that becomes the starting point of the Vajrayana practice.

Devamitra: Do you think it would be diluting it too much to spread these say four different practices like that over a period of a couple of days?

S: No it wouldn't be diluting it too much, but it would be best or would be good if say at the end of this more spread out period of practice, you at least once did the whole thing in one sitting. Even though you didn't spend very much time over it but it would give you the proper sequence in a more immediate sort of way, but it would be backed up by, or reinforced by, your more spaced-out practice earlier on.

Devamitra: When I asked that I was in fact thinking specifically say of not being away on retreat.

S: Yes. For instance the usual way in which Tibetans practise is they simply read the text or chant the text every morning without actually doing any practice in a sense. In a way even reciting or chanting it is a practice but they usually leave it at that, especially lay people, who haven't got much time. Supposing a lay person has had this initiation, he won't try and practise the Mettā Bhāvana or anything of that kind, he'll just sort of quietly read this over to himself in the morning. He'll probably light some incense, light a butter lamp, and sit down, read this through, maybe without taking it very seriously as a practice, but at least read it through and then recite the mantra for ten or fifteen minutes, and that will be his practice. But that's the sort of absolute minimum, but clearly one can do very much better than that. One can take the lines of the different verses as guides to practice, not substitutes for practice. Very often they're taken just as substitutes for practice. You just repeat say *Om Svabhavasuddhah* and so on instead of having any experience of voidness or any understanding of the sunyata teaching.

Mr. Chen always used to say the Tibetans were in far too great a hurry to get onto the Vajrayana, and you can see this happening in America in the different Tibetan Buddhist centres. There's not much stress on the more basic Hinayana and Mahayana teachings usually, except perhaps with the Gelugpas who are not the most popular, or the most well known. That's why I find it rather amusing that in England some of our Friends or some people known to us, want to start a Longchenpa Institute, because for instance the Vajrayana is the highest of the Yanas, let us say, and the Nyingmapa Mahamudra and Maha Ati Yoga teaching represents the quintessence of that and Longchenpa is supposed to be the absolute quintessence of the Ati Yoga teaching, so you set up straight away, as it were, a Longchenpa Institute to purvey the most esoteric teachings of all. That seems a bit premature to me. [Laughter] But do you see what I mean? There's so much basic work to be done. People have not even properly got into the refuge and what the refuge means, what to speak of other things. And what about their practise of the Brahma Viharas? Are they really in an emotionally positive state all the time? And what about their Bodhicitta, is that well developed? What about their experience of Sunyata? If they can't give a positive reply to all these enquiries, they've no business to be poking into the Tantra at all! What to speak of the esoteric Tantric teachings. It's ludicrous! I know there is such a thing as the path of irregular steps but then as I've said the path of irregular steps is a path, it's not just irregular steps. Well it's not just irregularity without perhaps even any steps. Anyway enough of that! [Laughter]



All right now come some quite difficult lines:

Whilst we thus "integrate" in the maya-way that does not prevent the causally-originated semblances though it transcends the constructions "all things" and "I", "the skandhas" and consciousness,...

Now what does that mean? If you don't understand that you can't really practise the visualisation, not really effectively in a Vajrayanic sort of way. Now what does that all mean? It's discussed somewhat from a different point of view or from a different starting point, in the current issue of 'Mitrata', which I think isn't in circulation yet. It's called 'The Wisdom Beyond Words'. That's the title of the issue, but anyway what does one make of this? Maybe it would be a good idea just to go round the circle and ask everybody in turn what they make of this, what it conveys to them. What about Luvah? What does this convey to you?

Luvah: Not very much. [Pause]

S: Vimalamitra, convey anything to you? If you don't understand the whole of it, any particular point that you really do get or that strikes you clearly.

Vimalamitra: Well the causally originated semblances - well I thought that was the skandhas, just form really.

S: Yes, that's correct.

Vimalamitra: And so I take integrating here as kind of merging with the void.

S: Well yes and no.

Vimalamitra: In the Maya way, that means you're still in Samsara. You've integrated or you've understood to some extent that the whole of Samsara is made up of form, but you haven't completely transcended it. You've integrated to a certain level.

S: That's not bad. You're not quite there but you're in the right direction. How about Kularatna?

Kularatna: This seems to be taking the Sunyata that you've experienced while you are reciting the mantra one step further and saying although there is that experience of Sunyata, that doesn't invalidate forms.

S: Yes, that is in a way the key point, yes.

Vajradaka: It seems to indicate that the Spiral Path, although not preventing causally originated semblances, is causally originated but in a progressive trend that eventually transcends the constructions of the I, the skandhas and consciousness. [Pause]

S: Devamitra?

Devamitra: I really couldn't say actually either.

S: Well perhaps we've gone far enough round, because the main point has in fact emerged. In a way the key term is 'The Maya Way'. It's this that we've discussed - What is Maya? - in this issue of 'Mitrata'. Anyone have any ideas about this? What is Maya?

Abhaya: It's usually translated as 'illusion'



S: Yes. It is 'illusion' rather than 'delusion', at least originally. It's magic, it's magical illusion. So what is the characteristic feature of a magical illusion? This sort of illustration comes up again and again in Mahayana Buddhist texts. The illustration or the analogy of the magician's magical display. What does the magician do, the old fashioned Indian magician? He conjures up a magical display. You see horses and elephants and towers and palaces and men and women and all sorts of things, but they're not really there. It's just a magical show. One might explain this as collective hypnosis, etc., etc. That's maybe beside the point but what is the point of the illustration? The point of the illustration is that you see the magician's magical display, his Maya, but it isn't really there. Not that you don't perceive it. You do perceive it vividly, but it has no substance, it isn't really there, it's void. So in Mahayana thought, in Mahayana teaching, it's said that all mundane things, all dharmas, are really like that. One's experience of things as things is not denied. What is denied is the fact that one takes one's experience of things in that way as ultimately real, or as an experience of things in their ultimate reality.

So it's as though there are two extreme positions. One extreme is to say that what you perceive is real. That's one extreme. The other extreme is to deny that you even perceive anything. To say that the perception as perception is unreal. So the Mahayana says that no, what you perceive you perceive. It doesn't deny your perception, but it denies the ultimate validity or ultimate reality of that perception. It says that all things are like Maya. You perceive, you experience selves, people, things, but though your experience as experience, as perception, is not denied, it is denied that those perceptions have any ontological validity, to put it in terms of western philosophy.

_____ : This would seem to refute the charge of nihilism.

S: Yes. So the things which are perceived as Maya, to perceive things as Maya, is to perceive them in this way, as appearing, as actually appearing, but not as being ultimately real. So 'whilst we thus integrate' - so to integrate means really to avoid those two extremes. There's a Tibetan expression here - I don't know what it is - which the translator has rendered between inverted commas as 'integrate'. This is clearly an interpretive sort of translation. But it means avoiding those two extremes. So you therefore integrate, you see things in a mean way, in accordance with the middle way which is the Maya way. You don't deny things as appearances, as Rupa, but you don't interpret the appearances in terms of actually existent things.

And the important point also is that Sunyata does not negate appearances as appearances, does not negate rupa as rupa. Does not negate the causally originated semblances as causally originated semblances, 'though it transcends the constructions, all things and I, skandhas and consciousness'. Even though it transcends the dualism of subject and object considered as something absolute and irreducible.

Sagaramati: Isn't - the causally originated semblances - the way they arise, that always seems to be absolutely real in the way they arise.

S: Ah. But the Buddhist way of looking at it is that things that originate in dependence on causes are not real, because the criterion of reality is something which is beyond causality, which does not come, which does not go, in that sort of way.

Vimalamitra: So all things produced by causes are not real.

S: Yes. Are not ultimately real.

Sagaramati: Well what about the law that they seem to fit in?

S: Well you know what Nagarjuna said about that. Not that it is a law in the sense that there is a law out there objectively speaking which is governing those phenomena and making them act in that way. Not that even the law of dependent origination is itself ultimate. Nagarjuna makes this very clear, doesn't he.



_____ : There's something by Tsong Kha Pa in "*The Door of Liberation*" about that, about you've got to realise simultaneously dependent origination of voidness to realise (the pure light of being?)

S: Yes.

Sagaramati: That's not quite the same thing.

S: It's not understanding two different things as it were side by side or one after the other. It's more like seeing the non-difference of Sunyata and Rupa, though within Rupa there are these causally originated semblances, or what appear to be causally originated semblances, though Nagarjuna denies the ultimate validity of Pratityasamutpada as such. It's not a theory of causation.

Vajradaka: So you then would negate the statement that the only ultimate thing is the truth that everything is impermanent?

S: No, it's not quite like that. You could look at it more from the standpoint of all things being unarisen, which we've also discussed in that issue of '*Mitrata*'. Or to go to back to the magician's illusion, has anything really come into existence? For instance the magician conjures up an elephant, has an elephant really come into existence? No, it's only appeared to come into existence. There has been no real coming into existence of an elephant. But supposing that magical illusion of an elephant gives birth to a baby elephant, well yes, within the context of the illusion one thing has given rise to another, but inasmuch as the first thing, the elephant, didn't really come into existence, being only a magical illusion, can you speak of a real production of a real baby elephant? No. So therefore, though within the magical delusion there is a production of one thing from another, in the ultimate sense there's no production of one thing from another, therefore no conditioned co-production in an ultimate sense. If one bears in mind that all phenomena are in fact exactly like the magical show, the magical display. So in that way the law of pratityasamutpada is not a real law, inasmuch as the phenomena which it is supposed to govern are not really coming into existence, but only appearing to come into existence.

Abhaya: So you can say that nothing exists. In another context we've discussed this word 'exist' and whether in fact we exist or these phenomenon exist so....

S: Well they are perceived but there is no ultimate basis in their existence. They are not ultimately real, but they are perceived as though they were ultimately real. So one has got to have both. One mustn't exclude the appearance and one mustn't lose sight of the void. So that's how one sees the visualised figure, the figure in this case of Manjughosa, as appearing in this sort of almost magical way. As non different from the voidness against which he appears. So it's as though in the case of Manjughosa, you try to see him in the way that you ought to be seeing, eventually, all phenomena - as non different from voidness and as pure appearance. In the case of the figure of Manjughosa it's more easy for you to realise this because you have, as it were, conjured him up yourself out of the voidness and then caused him to go back into the voidness. So you have to realise that all things are like this. You can do this especially easily if you've experienced the Manjughosa very vividly - as vividly as you experience ordinary sense objects. As regards vividness of perception, you can't distinguish between the two. So this gives you cause, when you come to reflect upon the reality of the things that you do perceive no more vividly than you perceive the Manjughosa which you know from experience you are able to conjure up and then dissolve back into the voidness.

Vimalamitra: So in a way you become a magician yourself.

S: Yes, you become a magician yourself.

Vimalamitra: So you see the rest of the world as....



S: Is somebody else's magic, maybe! Except that you also get rid of the distinction all things and I, skandhas and consciousness. Yes?

[End of side one side two]

Sagaramati: Would it be true in western terms to say that the thing in itself is borrowed. The idea of it being a thing in itself behind the appearance.

S: Yes, that's a purely mental construction according to Buddhism. It's the reification of the non-existent. The thing in itself is the thing which you don't and can't ever perceive.

Sagaramati: It's just a construct.

S: It's a mental construct, because by definition you can't have any experience of it at all. Because even if you experience it, well there's something there apart from your experience which is the thing itself, which you don't experience. I think personally this whole idea in western thought since the time of Kant of the thing in itself is really just almost a verbal muddle.

_____ : Is that what they mean by ontological, the essentialness of something? I never understood what ontological means.

S: Ontology is usually considered synonymous with metaphysics. Ontology is the science of being as such, not of being any particular thing, but of being as such. Well can you have being as such? Do we ever have being which is not a being of anything in particular. In a way this was Hegel's point, that the concept of being is purely a concept and requires filling with content, but some philosophers, some thinkers have held that god, for instance, is pure being, or the absolute is pure being, but Buddhists would tend to regard that as pure abstraction, pure conceptualisation. One could go into it more deeply than that. There are all sorts of assumptions here which have not been examined but I think we'd better not do that this morning.

But anyway you get a rough idea now what these four lines are all about. Which really means that the figure of Manjughosa which you're about to conjure up against the background of the void, is non different from the void. That the void which you've just experienced must not be construed as a one-sided void which negates appearances, which negates phenomena. Sunyata is Rupa, Rupa is Sunyata and the illustration of that, the instance of that that you are about to experience is the figure of Manjughosa, whom you see as one with the void, appearing and yet void. Void and yet appearing, in a way that cancels out the distinction of subject and object.

This is why for instance it is said that one visualises any Buddha or Bodhisattva as though they were like a section of rainbow, or like a reflection in a mirror. It gives you that sort of feeling of something, as it were, hovering between existence and non-existence.

Sagaramati: It's almost a visual equivalent to the still (unclear) small voice.

S: Yes, right, yes. It's not endowed with being in the way that we endow things with being despite their being just appearances. At the same time an appearance is there. It's not just the blue sky. There's the form too, the rupa too. So 'the Maya way does not prevent the causally originated semblances'.

Aryamitra: The things about the magician's illusion is the same as the practice is that it only lasts as long as the magician's got the power.

Sagaramati: The magician's power would be karma then, wouldn't it?



S: One could say that, because it's due to your past karma that you experience certain vipakas and these vipakas are the magical display. You have vipakas in common so there's a common magical display. One could look at it like that.

Vimalamitra: So micchaditthis which go around are kind of a delusion which is kept going by karma reinforcing it.

S: Delusion is a misreading of illusion one could say. [Laughter] Delusion is a taking of illusions as real. There's no harm in perceiving illusions, if you know that they are illusions. There's no harm at all in sitting back and watching and enjoying the magicians display, but when you start joining in as though it's all for real, then delusion creeps in. Delusion refers to your interpretation of experience. There's nothing wrong with experiencing, there's nothing wrong with watching the illusion knowing that it's an illusion but when you start thinking that the illusion is something real, it's really there, not as an appearance but as having an ontological status, that is delusion, that is *Avidya*, or that is *Viparyasa*, distorted perception. It's not so much the perception itself which is distorted but the interpretation of the perception.

Aryamitra: So general conditioned ways of seeing things, say the way the English would see something differently maybe from the Indians, would that be like a mass magician, they keep an illusion going, so if you enter within a framework where there's this mass illusion going on, after a while you begin to even construct it yourself.

S: Yes it's like the emperor's new clothes. Everybody agreed that the emperor was wearing these new clothes - he must be because everybody said so, it was just that they couldn't see them, but he was wearing them, yes he was surely wearing them. Only in the end a child cried out, 'no, the emperor's not wearing anything'. The child is a bit like the Buddha. Saying the illusion is an illusion. But only an illusion. There's no need to place a delusion on it.

So very often we get the experience of something being there and it's quite all right to recognise that it's there, that we see it, but then all sorts of strong subjective emotions come into play and affect our whole attitude towards what is apparently there. We wouldn't have any sort of trouble or difficulty if we just let it be there, and these strong subjective emotions didn't come up. If we just treated it as an illusion which we could look at and enjoy, but not that we had to regard as something there that we could grasp hold of or keep and so on. And this is, in a way, one of the beauties of art, that art gives us something to enjoy but not to grasp. Disinterested aesthetic appreciation, not in a dilettante sort of way but in a real way. Really appreciating but not trying to pluck. If you see a painted flower you don't try to pluck the flower do you? Not unless you're mad. [Laughter] You can really appreciate the beauty of the painted flower but it would never occur to you to try and pluck it because you know it's a painted flower. So in the same way you see a portrait of a beautiful woman, you can admire it and appreciate the beauty, but it doesn't occur to you to make propositions to her because it's just a painted woman.

So in the same way, if you just regard the flowers that you see in the fields or the women that you actually meet, in this sort of way, you can enjoy them, they're there as appearances, enjoy the beauty etc., etc., but make no attempt to pluck them or proposition them. You treat them in a way just as appearances that you can't grasp hold of, that are just there to be seen and just to be enjoyed, but not to be grasped hold of with grubby little paws. [Laughter]

Of course, to carry this sort of dangerously far, with regard to these objects you can not only see them but touch them, taste them, etc., etc., with impunity if you know that they're not really there, but that is very difficult. It's only the *siddhas* who can do that kind of thing, but it is not ruled out, that possibility, and you can experience a measure of this in your relations with things. As Blake says kissing the winged joy as it flies. If you can do that you live in eternity's sunrise, but 'he who binds to himself a joy does the winged life destroy'. So you can



see there are people who almost naturally have at least a little bit of this sort of happy, carefree attitude towards things. They can enjoy them without taking them too seriously and just let them go lightly and happily. They've got a touch of this. Others you don't dare to let anywhere near objects of enjoyment. [Laughter] Of any kind. But you can see the sort of thing that I'm getting at. So when you can see the whole world and absolutely delight in it, it's really beautiful, see everything, taste everything, smell everything, touch everything, but you know it's just an illusion, it's just like the magician's magical display. So you can be fully engaged in it, just like anybody else apparently, but innerly you are completely detached from it. You're not detached in a sense of yanking yourself away forcibly, but you just see through it entirely, completely.

Vimalamitra: Which is the best one.

S: Yes.

Vimalamitra: If you really be there and see through it at the same time.

S: But be very careful [Laughter] of this not being a rationalisation. One is almost afraid to speak the truth. It's as though lies are the only things that people are really able to accept, or lies are the only things which are any good for them. Taking anything short of absolute truth as being lies. People cannot but misunderstand the truth it seems. You can see it happening before you even say anything. They're all eager to take it in the wrong way. [Laughter] Whatever you say.

But this is why it's sometimes said in the context of the Vajrayana that the end result of the Vajrayana practice and experience is to see the whole world as a pure land and to see all the beings in it as dakas and dakinis, Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and to perceive all sounds as mantras, and this is what happens when you see through everything. You continue to see it and experience it as an appearance but you don't make it the basis of any grasping because you don't think of it as anything real in the ultimate sense. You are free to enjoy it then.

Vimalamitra: What about in London say when you get all the drunks coming out of the pubs? How would you regard that sort of thing?

S: Well in the same way. You wouldn't regard it as beautiful in the aesthetic sense, but you wouldn't experience any repugnance. You just do whatever was necessary, you'd function spontaneously which might mean going up to them and talking to them or it might mean avoiding them, seeing that you could in fact at that moment do nothing, but you wouldn't be in the least disturbed or upset.

Vimalamitra: Will you always get attached to the illusion of the world as real as long as you've got this kind of subjective content?

S: Well you can feel it coming up can't you. If you just watch yourself a little bit, you can see the point at which you cease just to appreciate something beautiful in an objective sort of way and these strong feelings of possessiveness etc., etc. - to go no further than that - start creeping in.

Vimalamitra: So you can't really see the world until those subjective feelings are...

S: Are eliminated. Yes. This is why sometimes it's good to be with nature because in a way you can't possess nature. You can't do anything about it. You can admire the sun and the moon and the stars but you know quite well you're not going to possess them, so that sort of admiration or appreciation can have a liberating kind of effect.

Devamitra: Didn't you say on one seminar that it was good to be erotic with nature?



S: Well in the sense of spreading your eroticism a little more widely than it usually goes, and then that, as it were, takes the pressure off and the tension out of those areas where eroticism usually does go.

Vimalamitra: You can do that with art too.

S: Yes.

So in the Mahayana, especially within the context of the Sunyata teaching, this recollection of everything being like a magical display. Perhaps we ought to avoid the use of the word 'illusion', but like a magical display. It's very very important. It makes it clear it's there. No one is denying its relative existence. The fact that you do perceive something and experience something, but it's not ultimately real, therefore you are not to really set your heart upon it.

Sagaramati: There is something. You said that you set your heart upon it. That seems to be the trouble. You set your heart on the phenomena, but your heart must be somewhere else then, as it were.

S: Yes, it must be. It must be, for want of a better term, on the void, or you haven't got a heart any more, you've got a bodhicitta, which makes a tremendous difference. Your heart, you could say, is on enlightenment for the sake of all. So you don't get entangled in the appearances. You see them, not only see them, the expression 'see' is appropriate with regard to a display, but we don't only see things, we hear them, we taste them etc. So one has got really to apply the magical display simile all the way round to all one's experience, not only to one's visual experience. I don't know what the expression is for an illusory sound. Would you say illusory sound or is that only used for visual experiences? Usually I think only for visual experiences, but one must apply it to sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and to thoughts also. When you're thinking about something you're not really thinking about something, you're having a thought. This is where the whole distinction of phenomenon and thing in itself just breaks down. The thought is not a thought about anything, a thought it just a thought.

Sagaramati: To me anyway the making the thing a concrete thing, it's the emotion behind it which makes it a concrete thing.

S: Yes, concrete in the sense of substantial. Yes.

Sagaramati: The stronger the feeling for the thing the more real.

_____ : You invest energy in it?

Sagaramati: So the more refined your emotions then the more, as it were, subtle the entity becomes.

S: Yes. Anyway let's go on. So that is all introductory to the visualisation, so you can get now a better idea what visualisation means. So whilst we thus integrate etc....

*There arises from the Letters OM AH HUM, of our own three centres, and
DHIH upon a moon within the heart Light.*

I think this is clear. There are a couple of notes. These are notes I compiled myself at the time. [Pause]

Yes, just a few words about these letters and their places. It's not so much that there are letters painted on the surface of the body. It's more as though one feels the body as a mass of quivering energy and the letters represent sort of vortices of energy which are quivering and vibrating even more intensely. It's much more like that. [Pause]



Devamitra: Does it matter if you visualise the letters in Sanskrit like we have here?

S: It's usually said it's better to visualise in Tibetan or Sanskrit but there doesn't seem any rational reason for that. I do know people have visualised in Roman characters quite successfully, so presumably one can do that. You require more characters I think though in Roman, don't you? And as regards the places, the Hum is not actually opposite the physical heart. This is usually stated quite definitely. It's the centre, the heart is supposed to be here, as it were, and you actually feel that this is the centre, not here. So when it is said that the Dhih is on a moon within the heart, it's not the physical organ, the heart, it's right in the centre of the being, behind, as it were, the Hum which is more on the surface, though not, as it were, as I said, painted on the surface. But more a sort of knot of energy, knot in a positive sense, of energy, just there, and the Dhih is another deeper subtler knot, as it were, even further within.

So the three or the four kinds of light represent more like one's own prayer or entreaty welling up. One mustn't forget that the three letters, the Om, Ah, Hum, represent body, speech and mind and one's own potentiality for developing the three Kayas. What in the Buddha is the three Kayas, in oneself is body, speech and mind. So you have those in embryo already, and you, as it were, develop those on your own. That's the light coming out, but then they sort of go towards the ideal out there, and conjure it up. It's yourself that you're conjuring up ultimately, yourself as you either will be, as you can say, or as you are now in reality even though you can't see it. So the rays of light are the feelers that you, having developed a little, put out in the direction of the ideal, or you as you will be or can be, or even are in a sense.

Vajradaka: So Manjughosa represents the three Kayas.

S: Oh yes. Well this is clearly stated in the stuti. There's a description of the three Kayas.

Vimalamitra: So the visualised form of the visualised dhyani Buddhas is the ideal as fully as you can take it before being touched by the transcendental.

S: Yes! Yes, this comes into it with reference to the *Jnanasattva*

which having invited Manjusri, the Prince, the Jnanasattva.

Now what is *Jnanasattva*? There's a distinction in the Vajrayana, a very important distinction, between *Samayasattva* and *Jnanasattva*. Are you familiar with this at all, have you come across this at all? *Samaya* here usually is rendered as 'conventional' and *Jnana* is more like transcendental, so the *Samayasattva* is the form or the figure, in this case of Manjughosa, which you conjure up in your own mind as a result of the use of your own constructive imagination. It's a sort of extension of your mind in the more subjective sense. You see what I mean? But the *Jnanasattva* is when the aspect of Buddhahood or the aspect of the Buddha nature, which corresponds to the *Samayasattva* is fully reflected in it or in a manner of speaking actually descends into it. That's the *Jnanasattva*.

Vajradaka: So it's not a subjective construction.

S: So it's not a subjective construction. When that happens, the *Jnanasattva* as it were descends, you have in a way transcended the subject-object distinction.

Devamitra: Please define the *Jnanasattva* again.

S: Well the *Samayasattva* is that form or figure that you produce in the course of your meditation, which you visualise as the result of the use of your own constructive imagination. It's like an extension of your own mind in the subjective sense, even though highly refined and purified and developed, and the *Jnanasattva* is that



aspect of the Buddha or Buddha nature or Buddhahood, which is, as it were, in correspondence with the *Samayasattva*, and which is able, as it were, to be reflected in the *Samayasattva*, or even, as it were to descend into it.

So when you're in contact with the *Jnanasattva*, you are in contact with something outside your own mind. Not in the sense of being in contact with an object as distinct from a subject, but in contact with something which though in a manner of speaking appearing as object nevertheless, inasmuch as it's *Jnanasattva*, transcends the subject-object distinction. So long as there is a trace of subjectivity you can experience that which is beyond subject and object only as object in relation to your subjectivity. So long as there is even a refined subjectivity, you have to experience, let's use the term 'absolute', the absolute, which is transcending subject and object, as an object. For obvious reasons. But there is a difference in your experience, because you are, in a manner of speaking experiencing the absolute, even though it does appear as an object out there.

Aryamitra: What do you call the one that is the subjective?

S: The *Samayasattva*. S-A-M-A-Y-A [spells the word out loud] It's the same word as for the Tantric Vow. So it isn't that all these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are only extensions of your own subjectivity, only ideas in your own mind. They are to begin with, but they have a sort of correspondence with different aspects of the absolute, so to speak, different aspects of Buddhahood, and sort of come into alignment with them. It's very difficult to explain it in any other way. It's rather like you've got a little mirror and if you just put it in a certain position it then can reflect the moon, so you're then in contact with the moon, not just with the mirror. But even that analogy's not very good because the *Samayasattva* is like painting the moon on the mirror. When the moon is painted on the mirror, then the moon is able to reflect in the mirror, which doesn't actually happen in fact, does it.

Aryamitra: Maybe you have to paint with a silver paint which reflects.

S: Right.

Aryamitra: You first of all paint the moon with this paint and then you might be able to see the moon.

S: But it's not unlike the use of words, because the Buddha used words, that is ordinary words, but he, in a manner of speaking, arranged them in such a way that they reflected the truth. So now if you arrange the words or you understand the words correctly you have the right rational apprehension, that rational apprehension can reflect the truth which is beyond reason and in that way you've got an intuition of that truth. In other words an experience of vipassana. This is the visual equivalent of that.

There's also in the Vajrayana a *Samadhisattva* but I'm not going to go into that. *Samayasattva* and *Jnanasattva* are enough.

So

which, having invited Manjusri the Prince

You see the light which goes forth from you, invites Manjusri, invites Manjughosa. Those rays of light as it were bridge the gap between you and the as yet unrealised ideal.

He sits, in well-pleased fashion

We've talked about this a bit, haven't we, his being well-pleased.



on mats of lotus and moon in the sky before us. In saffron coloured, twice eight

i.e sixteen year old

youth. The glory of his marks and signs, excellently blazing.

He's a Buddha appearing in Bodhisattva form. He has all the marks and signs of a Buddha. I think we need not go into those.

With five minor side crests in his oil black hair and graced by bunches of utpala

blue lotuses

over his ears. His right hand brandishing the sword of Jnana, whilst his left grasps the Prajnaparamita volume. Decked as ornaments with jewels and silks of all kinds; seated with both legs in the Vajraparyanka posture. His three centres marked by the three letters, and the moon mat inside his heart by a blazing reddish-yellow letter DHIH, once again light goes forth

that is from his letters,

to invite the empowering deities.

The empowering deities, the five jinas, are imagined, as it were, as conferring the *Abhisheka* on Manjughosa. You are, as it were, visualising an initiation, a Tantric initiation, of Manjughosa by all the five Buddhas. And then

By the Jnana Amrta consecration,

By their pouring upon them the Amrta, the nectar, of the five Jnanas, which they respectively or variously, embody,

His whole body is purged of the obscurations [of our vision].

You are familiar, I take it, with this idea that the five Buddhas, Vairocana and so on, embody the five Jnanas, the five knowledges or wisdoms. I've mentioned these and described these many a time in lectures.

Subhuti: Can you distinguish Prajna and Jnana?

S: Yes and no. Very often they're used synonymously but very strictly speaking you would say that Jnana represents a higher development of Prajna. For instance in the ten paramitas of the bodhisattva, the sixth is Prajna, but then one of the four that, in a way, were added on is Jnana. So inasmuch as the six or the ten are progressive, Jnana must be higher than Prajna. In that case Prajna is what reduces everything to Sunyata, but Jnana is what sees that rupa is non-different from Prajna. Though again in some Perfection of Wisdom texts Prajna is used in that second sense, the sense, as it were, of Jnana. The way in which Jnana is used when we speak of the five Jnanas seems to have no technical relation to Prajna.

Vimalamitra: Prajna is also regarded as more the active.



S: You could say that, yes. The Jnanas are more like the five awarenesses. Guenther them translates them like that which is quite correct I think. Transcendental awarenesses. Prajna is more like Jnana in operation, in practical affairs, as it were. Though again one can't press that too far because Karuna is also that, that aspect of Prajna. But Prajna and Jnana are from the same root - Jna. Prajna is extreme knowledge as it were, higher knowledge if you like.

Devamitra: Would it be incorrect to look upon Jnana as Karuna and Prajna sort of merged?

S: You could do that, you could. Though again it is said that Prajna itself is non-different from Upaya. One can only say there are certain texts in which they're distinguished and certain texts in which they're not. It depends entirely on the context. It's very difficult to generalise about that. But certainly the expression 'The Five Jnanas' is consistently used. You never have the expression 'The Five Prajnas'. It is always 'The Five Jnanas'.

Vajradaka: Is this particularly Vajrayanic?

S: No, this is general Mahayana, though perhaps more Yogachara teaching - 'The Five Jnanas'. But in the Vajrayana the Five Buddhas embody the five Jnanas. So the fact that Manjughosa is initiated by the Five Buddhas means that he is thoroughly endowed with their Five Jnanas. In other words he himself becomes the embodiment of Buddhahood in all its aspects.

And then 'by the Jnana Amrta consecration' - One can imagine if one likes, one can visualise, the Five Buddhas sending down or pouring down streams of nectar, or even taking up and emptying pots of nectar over the head and body of Manjughosa. 'His whole body is purged of the obscurations of our vision'

and he is adorned on the head by Akshobya [and the rest].

This can be taken in two ways. It can be taken to mean Akshobya is mentioned because Manjughosa belongs to his Buddha family, or simply that Akshobya is enumerated first, being the Buddha of the East, and you always enumerate starting with the East. That's what actually faces you in the mandala. Really Manjughosa belongs to the family of Vairocana. But it may be that he's here regarded as belonging to the family of Akshobya - that is a possibility. On the other hand Akshobya may be mentioned simply because he's the first of the Buddhas if you enumerate starting at the East which is where you usually start.

_____ : The East faces you so East is at the bottom of your visualisation?

S: Yes. When you have the mandala here, East is here, West is there, South is there, North is there, because that's the point at which you enter.

_____ : That makes sense too because you're forward to the West, Amitabha...

S: Yes.

_____ : Can you start again. East is on the right?

S: No. As you enter the mandala you enter by the Eastern Gate, which means that directly in front of you there is Akshobya. Beyond Akshobya in the West, in the same line, is Amitabha. On your left, that is to say to the South, is Ratnasambhava and to the North, that is on your right, there is Amoghasiddhi. One must bear this in mind in descriptions of rituals and visualisations, because when you hang a thangka up you get the south at the bottom. It's as though you're entering from the south which is not so, you always enter from the east. You begin from the east because this is where the sun rises. Again it's connected with solar symbolism.



_____ : You always enter from the east.

S: The mandala. When you're initiated into the mandala, which means you actually walk into the mandala, you walk in by the Eastern Gate. So the Eastern direction is the one that faces you. Whichever way you may happen to be, if you got on....

[End of tape three tape four]

Vimalamitra: It's quite interesting what you were saying about Manjughosa probably coming more from Vairocana's family, because when I was doing my visualisation I kept getting Vairocana on top of Manjughosa.

S: Well the fact that Akshobya is mentioned here, as I said, doesn't necessarily mean that Manjughosa belongs to Akshobya's family, though he may in fact be so regarded in certain traditions, but certainly originally he belonged to the family of Vairocana, the Tathagata family, and Manjughosa is always in the middle of the three bodhisattvas - Avalokitesvara, Manjughosa himself and then Vajrapani. It seems though to a great extent that Manjughosa is so important as a bodhisattva that he sort of transcends the five family division which came, at least as regards the literary evidences, much later. But Manjughosa was in existence, in circulation, before the five Buddha pattern and five bodhisattva pattern was really worked out. As far as I remember also when the Five Buddhas are enumerated with their five bodhisattvas in these later texts, Manjughosa is not included among the five bodhisattvas. It's as though he's too important to be included. Though he is included among the three bodhisattvas corresponding to the three Buddhas who preceded the Five Buddhas. These things are never worked out very tidily, if you know what I mean. There are always inconsistencies which in a way is good. It has a definite positive value, as in Blake. You can never reduce it to a completely tidy, coherent system. Very irritating to some people.

So

We devoutly worship and petition him - whereby From the very axis of his heart [i.e. the letter Dhih] the words of the stuti and rosaries of the mantra issue without pause, And as clear as the light that makes it daytime, dissolve into the inside of our heart. Whereupon, through the dispersal of all the darkness of ignorance and the shining forth of omniscience, kindness and power, Our Lotus of Knowledge and Kindness, fully blown, has gained the rank of the Protector Manjusri.

That, in a way, is quite important because it means that as soon as you receive the mantra and the letters of the stuti into your heart, your lotus sort of suddenly swells and develops and you yourself are Manjughosa, as it were, in an instant. Your bodhicitta's become fully developed and is coterminous with the Buddha Mind, Enlightenment itself. That's what you must try to think.

Vimalamitra: It's quite important where it says as bright as daylight.

S: Yes as clear as the light that makes it daytime. There's sudden illumination. Again solar symbolism also which again connects Manjughosa with Vairocana, the illuminator, the Sun Buddha of Japanese Buddhism.

Abhaya: Which mantra does it mean here?

S: The *OM A RA PA CA NA DHIH*.

Abhaya: Even though it's not actually specifically mentioned.

S: Yes, the rosaries of the mantra.



Devamitra: So one sees the words of the sadhana?

S: Yes. Obviously to visualise all the actual letters is difficult, if not impossible, so you just visualise the light, the golden light, and as it were feel or think that in that light the stuti and the mantra are being received into oneself.

Kuladeva: If you visualise the letters of the stuti do you visualise it in Sanskrit or Tibetan or can you visualise it in English?

S: You can visualise in English though it's usually said that it's better to visualise in Sanskrit or Tibetan. I think it is actually easier from a purely pictorial point of view, not a sort of magical or occult point of view. Also the associations are different which may be important. Like for instance if we have Chinese vases on the altar with Chinese characters, that looks beautiful and romantic to us because we don't know what they mean, but the characters might actually say 'Made in Hong Kong' [Laughter] but for us those associations are simply not there, but a Chinese sitting and meditating and seeing 'Made in Hong Kong' might be seriously disturbed [Laughter] and might bring all sorts of commercial things before his mind, but we think oh it might be something from the Tao te Ching or something really profound. We don't know, we just see these exotic looking characters. So it's a bit like that. The Roman characters have got very maybe mundane associations. For us at least these very exotic Tibetan and even Sanskrit characters - they've got different sort of associations. So maybe it's better to use those if we can. And I think they are easier to visualise in a way, just pictorially speaking.

Abhaya: Is there a picture of the seed syllable you could show us - *dhih*?

_____ : Chintamani did one, didn't he.

S: Yes. He did. We have got one somewhere. I'll try to find one. I saw it.

Sagaramati: Somebody who went through this - Chintamani, he said that the *Samayasattva* you visualise as being hollow, and that when you come to the dhyanic consecration you imagine this stuff as it were going into....

S: Yes you can do that. That is a sort of very more literal way of doing it. Yes you can certainly do that. But that's as though it's a form informing a form, if you know what I mean, but yes you can represent, you can see the *Samayasattva*, as made of sort of golden glass, and then the Jnana Amrita as filling that, much as in the case of the *Vajrasattva* visualisation you visualise yourself in the end as a vase washed clean and filled with curds, a crystal vase filled with curds.

Devamitra: So the point we've reached in the text here, the *Samayasattva* has become the *Jnanasattva*. Is that correct?

S: Though he is hailed as *Jnanasattva* earlier on but I think that is, as it were, by anticipation. I think we have to stop there. It's time for a cup of something.

[Break]

S: the Ratnaguna but never mind. I think tomorrow we really will, but in a way it's not a bad thing that we're spending so much time on the sadhana.

Subhuti: Could we possibly do more study?

S: Well this brings up something that somebody mentioned yesterday which was that it might be a good idea



to have less work in the afternoon and allot some time for making notes for the benefit of those who do want to make notes.

[Short practical discussion about taking notes and when to do so]

All right, go back to the text.

So you see these verses which we've done this morning after the mantra of sunyata really describe the visualisation. Usually what Tibetans do who don't practise very seriously is just read through this which presumably forms a sort of picture in the mind automatically, but actually one should try to visualise, taking these lines as a sort of guide or key to the visualisation. If one does the visualisation properly, that itself is, one can say, an experience in itself.

Abhaya: I suppose it would be a good idea to try and memorise it.

S: Oh yes. All this should be memorised. Perhaps I should have mentioned that. For instance 'I and all else that moves until enlightenment' - all those verses should be memorised, those eight lines. Then of course the mantra *Om Svabhavasuddhah*, that should be memorised.

_____ : Please repeat that quite clearly - to get the phonetics of that mantra.

S: *Om Svabhavasuddhah Sarvadharmah Svabhavasuddho 'Ham.*

_____ : 'Ham. You didn't say what 'Ham was.

S: *Aham, 'T. Svabhavasuddho 'Ham.* Aham. The apostrophe means that for reasons of phonetics the A, the initial A has been elided, that is to say dropped. So the 'Ham is Aham, 'T.

By the way just one point. It isn't necessary to memorise the description provided you actually do the visualisation. If you're totally unable to do the visualisation or too tired, well you can recite that instead, but these lines - 'whilst we thus integrate' right down to 'gain the rank of the protector Manjusri' are really intended as a guide to the practise of the visualisation. So provided you visualise in accordance with that description you don't need to recite and therefore don't need to memorise all those lines. But the stuti which follows you do need to memorise.

Aryamitra: For those who don't actually have this as one of their practices, is there anything, any general way of using it with their other practices or....

S: Yes, what one usually does is that you stick to your main practice and if you do the visualisation of any other deity, you imagine or you think to yourself that your main deity has for the time being assumed the form of this other practice. Supposing your main practice is the Tara practice, then you think Tara now assumes the form of Manjughosa, and then you do the Manjughosa practice.

Vimalamitra: The first four lines of this switching of visualisation. That might be quite a good idea to memorise.

S: Yes, that gives you the sort of spirit of the whole thing.

All right then on to the actual stuti which as I said you should know by heart. [Pause]

So you notice that the stuti, the praise of Manjughosa is divided into three parts. First of all his mind is praised,



in other words his Dharmakaya, then his speech is praised or his Sambhogakaya, and then his body is praised or his Nirmanakaya, and the praise of the mind is divided into two - praise of his wisdom, praise of his compassion. So

To Thee, Whose Understanding, purifying like a cloud free sun,

again solar symbolism,

the two Obscurations (avarana)

Do you know what these two Avaranas are?

_____ : Klesa and Jneya.

S: Klesa and Jneya. Klesa meaning the obscuration of defilements and Jneya the obscuration of knowables. In other words the obscuration which consists in viewing the Maya-like appearances as objects actually existing out there as realities.

_____ : How do you spell Jneya?

S: J.N.E.Y.A. The n being a Spanish n with a little curving line over it. It does occur later on in the text.

_____ : So klesa is sort of internal obscurations and Jneya external?

S: You could say that the Klesa represents emotional obscuration, Jneya is intellectual obscuration. Or perhaps *passional* would be better than emotional because emotional shouldn't be a dirty word. It's *passional* obscuration and maybe cognitive obscuration. Cognitive obscuration is when you perceive an appearance and you say, 'ah, that's a real object, a thing there which I can grasp'. That is the obscuration of the cognitive.

Vajradaka: Is klesa used always in this....

S: Klesa means defilement. There are different lists and sets of klesas but it's a very broad, general term. Later on in the text we will come across a distinction of contrived and inborn klesas and we'll go into it in that place.

Sagaramati: The Jneya one, that comes after. I always get the impression that you can purify the klesa one, but then there's got to be something else comes in to break through the.....

S: Yes. For instance it's the Klesa Varana which obscures the truth of the Pudgala Nairatmya and it's the Jneya Varana which obscures the truth of the Dharma Nairatmya. This is the correlation that is usually made.

Vimalamitra: What were those two terms you used?

S: It's the Klesa Varana, the obscuration of passions which obscures the truth of the emptiness of self, and it is the obscuration of cognition or cognisables which obscures the truth of the emptiness of objects or dharmas. This again is basic Mahayana teaching that you all ought really to know and which will be made clear if you study 'Buddhist Thought in India'. Usually it's said that the Hinayana teaches the Pudgala Nairatmya whereas the Mahayana teaches in addition the Sarva Dharma Nairatmya or Sarva Dharma Sunyata. This is all a bit schematic and scholastic but it is useful to know these things if one is studying texts. I ought not to have to explain these things on every seminar - which is tending to happen.



Aryamitra: And you advise that if we read 'Buddhist Thought in India' that this would clear up....

S: Yes, this would give you your basic understanding of Buddhism from the more philosophical point of view. I think you'd need to go through it in a study group. I think you'd find it quite tough going on your own, unless you have a natural interest in these things, which a few may have but not everybody. It would be a good text for a more serious study group. It's very clear once you get down to it. Conze is a very clear, precise writer. A bit dry sometimes but if you just had it say once a week. It's not really dry. It does come very much alive.

All right, so 'To thee whose understanding, purifying like a cloud free sun the two obscurations

and very clear, Sees all matters whatsoever as they are.'

This links up very much with the most early Buddhism. Seeing everything *Yathabutha* - as it really is, in accordance with reality.

wherefore thou dost hold the Volume (of Prajnaparamita) to Thy Heart. To thee who in kindness

Here the compassion aspect of the mind of Manjughosa comes in

as though to an only son, to living beings - covered as they are in the prison of temporal existence with the darkness of Avidya and afflicted with Dukkha - [dost utter] Thy speech.

Here comes in speech and the Sambhogakaya. Anything requiring explanation so far? The prison of temporal existence. Samsara as a prison. Dhammaddinā went into that very well, didn't she, in her lecture on the Wheel of Life. Anybody heard the tape, those who didn't hear the lecture? It was very good wasn't it. It's a quite suitable lecture for relatively new people, quite lively. So Samsara or Wheel of Life as a prison. With the darkness of Avidya, that is to say 'ignorance' it's usually translated.

Aryamitra: As though to an only son. It presumes that one has got kindness one has to an only son. Can you think of anything in parallel with us, with single people?

_____ : Abhaya might know.

Abhaya: Sorry I missed that.

S: As though to an only son. I think it's very difficult for people in the west to feel about the son as people in the East did, even if they have got a son. It just depends on a bit of imaginative identification and empathy. Because in the east, especially in India, the son was very much the continuation of yourself. The son, especially among high caste Hindus had to celebrate your after death rites. If that wasn't done you weren't properly dead, in a way. And it was very necessary to have a son to carry on your name and your line and to make the necessary offerings after your death. So the son is sometimes described as the father's 'other self', and in ancient times in India the son was literally the father reborn before the father had actually died. So in all these early civilisations the feeling for the son is very very strong, much stronger in many cases than the feeling for the wife, and certainly far far stronger than the feeling for the daughter. The son is you. You see yourself in your son reborn. So the affection of the father for the son is a very positive thing in these early civilisations. You still find it even in the west here and there, but it's not as common or as strong as it used to be, though one can certainly imagine it because one has a strain of this in oneself deep down, whatever the experience in this life with one's actual father or actual son might have been, because, in a way, you participate in the experience of the race or at least there's some sort of father archetype in you, however unsatisfactory your own actual father



might be.

So it isn't necessary I think to have had a good father-son relationship yourself before you can appreciate or feel what this is or this represents. The feeling is not the feeling for an infant son, don't forget, but for a grown up son who has become, as it were, independent, but with whom you have this very positive relationship and with regard to whom you are still father in the sense of knowing more and being able to teach him, and introduce him to the world and show him around and so on. The *Manusastra* says that when your son is sixteen years of age, cease to regard him as a son and treat him as a friend. That is the old Indian tradition. Someone was considered to be mature at the age of sixteen, hence the sixteen year old youth. You're at your prime then. You're not a boy any longer, you're a man, a young man. In India people mature rather quickly. You are ripe for marriage and fatherhood then. We consider it a bit premature.

Aryamitra: Why is that? Do you think they actually more mature at sixteen?

S: Well in a way they're not. They're physically mature very often, but don't forget even if you marry at sixteen in that sort of society, there's your father and your uncles and your elder brothers to look after everything. You don't have the whole responsibility coming on poor sixteen year old you. You just continue as before. The only difference is that you've got a wife to amuse yourself with now. There's no extra responsibility whatever. [Pause]

_____ : Presumably you don't usually choose your own wife anyway so you don't make the mistakes that we might make.

S: You don't even have that responsibility, right, yes, and far fewer mistakes are made I'm quite sure. Anyway I've spoken about all that before. No need to repeat what I've said on previous occasions. I'm a firm believer in arranged marriages if one has them at all.

So as though to an only son. 'To thee who in kindness a though to an only son, to living beings covered as they are in the prison of temporal existence with the darkness of Avidya and afflicted with Dukkha, does utter thy speech

with a sixty-four-fold voice'

What is this sixty fourfold voice? It's the Brahma voice with all possible tones, all aspects, saying as it were, communicating as it were, all things to all people so that each hears in his own way in accordance with his own language. Sort of archetypal speech. There are sixty four letters to the Sanskrit alphabet, so the sixty-four-fold voice is the voice which is full and complete, which exhausts all possible sounds, which says everything in one utterance.

Resounding loud as thunder, waking the sleep of the klesas.

What does that signify or suggest, the sleep of the klesas?

Vajradaka: That they're under the surface.

Vimalamitra: That you're asleep.

S: That you're asleep. Not that the klesas are asleep, the klesas are very active, but it's the sleep of the klesas in the sense that while you are asleep the klesas are active. You've got to wake up, i.e. gain enlightenment, and it's the klesas that have got to be laid asleep or which have got to be killed even, or at least transformed.



Sagaramati: I always imagine that it's like the klesas having roots and waking the sleep of them is getting further into the root.

S: I think it's more a suggestion that the klesas are an expression of one's unawareness, or one's, as it were, state of sleep, so that when you wake up out of this state of unawareness the klesas automatically vanish.

unfastening the iron fetters of karma.

That's an obvious piece of symbolism.

Dispersing the darkness of ignorance, and [who], cutting off every sprout of dukkha, dost grasp the sword.

You cut off the sprouts of dukkha of course by cutting off the causes of dukkha.

And then the praise of the body, the Nirmanakaya:

To the Body of the chief among Jinas and their sons, his body-of-virtues perfected. Pure from the start and arrived at the end of the ten bhumis, adorned with the ten tens of ornaments and twelve. Dispersing the darkness of our mind. To [Thee] Manjughosa we bow.

What is this pure from the start and arrived at the end of the ten bhumis?

_____ : He's already a Buddha.

S: He's already a Buddha, a Buddha from the start, but arrived at the end of the ten bhumis. So who is it that arrives at the end of the ten bhumis?

Abhaya: The bodhisattva.

S: The bodhisattva. So it's as though he's Buddha and bodhisattva in one. A Buddha appearing as a bodhisattva. A sort of embodiment of the absolute bodhicitta and of the relative bodhicitta. He transcends the dichotomy between eternity and time.

Vajradaka: Are we going to be going into the three kayas later on?

S: No, because there are lectures and even writings about that. No need to.

Mahamati: The words of the stuti were received from Manjughosa. The words that are addressed to Manjughosa.

S: Yes.

Mahamati: That seems at first glance quite strange.

S: Well it isn't on the level of personality. If for instance somebody gave you an address of welcome or something like that to themselves and asked you to read it you'd think it extremely odd, but it isn't to be taken like that. [Laughter] I've had that sort of experience in India, people saying well I'd like an address of welcome written for me, praising me and telling about all the things that I've done, could you write it and get it read out, I really want that what I've done should be appreciated by everybody, and people are really naive about these



things in India. But Manjughosa is not to be understood as a separate personality who hands you - another separate personality - a hymn of praise to him which he sort of has written out. [Laughter] It's like when you see nature [it] inspires you to praise nature. If you write a beautiful poem in praise of nature, well where's the inspiration come from? From nature. So in a manner of speaking it's nature who is praising nature. So if in order to praise wisdom truly what do you need? Wisdom. It's only wisdom that can enable you to praise wisdom. It's only Manjughosa who can give you the right words with which to praise Manjughosa.

So you recite all that thrice. So you need to know that whole stuti by heart. That's absolutely necessary, and you can do so, you can learn it, put it up over your shaving mirror and read it every morning etc. And when you learn it by heart by the way, learn also the words which are within the square brackets because they're essential to the continuity. They are not actually part of the text, they are understood in the Tibetan.

And then you recite the mantra *OM A RA PA CA NA DHIH*. I think you know about these letters. I know I've explained it before a number of times, that these letters constitute the first five letters of the so called Alphabet of Wisdom, in which you get for instance A is for Absolute. Wisdom is absolute. B is for Beautiful, wisdom is beautiful, C - wisdom is something or other, some epithet beginning with C. In this way you get wisdom is something beginning with A, something beginning with RA, something beginning with PA, and there's a text in the Perfection of Wisdom corpus which goes into all this. I haven't got a copy of this unfortunately. There's an extract to be found towards the end of Conze's select sayings. It's almost the last page I think. But you get the idea, don't you. You see what I mean?

Aryamitra: It's not an explanation of the mantra?

S: Yes it is, because the mantra in principle is all the sixty four letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. Each letter being the initial letter of some epithet of the Perfection of Wisdom. In that way you arrive at all the different aspects of the Perfection of Wisdom. So the mantra *OM A RA PA CA NA DHIH* stands for wisdom itself in all its multifarious aspects.

_____ : A slight red herring here - how is the Manjughosa mantra different from Prajnaparamita, her mantra? They're both perfection of wisdom.

S: Well they differ as they appear to differ. The Prajnaparamita is a female deity, a form of Tara, and her mantra is the *Gate Gate*, that's the difference. But you could say, if you wished, that the *Gate Gate* suggests movement and progression from a starting point to a goal, whereas with the *OM A RA PA CA NA DHIH* it's more spatial, you have the simultaneous unfoldment of all the different aspects of wisdom without any question of time coming in. You see what I mean? One is more spatial, the other is more temporal. You could put it in that way if you wished. But the real answer is that the difference is that Manjughosa is Manjughosa and Prajnaparamita is Prajnaparamita! Yes?

Subhuti: Is there anything that can be said about the seed syllable?

S: The *DHIH*. Dhih is also a word which means 'wisdom'. Also in Pali Dhi, D.H.I., Dhi, I think you find it in the Pali texts. In the Dhammapada and the Sutta Nipata *Dhiman* is endowed with wisdom, the wise person. So here it's quite simple and obvious why Dhih which as a word, not just as a syllable but as a word, means wisdom, well clearly that is an appropriate *bija*, mantra, for Manjughosa. And *OM* is usually understood here to mean the Trikaya. So you could say that starting, metaphysically speaking, from the absolute Buddhahood as endowed with the three kayas, you progress through all the different aspects of wisdom and in the end develop that wisdom itself which is identical with the three kayas. The *OM* represents the starting point in an absolute sense, the *DHIH* represents the goal which is the unification of your own enlightened mind with the trikaya of the Buddha. The *OM* represents the goal that you set yourself at the beginning which is Buddhahood, the *A RA PA CA NA* the path and the *DHIH* yourself as realising the goal as the result of following the path.



[End of side one side two]

You can say that with regard to all mantras in a way. Certainly with regard to the *OM MANI PADME HUM*. The *OM* is the goal, Buddhahood, the Trikaya. The *MANI PADME* represents the path, the *HUM* represents yourself as having followed the path and having reached the goal, and Govinda explains it more or less in this way, maybe not quite so specifically but it amounts to this.

And there's a note by the author '*in certain texts HUM SVAHA appears after DHIH, but in ancient books generally it is as set down above*'. So we say *OM A RA PA CA NA DHIH* simply.

_____ : Twenty one times?

S: Yes, twenty one times. When the stuti sadhana is done in a certain way, as we will see in a minute.

Kuladeva: I can't remember where I came across it now but apparently the *DHIH*, when it's recited a number of times it's sometimes recited more than once.

S: Yes, the *DHIH* is often. You say *OM A RA PA CA NA DHIH DHIH DHIH DHIH DHIH DHIH DHIH DHIH*. Students often do this. This is supposed to be good for the memory. I can't say whether it is or not, but this is often done in Tibet, the *DHIH* is recited many times, but this is not when it is done as part of the stuti sadhana.

Now

One should do all this [viz. stuti and mantras] twice more, i.e. the ecomium altogether nine times.

That is to say you recite the stuti three times and then you recite the *OM A RA PA CA NA DHIH* twenty one times. Having done that you again do the stuti three times and the mantra twenty one times. Then again stuti three times, mantra twenty one times. Or you can say the mantra as often as possible, having recited the stuti seven times or twenty one times etc., or any multiple of seven times running straight off.

Whilst in the course [of day-to-day practice] this much will serve the purpose. If one is paying special attention to the stuti sadhana it is explained in ancient commentaries on the Beneficial Effects [of the stuti] that one should recite the ecomium in the order explained seventy thousand times and the mantra should be recited five or seven lakhs of times.

I expect most people will be satisfied with the day to day practice.

Sagaramati: I thought it was said that the mantra should be said as often as possible after seven or twenty one etc.

S: Yes, that's one way of practising.

Sagaramati: I thought it was the mantra that you said either seven, twenty one or a multiple of it.

What's the ecomium? I don't understand that.

S: The ecomium is the stuti.



Sagaramati: Ah that's the stuti.

_____ : Is it an English word?

S: Yes, well a Greek word I think.

Aryamitra: So you recite the mantra sixty three times? Twenty one times, then twice again is sixty three.

S: Yes, the normal practice is you recite the stuti three times, then you recite the mantra twenty one times. Then you go back and recite the stuti three times, mantra twenty one times, stuti three times, mantra twenty one times. That means that altogether you've done nine stutis and sixty three mantras. Or you can recite the stuti seven times or fourteen times or twenty one times or twenty eight times - seven or any multiple of seven as you please - and then recite the mantra indefinitely afterwards as many times as you like with or without counting.

Kuladeva: And that would exclude doing the three stutis and twenty one mantras before?

S: Not necessarily. You could do three, twenty one, three, twenty one, three, twenty one, three, twenty one, and then go on reciting the mantra indefinitely. But actually I have found and I think others have found that when you practise this way of practising - stuti, mantras, stuti, mantras, stuti, mantras - is very effective. So I think at least to begin with people should practise in that way. And reciting the mantra quite slowly and carefully.

Devamitra: The sort of pace that you gave it last night?

S: Yes. I think actually, to begin with it's good to do three stutis, twenty one mantras, three stutis, twenty one mantras, three stutis, twenty one mantras, and then carry on the mantra indefinitely without the counting, as long as one can. I think this is probably, for most people, to begin with, the best way of practising. The alternation of stuti and mantra does seem to have a quite definite effect, even a quite special effect.

Vimalamitra: I think I heard someone say that you shouldn't do this in multiples of fourteen or something.

S: I've not heard that. It does say seven or twenty one etc. I assume it means any multiple of seven. It may be simply that an odd number is auspicious and an even number is inauspicious. I think one need not pay too much attention to that. That's something Chinese rather than Indian Buddhist.

All right, the conclusion. There's quite a bit to look at here.

Subhuti: What's a lakh?

S: A lakh is one hundred thousand. Boom in Tibetan. Guru Boom is the Hundred Thousand songs of Milarepa. It's a nice word, isn't it. Lakh is of course an Indian word.

After repeating the stuti thrice [more]

simply the stuti. That is say after your mantra recitation, whatever the number of those might have been,

petition, in one pointedness upon the desired purpose:

This is again addressing Manjughosa.

Kind Sun of Speech, when the beams of thy Wisdom (prajna) and Compassion



(karuna) Have quite dispersed the dark of my mind's confusion (moha), that partakes equally (samapanna) of Klesa and Jneya, I pray that they may engender the shining forth of confident understanding, that realises correctly the meaning of the scriptures, the well uttered word,

that is the word of the Buddha,

and the sastras explaining its thought - and cause me to gain Omniscience.

Perhaps a word or two about omniscience. The Buddha himself disclaimed omniscience in the sense of disclaiming a knowledge of all worldly eventualities whatsoever. The Jains are supposed to have believed that the Jinas were omniscient in the sense of knowing exactly how many leaves there were on any particular tree, etc., etc. The Buddha disclaimed that sort of omniscience. The general word for omniscience which is of purely spiritual omniscience is *Sarvajnata*. The Buddha only claims to be omniscient with regard to the path and the means to reach that path.

But there is another term for omniscience or another term translated by the English word omniscience in later Mahayana, which is *Sarvākarajñana* which is translated by Conze as 'knowledge of all the modes', and it means a knowledge or omniscience with regards to all the different spiritual paths followed by different kinds of beings. For instance the knowledge of the Bodhisattva path, the Pratyekabuddha path, the Arahant path. *Sarvākarajñana* includes and comprises all those. It's more than the simple omniscience, as it were, of knowing Nirvana and the way to Nirvana. In other words the whole concept of *Sarvākarajñana* reflects the development of the three yanas, i.e. the *Sravakayana*, *Pratyekabuddhayana*, *Bodhisattvayana*.

Abhaya: *Sarvākara*?

S: *Sarvākara*. *Sarva Akara*. *Akara* meaning 'a mode'. The *Abhisamayalankara* deals with this quite exhaustively, also translated by Conze. I presume that omniscience here means *Sarvakarajñana*.

And having thought of the deity before one as absorbed into oneself

in the manner that we did yesterday. The deity shrinking to a ball of light and that being absorbed into one's heart via the crown of the head,

or as non-visualised.

which seems to allow the whole panorama just to vanish.

one should become absorbed in samadhi, for as long as it abides in the state of union (yuganaddha) of quiescence and insight

that is samatha and vipassana

brought about by the actuality

which means the realisation

of the two non-selfhoods

that is the *Pudgala Nairatmya* and the *Dharma Nairatmya*.

Having done the practice properly, that is to say the stutis and the mantra and so on and repeated the conclusion



and having absorbed the deity or made the deity to be non-visualised, *one should remain absorbed in samadhi*. This is very very important. In some ways it's the most important part of the practice. There should be a sort of, in a manner of speaking, result, which you should actually experience at this particular point and carry on experiencing for as long as - I won't say you can because it isn't a matter of willed effort. And that will consist in an experience of transcendence of subject-object duality brought about by a unification of samatha and vipassana, in the Mahayana sense. The samatha consisting in the vivid visualisation of Manjughosa, and the vipassana consisting in the realisation of the voidness, the sunyata nature of that visualisation.

But it's quite important, in a manner of speaking, to prolong that samadhi experience or samadhi state. Not, as it were, to make a willed effort. You in fact can't do that. If you're able to do that you've already lost the samadhi. You should just be in that state as it were, for as long as it lasts, but allow yourself to be, don't get up hurriedly or start doing something else. Give yourself time to be in that state for a while. That in a way is the most important part of the practice.

Vimalamitra: Could you say what you were saying about samatha and vipassana again as relates to the practice?

S: Yes. The samatha side is more the vivid visualisation of the figure of Manjughosa. What you actually see, what you perceive, and the vipassana side, the insight side, is more the realisation of the Sunyata nature of that visualised form, that visualised figure, which of course is not just a thinking about it. You do your thinking about it before the practice.

Aryamitra: Could you say again why it's important to remain in that state for as long as possible?

S: As I said it's not a question of willing it but this is the aim and object of the whole practice, this is the culmination of the whole practice. If you look at my little note at the end you will see that the samadhi belongs to the *Mahamudra*, whereas the stuti sadhana as a whole belongs to the *Kriya* and *Carya* tantras. It's quite extraordinary in a way, with this samadhi you suddenly make a great leap beyond the practice itself formerly considered. Not that you actually make the leap but the leap happens. If you do the practice properly, then in a way you go far beyond the practice, you go right into the *Mahamudra*, which is a very high stage of Vajrayana practice. The framework of the practice is exoteric tantra, but the content of the practice is more like esoteric tantra. So the initiation that was given when I received this was, as it were, for the esoteric tantra, even though the framework requires only initiation for the exoteric tantra. If you look at the words, it's *Kriya* and *Carya*, but if you look at the substance, the meaning of the words - well not even the meaning of the words, it goes beyond that - it's *Anuttarayogatantra*.

So it means that if you practise properly you definitely do get an actual experience of transcending the subject-object distinction, whether more superficial or whether deeper. This is the basic point. So you must give yourself, as it were, time, to experience that at this particular point - that's the samadhi. It culminates there, or it goes beyond the culmination there. It's more than a culmination of what you've done. You are as it were just given something extra that you haven't earned at all, in a manner of speaking.

Aryamitra: So it's very complete, isn't it.

S: Yes.

Vimalamitra: Scientific(?)

S: More complete.

All right then,



On arising therefrom

that is to say arising from the samadhi,

he should "bridge the gap"

that is the gap between the session of practice or one session of practice and the next

with dedication and resolve as follows:

Through this beneficent act, may I acquire the two stocks (of punya and jnana).

Sometimes it's said that you acquire the stock of *Punya* by practising the first five paramitas, and the stock of *Jnana* by practising the sixth.

And so may (I) gain clarity on the meaning of non-selfhood; thereby may I see manifestly, with exalted mind, the Manjusri-jnana which is free from discursiveness;

Not a question of thinking about it,

and through the Vajra-like samadhi

which is the ultimate samadhi,

- having abandoned completely the klesas, contrived (parikalpita) and inborn (sahaja) - May I make and end of the jneya-obscurations, with all its parts, and gain the wisdom (prajna) of the Sugatas.

The Sugatas of course are the Buddhas, the happy ones, the well-gone ones.

Now there are a few points here. I'll pop outside for a moment and then we'll go into them. **[Break in recording]**

..... five (parikalpita) and inborn (sahaja). Inborn, sahaja, literally means born together with one, innate, congenital. Congenital is the literal translation actually. A congenital disease is one that you're born with so congenital klesas are klesas that you bring with you when you're born. You bring them with you of course, according to Buddhism, from previous existences, but there are others that you construct in this existence itself, so what are these? The only source I've been able to find is Yuan Chuan for these and the restorations of the Sanskrit from the Chinese aren't really very clear but it is of some interest so I'll just go into this.

There's a section here on problems relating to the klesas. [Pause] Bear in mind that this is an explanation according to the Yogachara whereas Manjusri is connected with the Madhyamika tradition, but anyway it will cast a little bit of light. [Pause] Yes. [Pause] The four klesas which are congenital are, as translated here, self delusion, self belief, self conceit and self love. These klesas you bring with you when you are born or when you are conceived. They do give supposed Sanskrit equivalents of these but I won't give you those because they seem to me quite unsure, having been restored from the Chinese, but you can get the general idea about what are these congenital klesas. You bring with you your experience of selfhood. You bring with you self delusion, self belief, that is belief in oneself, not in the sense of confidence but believing that I am I, not anybody else, and self conceit, which means thinking of oneself as better than others or worse than others or even equal to



others, and so of course self love. These are the klesas that you bring with you, and all the rest you contrive, as it were, in your present existence, as the result of your contact with external objects. Those are the constructed klesas.

So do you see the idea, do you see the sort of basis of the distinction between the inborn or innate or congenital and the contrived klesas?

For instance it is said that you have these four congenital klesas. If for instance, in the course of your lifetime you say construct a philosophy of eternalism, well this is a contrived a *parikalpita* klesa. You construct that on the basis of your thinking in this life, you contact maybe with bad teachers or reading of misleading books and so on. You could say that the contrived klesa is a more elaborate klesa rooted in the inborn klesas but elaborated as a result of your own thinking and your contact in this life itself. There are these two aspects. Perhaps we shouldn't distinguish too strictly between the two. Sometimes it's difficult to see where the one ends and the other begins, but you can see that there is a sort of difference between the two. Anyway that's just by way of a brief explanation.

Vajradaka: They seem to be more kind of understandings which I thought was what Jnana related to than to of emotional....

S: They do in a way, but perhaps it's only a difference of emphasis that you can't really separate the emotional and the cognitive or the passionate and the cognitive. And it says at the end, 'May I make an end of the Jneya obscuration'. That seems to be considered more important in a way, which from the Mahayana point of view it is. The klesa varana having been disposed of long ago, as it were, in the Hinayana. But a subtle klesa persists with the Jneya. Again one mustn't take this division between Hinayana and Mahayana too literally.

And [then] he should enter the ways of [day-to-day] activity (caryyamarga); and in the intervals when not meditating too he should make all the ways of activity purposeful through being inseparable from the embryo of Voidness and Compassion (sunyata-karuna-garbha).

I assume that means the bodhicitta. To keep alive in between sessions of practice his bodhisattva attitude.

By so striving it is certain that without taking long he will obtain the rank of Manjusri Jnanasattva who transcends the extremes of existence and quiescence.

Vajradaka: Is quiescence non-existence?

S: No, it's more like arising and ceasing.

Composed by the widely learned (bahusruta) bhadanta Jam-dbYans mKhyen-brTse 'i dBan-po (Jamyang Khyentse wongpo) (-Manjughosa Jnanakrpendra)

that is the predecessor of the Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche with whom I was in contact.

after extracting the quintessential purport of all the ancient writings, with the intention of benefitting himself and others; and written down by Chus-rje bLama Ananda-manjughosa. And through this may all living beings gain power in the jnana of the four pratisamvids.

A little learned flourish at the end by the compiler. I take it you know what the four *pratisamvids* are. *Dharma*



pratisamvid, *Artha pratisamvid*, *Nerukti pratisamvid* and *Pratibana pratisamvid*. They are all described in the *Survey*.

Abhaya: What does it mean? Pratisamvid?

S: Usually it's translated 'Analytical Knowledge'. It's part of the equipment of the bodhisattva, part of his skilful means. *Dharma pratisamvid* - he knows the Dharma in all its aspects. That's a rough and ready meaning. *Artha pratisamvid* - he knows the meaning of the Dharma, the true purport. *Nerukti pratisamvid* - *Nerukti* is literally grammar and etymology. He understands words, he knows how to use words, he's a master of communication. And *Pratibana* means like eloquence with self confidence. He knows how to speak.

There's a very detailed account of the pratisamvids here in '*The Bodhisattva Doctrine*'. I've marked if anyone wants to look it up - it's where this little marker is, and also in the *Survey*. It's a quite well known category.

Subhuti: What's a *bhadanta*?

S: *Bhadanta* means the same as *Bhante*. it's reverent or venerable. Jamyang Khyentse Wongpo it's pronounced or *Manjughosa Jnanakrpendra*. *Krpa* is like Karunā. *Krpa Indra* or *Krpendra*, Lord of Wisdom and Compassion. [Pause]

Abhaya: Did you have a lot of contact with the monk who passed the sadhana to you or was it just for the purpose of this sadhana?

S: No, I did have other contacts with him. That was the famous Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche. He died about two years after I left, just over two years after I first left India.

_____ : Did he explain it with this kind of clarity or is this something that you've developed over the years.

S: This is something I've developed myself, but the seed of it was there.

Devamitra: When he gave you the initiation, exactly what did that involve?

S: That was a ceremony, a *Wong* as it's called, the *Abhiseka*, which was of Manjughosa plus Avalokitesvara, Vajrapani and Tara. It was a ritual. Nothing was explained at the time. It was - well I say purely a ritual but it was ritual with a definite meaning. As the ritual was going on he was going through the actual meditation and invoking the deities involved. I'll probably include a description of that in the appropriate volume of my memoirs which will be volume four I think. [Laughter] Or three.

Devamitra: Going through this text gives me an impression of an experience of the bodhicitta as being something far less remote than that which I've usually been accustomed to think of it.

S: Good. So it should in a way.

Devamitra: It makes the whole (unclear) more accessible.

S: Yes well the bodhicitta isn't just an idea or a thought, as I've emphasised many a time. You must be a little careful doing these practices. If you're not in a quite properly prepared state you can feel quite sick and ill after doing them, because there's too great a degree of incompatibility between the experience which the practice induces and your state of consciousness or being when you're actually doing the practice or take up the practice. So sometimes there is, as I said, that sort of incompatibility. It's as though the experience is too much for you,



you sort of feel like throwing it off and you get a feeling of sort of sickness.

Devamitra: What should one do in that case?

S: Well just approach it calmly and collectedly and make proper preparation for it, allow yourself enough time.

Devamitra: But say you find yourself feeling a bit sick during the course of the practice would you just.....

S: Oh you can carry on, but just note that you must have not been quite up to scratch before starting on the practice.

Vimalamitra: Should you, if you feel quite negative or really tired that morning, not do the practice? Do the Mindfulness of Breathing or the Mettā?

S: It might be better to do the mettā and then if you can, go on to the other, or just do the recitation of the mantra after a period of Mettā Bhāvana.

Vimalamitra: Can you just do, if you've only got a short time or you got up late, you've only got a few minutes [Laughter]

S: I'd say probably just go back to bed! [Laughter]

Vimalamitra: Couldn't you just say the stuti and the mantra?

S: You could, you could. These are the two main things, the stuti and the mantra, yes. If you had time for nothing else you could do simply those, but I would say as an absolute minimum, recite the stuti three times and then recite the mantra as long as you can. That's an irreducible minimum, below the minimum that they give in the text. But you can do this if you really get up as late as all that. The main thing is just to keep the contact and the continuity.

Abhaya: How long do you reckon the complete practice should take?

S: It should take not more than about an hour, which is a reasonable length of time, but clearly one can spend longer on that quite easily, or longer than that quite easily. But about an hour.

Sagaramati: That's including a short mettā practice?

S: No, only actually reciting those lines, not actually doing a short mettā practice, unless it's a very very short one.

Sagaramati: In the one I've been doing you have to do the *Heart Sutra* three times. You chant the refuges and precepts, then you recite the *Heart Sutra* three times.

S: That's quite good also, yes, because that is wisdom, but it isn't actually part of the practice, but if one cares to place the practice itself within a more extended framework, well that's fine. So much the better.

Vimalamitra: Should you say the stuti and the mantra quite slowly?

S: Not necessarily, no. And also when you're actually reciting, don't bother too much about the meaning. You can reflect upon the meaning at other times but don't try to sort of follow the meaning word by word, as it were, when you actually recite it. No, don't bother about the meaning at that time. Just recite it, just recite it



concentratedly. Don't stop and think about it if you know what I mean. It's like driving. You get into the way of driving, you don't stop and think about it, you just do it, don't you. If you stop and think about it you're lost aren't you.

_____ : If you are keeping up another visualisation practice, is it wise to do say one in the morning and one in the evening or should you only do one at a time?

S: Oh no, you can certainly do one in the morning and one in the evening. Quite a good combination is the Manjughosa in the morning and Vajrasattva in the evening.

_____ : Why do those two specifically go well together?

S: They seem to work well. It may be because there is an association of Manjughosa with the sun, solar symbolism, sunrise, light, in the morning you feel more like that, and Vajrasattva seems to be associated more with the evening. But there's no hard and fast rule. If you feel like doing Avalokitesvara in the evening, fine, but one can certainly do two different practices, one morning and one evening, in this way. That's quite good. [Pause]

Aryamitra: Would Avalokitesvara and Manjughosa go together?

S: Well there are no bodhisattvas that don't go together if you know what I mean, but Manjughosa and Vajrasattva seem particularly complementary, but there are none that are incompatible.

Vimalamitra: How about Manjughosa and Prajnaparamita?

S: Again you could say they are complementary because they're masculine and feminine aspects - not aspects but presentations - of wisdom, so they're complementary in respect of iconography at least, to the extent that they're masculine and feminine respectively.

_____ : Do you think that it's more important for people to keep up their visualisation practice or would you say Mettā and Mindfulness.

S: If you have to choose then definitely the visualisation, quite definitely. And if you have to choose between either Mindfulness or Mettā plus visualisation then definitely Mettā plus visualisation. After all you can be mindful all the rest of the time. [Laughter] Mettā is more difficult anyway than Mindfulness, but it seems to be a better foundation for visualisation practice. It's in a way more creative.

Is that the lot? All right then. We are a bit later this morning, never mind. I expect lunch is ready anyway.

END OF SEMINAR

*Transcribed, checked and contented by Dharmachari S2labhadra
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