

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 [Mitrans](#). 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

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

Milarepa and the Novices Seminar (The Yogi's joy)

Held at; 'Padmaloka'

In; July 1978

Those present: Ven Sangharakshita, Lokamitra, Sagaramati, Kulananda, Dhammarati, Mahamati, Andy Skelton, Dhammananda, Graham Steven, Vairocana,

Sangharakshita; Let's start reading round then.

(Text taken from 'Buddhist texts through the ages' edited by Conze.)

Kulananda; "In order to fulfill the command of his master, that chief lord of Yogis, the Holy Milarepa moved from Kyang-pen to Yolmo-Kang and settled in the tiger's cave of Singa-dzong in the forest of Singa-ling. From the very first the local deity of Yolmo was tranquil and displayed a beautiful form. She surrendered herself to his service and paid him the highest honours, so that his meditation prospered greatly."

S ; This might seem to be only introductory but actually quite a few important points do emerge. I take it that everybody has heard the name of Milarepa and that everybody in fact knows the story of Milarepa roughly. Who has read 'Tibet's great Yogi Milarepa'? Nearly everybody - good. So at least one knows from that that Milarepa as it were specialised in solitude and meditation and this was by the command of his master that is Marpa, the great teacher, the great translator Marpa who spent much of his time in India collecting Tantric texts and gaining initiations into them and with all this spiritual treasure or literary treasure, bibliographical treasure he returned to Tibet and those who've read 'Tibet's great yogi Milarepa' know that he was a rather tough character who gave his disciples or at least some of them a rather hard time, Especially he gave Milarepa a hard time because Milarepa had committed quite a number - we might even say sins - they weren't just faults because they'd involved killing quite a number of people by black magic, so in order to purify him of these sins Marpa had treated him in quite a tough sort of way and eventually told him to spend the rest of his life in solitary meditation in remote mountain caves. So this is why it is said, 'In order to fulfill the command of his master, that chief lord of yogins,' i.e. Marpa, 'the holy Milarepa moved from Kyang-pen to Yolmo-Kang and settled in the tiger's cave of Singa-dzong in the forest of Singa-ling.' So he's somewhere up on the Tibet/Nepal border in a very mountainous region inhabited by very few people and I suppose there were tigers there even because it mentions the tiger's cave, presumably a cave in which a tiger has lived at some time or other, therefore quite a fearsome and dangerous sort of spot. But what about this phrase, 'the command of his master'? The command of his master, that is to say his Guru, Marpa. What does one mean by command in this context? Can there be a command in this context? Didn't we say something about there being no power in the spiritual community. Presumably the guru wouldn't exercise any power. What does one mean then by command? Was it really a command?

: Is it a precept? [2]

S: Yes but if it was a precept why do you think the text says command. Can there be a command or can this word really be used in the spiritual context. If so what does it mean?

Dharmarati; Milarepa's taking his guru seriously and the guru is making certain recommendations. A guru's recommendation I suppose has some force.

S: It has the force of a command you could say, yes. Otherwise the guru can go on commanding till he's black in the face. It won't do much good. And you could say the guru's command is really the disciples' obedience. If the guru only suggests or hints or indicates sometimes that's taken as a command by the disciples. Marpa might even have simply said it might be a good idea for you to go and spend the rest of your life in mountain solitude. He probably didn't because we know he was rather apparently a peppery sort of character. He probably just said 'Off you go!' That was probably the way he spoke and Milarepa being Milarepa obeyed instantly. So it is in fact the receptivity as we may call it of the disciple that gives the force of a command to the guru's suggestions. The disciple doesn't feel them as a command. Do you see what I mean? In the group sense. Doesn't feel that the guru is exercising power over him but that he is simply pointing out what is best for the disciple.

So 'From the very first the local deity of Yolmo was tranquil and displayed a beautiful form.' So 'who or what is this local deity? Who are local deities? That is meant by that do you think?

Dharmarati; In Padmasambhava's story in Tibet he subdued the local demons. The forces of nature or something.

S: So what is a local deity or local demons? What does it suggest?

First of all what is it quite literally?

Sagaramati; The power in that area.

S: The power in that area. What sort of power. Natural forces? What sort of natural forces because it does say deity referring to a person, a being. It's a little bit like what we were talking about yesterday about the naughty chair. The 'impersonal' - inverted commas - is perceived as 'personal' - inverted commas. You live in a certain spot, you live in a certain area. You feel there a certain atmosphere which seems to convey the essence of the area, the essence of that particular spot and you feel that, you experience that as in some way personal. That's your deity, that's your local god. You may get sort-of deities associated with particular natural objects. You might get not just a naughty chair but a naughty or a good tree. You may remember in the Pali texts you're always coming across tree devatas, tree divinities and

sometimes they speak to the monks. Sometimes they tick the monks off. Sometimes they encourage them in their meditations. So it's as though primitive peoples have got a greater sensitivity to this sort of thing, not only a greater sensitivity to what we might call a particular psychic atmosphere of a spot but a greater [3] tendency to experience that in personal terms as a spirit, a god or a goddess, divinity and so on. So if one is speaking in terms of say the whole region you speak of the god of that region or you speak of the god of a particular tract of land, the god of a forest, even the god of a cave or shrine or the goddess. It's a sort of particular numinous atmosphere concentrated in to what you experience as a particular form or figure. You feel a sort of personal presence there without actually seeing anything or hearing anything. Has anyone ever had that sort of experience? You think there's some one here. you don't see any form. You don't hear any voice but it's some one not some thing but some one here. The primitive man seems to have been quite susceptible to that experience. He found himself in the midst say of a desert, there's some one here or when he found himself on the edge of a stream, there's some one here or in the midst of a forest, there's some one here and that's the local deity. So do you think there's anything in it objectively. What is it objectively do you think? One might say in more modern terminology the particular vibration as it were which is not just physical - it has a certain psychical quality. One can speak in terms of atmosphere. The primitive man, and I'm not using the word primitive in any disparaging sense at all, but primitive man experienced it in the form of deities it seems and therefore one has sort of primitive polytheism as it were which to us is now a sort of poetic convention merely. Nymphs and satyrs and pans and things of that sort but which primitive man actually experienced in that particular way. Some people do it even now. If you can get into a forest or find yourself by the side of a stream. There seem to have been also deities associated with towns. There's a story about the Buddha, I think it's in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, on his last tour before the Parinibbana, he came to the spot where subsequently (Apataliputra) was to arise, the modern (-Patna), the new capital of the Magadhan empire when Rajgriha had been deserted, and it is said that he prophesied that here a great city would arise because here there were powerful deities and where that particular kind of powerful deity congregated it seemed they incited men's minds to build. So it's as though there was a psychic atmosphere or there were psychic presences which the Buddha spoke of in these terms. Influencing human minds in that sort of way. Presumably other deities, other forces, other atmospheres, other vibrations might influence your mind more in the direction of meditation rather than in the direction of building towns and cities and palaces-and so on. But it's as though every particular place has its own psychic atmosphere and in that sense its own deities and therefore its own particular kind of influence on you. We all know that even in Britain there are spots with all sort of strange influences. Places like Glastonbury for instance. Explain them how one will but certainly there is something unusual there that can be felt or experienced by people but primitive tradition speaks in terms of local deities which is perhaps the simplest and most straightforward way of putting it. So that's point one but point two is that it that it seems to have been the Buddhist attitude to adopt a sort of friendly attitude towards the local deities. So what do you think that represents? That Padmasambhava subdued the local deities, the local demons. Demons in the sense of daemons not in the christian sense of demons or devils - powerful natural forces - subdued them. What does that mean? It doesn't seem a very friendly thing to do but that's just a more vigorous way of putting it. Actually it's quite friendly.

_____; Put their energy at -the service of the Dharma.

S: Put their energy at the service of the Dharma.

So this sentence says, 'From the very first the local deity of Yolmo was tranquil and displayed a beautiful form.' What do you think that suggests? That she was tranquil and displayed a beautiful form. What do you think tranquil means? It's as though the atmosphere of that particular place was propitious to meditation. One felt calm, one felt peaceful. The local deity of Yolmo was tranquil and displayed a beautiful form. Even more than tranquil. It was as though Milarepa saw something, saw a beautiful form. So if you see something really beautiful what sort of effect does that have on the mind? Calming tranquilising, energising. It makes the mind more joyful, more serene. So that's how he felt.

_____, In harmony.

S: Yes in harmony. It's as though the atmosphere of that whole place was in harmony with Milarepa's meditative mood -with his aspiration, his spiritual aspirations and he experienced this in a very vivid tangible sort of way. The text goes on to say even further, 'She surrendered herself to his service and paid him the highest honours so that his meditation prospered greatly.' So she surrendered herself to his service. It's as though one could say putting it in one way that the atmosphere of the place co-operated fully with Milarepa's aspirations. On the other hand one could say that his own attitude was such as to fully utilise the beneficial atmosphere of the place.

Sagaramati; I can go as far as accepting the atmosphere but it's the communication that I find (unclear)

S: I think it goes back to what I mentioned, that is to say that primitive people and people in general to the extent that they are primitive, again using this expression in a non-derogatory sort of way, tend to experience things personally. I used to wonder this quite a bit in connection with my friend Mr. Chen because he used to tell me endless stories of his own encounters with gods and goddesses and so on, including these local deities. One couldn't possibly doubt his sincerity. That was actually what he experienced. So it's as though some people are as it were psychically organised in such a way that that is how these things come to them. That is how they experience them. They literally see, not with their physical eyes but with their psychical eyes, their meditative eye, forms figures and even hear voices. This is how they experienced what we would describe as atmospheres and vibes which we experience more impersonally. Perhaps it is this sort of person that does tend to get on rather

well with meditation, certainly with meditation in a certain sense. They are sort of psychically sensitive and in addition to that they have this tendency to personalise everything and experience atmospheres and vibrations as we would say in terms of living personalities. In a way-like the child does. I think one should look at it like that. It's a particular type of perception, a particular way of perceiving. We don't usually

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have this. Certainly people who have been brought up in a very rational sort of way and maybe in an urban environment but primitive man seems to have it much more strongly just as children have it and some sort of psychically gifted people with this sort of psychical organisation. I used to give food for thought sometimes when I went to see Mr. Chen and he said, 'Ah just before you arrived such and such deity came and told me what I was to say to you.' He was completely sincere. I knew him well enough and I couldn't possibly doubt the truth of what he was saying- as his own personal experience howsoever one might evaluate it. It wasn't that he got that idea and put it in that particular way. No not at all. That was the experience he had quite clearly. He was perhaps the most extreme case of this kind that I've been closely associated with though I have known others too. These things were completely real to him, as real as the people that came to see him if not more real.

So she surrendered herself to his service, This is perhaps putting it a bit poetically and suggests Milarepa's own attitude. 'And paid him the highest honours'. There's-- a complete subordination of the atmosphere of that place to his particular meditative mood so that his meditation prospered greatly. Do you think this is really so. Leaving aside the question of local deities do you think that one's meditation does prosper particularly or specially or greatly on account of what we might call the psychic atmosphere of a place. Has anyone noticed this especially on solitary retreat? Different places have different atmospheres. Some are as it were good for meditation, others apparently not, at least not for oneself as one is at that particular time. Anyone have any particular experience.

Kulananda; Even just different shrine rooms in the movement.

S: Yes. In what way.

Kulananda; From my experience the shrine at Sukhavati gives me stronger meditations than the shrine at Vajrakula.

S: Well maybe there's a greater concentration of psychic energy because there are more people. This is not so much due to the local deities of Bethnal Green as the inmates of Sukhavati sitting and practicing there. I was thinking more of when you go off on your own

to some spot maybe in the country and you experience different psychic atmospheres.
Anyone noticed the atmosphere at Broomhouse especially when you get in among the trees.

_____ ; Yes, it's very nice.

S: Ah you see. What do you think about the local deities there? What do you think they are like?

_____, They remind me of those trees in 'Lord of the Rings' that move very mechanically
-in -large groups.

S: The Ents? [6]

: Yes the less evolved Ents.

S: Is it a good place for meditation sitting right in the middle of the trees on your own?
Aryamitra?; I never went into the forest. (laughter)

S: Well it would depend wouldn't it. If you were stvung minded and wanting to
overcome fear it would be a very good place to do that. Does anyone else have any
experiences?

_____ I tried doing some yoga there once. I was quite frightened of the forest.

S: I must say the first time I went there and also subsequently I had a distinct impression
that the trees were all angry. They were resentful trees. I concluded that it was because they
were planted so close together. It was just like people being congested in a city almost in a
tube train as it were. So it's as though the trees didn't have enough room and that therefore
they were in a somewhat negative frame of mind as it were. I hope I'm not being fanciful but
this is what I actually felt, that they were angry and also that they didn't like human beings.
They weren't pleased to see me. I got that impression quite definitely.

Sagaramati; With those aircraft it's like a dragon in the forest.

S: That's true. There's that also. Maybe they're constantly upset by the aircraft. It can't be good for their nerves.

Dharmananda; I went there last year and went in the forest alone and I was sitting chanting the 'Om Mani Padme Hum' and I felt very good and I was joined by a squirrel who played happily beside me. Maybe he was glad I'd come there

S: A positive vibration.

Kulananda; You can feel the woods down the road. As soon as you reach them.

S: They are very happy, certainly compared with those at Broomhouse. I sometimes think it must have made quite a difference to the lives of the Buddha's early disciples, that is to say the wandering monks, that they were living in the midst of nature all the time. Just walking through the forest or sleeping in the forest and having a hut in the forest and just coming out each day to beg at the nearest village. This must have made quite a difference to them psychologically so to speak. It's only in recent centuries that the earth as a whole has been relatively de-forested. A thousand years ago Britain was virtually one great forest with just clearings here and there. Just small towns and villages with tracks through the forest. Northern India in the Buddha's time was one great forest. The Maha (vanna) it was called - the great forest and is referred to as such in the Pali texts.

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So it must have made a difference to the sort of psyche of humanity generally, the fact that so much of the earth's surface is no longer forested in that way and that we no longer have the company of so many trees. Our ancestors lived surrounded by trees especially our primitive ancestors. Lived in them even very long ago but we've been quite recently taken out from the trees, from the forests. We don't have that sort of psychic companionship any more. I wonder what sort of difference that makes. I'm sure one feels differently living in the midst of thick or dense vegetation or near it.

_____, Something that's lacking in Brighton and the countryside surrounding it very much are trees.

S: One notices for instance in Manchester though it was a city there were so many trees. It seems to make some difference to the atmosphere not to speak also of the appearance of the place. One was never very far away from quite a few trees all the way through the city. The suburbs seem relatively full of trees, open spaces and parks with trees. Someone also mentioned coming from flora to fauna what a different experience it is living in some parts of Africa where still there are enormous flocks and herds of different kinds of animals and birds so that you feel the presence of nature in that form much more strongly. You see thousands and thousands of different kinds of birds in flocks, thousands and thousands of different kinds of deer and become very much aware of man as just one species among so many whereas usually the only animal species you see effectively is man, You see a few birds, a few insects, the odd horse, a few dogs and cats but the impression that one gets unconsciously is that man is almost the only species which is certainly not the case. Of course he has been on the increase over the last few centuries quite dramatically.. But in Africa I'm told one still has that sensation of man being just one animal among so many. There are so many others in existence, occupying quite a large slice of the environment in a way that they don't here. This surely gives one a different perspective and a different feeling. You feel yourself part of a whole complex of living things, not just you. So again this must have some difference on the psyche, on one's overall attitude- and feeling about life.

Alright let's go on to the next paragraph.

_____ ; "At that time five novices from the Mon-country came to seek instruction and said to him: 'By its very fearfulness there is an advantage in this place, for it is one that greatly prospers meditation. Has it so appeared to you, O Master?' In reply he sang this song, extolling the place and telling how meditation comes about:"

S: 'At that time five novices from the Mon-country came to seek instruction and said to him,' What does this suggest; that they've come to seek instruction. What does it imply?

_____ They'd heard about him but don't you think that's strange? He'd been living in that particular spot for months, perhaps for years all on his own but people had heard about him apparently in the Mon-country and five of them five novices - it's not clear whether they're novice monks or just novices in the sense of beginners in meditation but

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they'd come to seek instruction. So again what does this suggest? At the very least in a place like Tibet news travelled even by word of mouth very rapidly and very far indeed. One does in fact find this in regard to those matters in which people are interested or in which they are

concerned news really does get around very quickly indeed. Word of mouth I was told by a gentleman into advertising is still the best method of advertising. He was someone I met on the plane coming back from Helsinki a couple of years ago. He was American and inevitably we got talking - he was sitting next to me. I didn't particularly want to talk but then I thought well it's inevitable so I'd better accept it and make the best of it. But anyway it turned out to be quite interesting. He belonged to some extreme Protestant sect, we talked a bit about that but then it transpired that he was into advertising. He asked me what I was into so I told him and we talked about that. He was quite interested, especially in meditation and then we started talking about advertising in relation to religious activities and he asked me how people came along to the FWBO, what sort of advertising we had and what sort of results we found so I said that we still found that most of our regulars came along to the FWBO, to the Centres on the recommendation of a friend and that maybe 65% of our people come along in that way and he said yes, despite all our modern methods and techniques that remains the most reliable method of advertising. If you've got that, he said, your product is sold. (laughter). If you've got that he said, don't worry about techniques and campaigns. The word of mouth is still the best method of advertising. Someone's personal recommendation. There's nothing like that. So here from his point of view we're in quite a healthy state. Most of the people who came along came as the result of someone's personal recommendation.

So what do they say. 'By its very fearfulness there is an advantage in this place, for it is one that greatly prospers meditation.' Why should the place have been fearful?

_____, 'Because it was so lonely.'

S: Because it was so lonely yes. And maybe there were actual dangers there. After all he's staying in a tiger's cave perhaps there were tigers around or other wild animals. But nonetheless these novices say by its very fearfulness there is an advantage in this place for it is one that greatly prospers meditation. How could the actual fearfulness prosper meditation.

_____ 'It can help you overcome the fear.'

S: It can help you overcome the fear.

_____, 'It can keep other people away.'

S: It can keep other people away. Yes indeed. So they say, 'Has it so appeared to you oh Master?' 'In reply he sang this song extolling the place and telling how meditation

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comes about.'

_____ ; "I bow at the feet of my holy master.

It was by accumulated merit that I met with him.

And to this place, indicated by my master, I have come.

This joyous site of fields and hills within the land of Mon. A land of grassy slopes with flowers of many hues, With glades where fair trees dance ~nkesltheirsports, Where resound the many songs of birds And bees hover in their flight, Where day-in day-out a rainbow quivers, There Summer and Winter a sweet rain falls And Spring and Autumn a thick mist clings. It is in such a lonely place as this, That I, the yogin Milarepa,

Am joyous in the Clear Light of realis~ation of the Void,

Joyous exceedingly at its many ways of appearance, Joyous at its greatness of variety, Joyous with a body free of harmful karma, Joyous in confusion of diversity, Joyous midst fearful appearances,

Joyous in my freedom from that state where distractions rise and pass away.

Joyous e~ceedingly whereC:hardship is great, Joyous in freedom from sickness, Joyous that suffering has turned to be joy, Joyous exceedingly in the mandala of spiritual power, Joyous in the dance of bringing offerings, Joyous in the treasure of triumphant songs now uttered, Joyous exceedingly at the sounds and signs of multitudinous syllables, Joyous at their turning into groups of words, joyous in that sphere where mind is confident and firm, Joyous exceedingly in its spontaneous arising, Joyous at its manifestation in diversity."

S: So how does Milarepa find that particular fearful place? (Laughter) What does one notice about his description just as a description of the place?

_____ ; It's very beautiful.

S: It's very beautiful. From that point before you might have thought it was a very gloomy, terrible place like some remote corner of Norway or somewhere like that. Dark

and threatening but no Milarepa says 'This joyous site of fields and hills within the land of Mon.' Fields, what does that suggest? There are a few people there. 'A land of grassy slopes with flowers of many hues. With glades where fair trees dance and monkeys ply their sports, where resound the many songs of birds and bees hover in their; flight, etc., etc.' It's a very beautiful place but those five novices see it as fearful. Milarepa sees it as beautiful so what does this tell them? Why this difference. A difference in their mental state but what sort of difference?

_____ ; They see it as some sort of threat to their ego whereas he sees it as being conducive to

S: Perhaps they see only the loneliness. There may be fieldstut perhaps the presence of the human beings who cultivate those fields is hardly noticeable. It could be of course that there aren't any habitations there because sometimes in that area people have fields in remote spots and just go in the spring and sow and then come back in the autumn and reap. They may live miles and miles away but what impresses those five novices apparently is the loneliness and solitude of the place. That is what impresses them and that's why they experience it as fearful. They don't see the beauty because they're overpowered by the sense of solitude but Milarepa isn't oppressed by that feeling of solitude so he can see the beauty of it all which is actually there in a manner of speaking. So to them it is fearful because they take note more of the solitude, they feel that more in a slightly negative sort of way but he is quite free from that so he just sees the great - natural beauty of the place and can thoroughly enjoy it.

_____, Also he's in harmony with the local deities and vibrations and they're obviously not.

S: One might say it's a bit like someone going into an art gallery and when they enter the art gallery they find that they're the only person there so they're so oppressed by the sense of loneliness and solitude they can't even enjoy the beautiful paintings on the walls. They feel uneasy but somebody else who just cares about art would come in and not even notice that there were no other people around. In fact if he did notice he'd be rather pleased because he could just look at the paintings undisturbed and then he'd thoroughly enjoy their beauty not bothering about the absence of company because he was so absorbed in the paintings themselves. Maybe it's a little bit like that. So solitude to many people is terrifying and a solitary place is a terrifying place but not to some- one like Milarepa. And it comes almost as a surprise after that introduction to listen to Milarepa' 5 song and to realise what a beautiful

place it was where he was staying. Not bleak or barren or anything like that. Not dark or gloomy but really beautiful. But some people even find the ordinary English countryside a bit terrifying. If they have to stay in the midst of it all Of their own don't they? That's why they sort of congregate in caravan parks and camps to say nothing of these holiday camps and so on. So what is Milarepa's predominant mental attitude, his predominant mental state as he stays, as he lives in this place, the land of Mon? That's pretty clear isn't it. It's joyous.

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So first of all he describes how beautiful the place is. That's as it were objective. Then he describes how joyful he is, that's as it were subjective. So to them there is solitude, objectively and fear, subjectively but for him there's beauty objectively and

joy objectively. Joy of many kinds. Joy in many different ways. 'It is in such a lonely

place as this,' Yes he's not unaware that it's lonely but he doesn't experience the loneliness as a threat, 'that I the yogin Milarepa', that's what he is a yogi, 'am joyous in the clear light of realisation of the void.' What is this clear light of realisation of the void? What is the void? It's Sunyata. It's just the Mahayana and Vajrayana term for Ultimate Reality but what about clear light of the void. What does one mean by clear light of the void? It's a very common expression in this sort of literature, this sort of tradition.

_____ It's like it's not just a sort of black, negative practice....

S: Yes very much so. It's very living, very beautiful, bright. One can only compare it to light. But what about clear light and of the void? What is the difference say between ordinary light and the clear light of the void. There's a point at which the analogy breaks down.

_____ ; Ordinary light comes from a particular source but clear light is just there.

S: There's no particular source. It isn't coming from anywhere. In a sense it isn't going to anywhere. There's just light there. That light is clear. That is to say it is void. In it there's no subject from which it is coming, no object to which it is going. It's a state free from the duality of subject and object. This is why it is the clear light of the void. One shouldn't perhaps try to say anything more about it than that. 'Joyous exceedingly at its many ways of appearance.' What does that mean?

_____ The joy in the form which reality takes.

S: The joy in the form which reality takes. One can speak of clear light of the realisation of the void but one mustn't as it were think well it's light and not darkness. At once you're in the midst of duality. You can see that reality is not fixed to any one thing as it were, even an unconditioned thing. Usually we think in terms of things being this or being that and therefore we think of reality as being this or being that. You can speak of it in a manner of speaking as being this or that as the clear light of the void but you can't really tie it down in that way if you look at it, if you watch it as it were it assumes different forms, it's mobile, it's constantly changing, it's flowing, it transforms itself. 'So joyous exceedingly as its many ways of appearance, joyous at its greatness of variety.' What does it indicate, this fact that you are joyous at its many ways of appearance, joyous at its greatness of variety?

_____, You're not attached to one thing.

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S: Yes you're not attached to any one form. You don't try to hold it down in any particular form. You don't insist on the unconditioned being the unconditioned. If it changes into the conditioned as you watch it or look at it you may be surprised but you don't mind.

(laughter). You're pleased, you're happy you think how wonderful, how absurd as it were.

(Laughter) I thought it was the unconditioned but look it's turned into the conditioned as I look at it. It's rather like for instance if you were talking with someone under the impression that it was a man and he suddenly changed into a woman or something like that. It would upset all your ideas. (Laughter) and all your reactions. So it's rather like that.

Kulananda; It would really throw things out of gear if you insisted that he was a man.

S: Yes indeed then you start of course wondering what you are or who you are. It's subjective as well as objective. So this is where it links up with the craziness that we were talking about yesterday. The crazy person sees things differently from the way in which we do. Perhaps in some ways in the case of some crazy people at least they're right or at least not wrong. So in the case of the yogi who really has realised the clear light of the void when things change, when the void itself changes, when the clear light itself changes he's just joyous at its many ways of appearance, joyous at its greatness of variety. He doesn't insist that he should experience it only in a particular way or it should be as it were a particular

thing with a fixed rigid identity because this is a basic Buddhist teaching, that things have no Svabhava, no own being, no ultimate individuality of their own or essence which never changes. Everything is fluid, unfixed opened - in other words void. So if the void itself demonstrates its void nature by changing into something else well if you've really understood what the void means you shouldn't be surprised should you.

'Joyous with a body free of harmful karma.' What do you think that means? Presumably it means he's not suffering from any illness as the result of previous unskillful karma. 'Joyous with a body free of harmful karma' This is surely a great blessing, isn't it to enjoy good health, to be free from ailments when you're meditating or trying to meditate. 'Joyous in confusion of diversity' What does that mean? What is diversity confused by or confounded by or defeated by? Its opposite and what's its opposite? Unity. Not uniformity but unity. He's enjoying the diversity surely but there's also confusion of diversity, one which is there nonetheless.

Kulananda; Perhaps there's also the suggestion that he doesn't mind if it's all just confused. He doesn't need to impose order on it.

S: I don't think actually the English really means that. I think the word confusion is used simply in the sense of sort of cancelling out or combatting. So he doesn't mind that the void appears in many ways, he doesn't mind its greatness of variety. But he doesn't insist on it being various either. He's joyous in the confusion of diversity. If all the diversity suddenly resolved back into one thing, one reality without any

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diversity, he's joyous in that too. Let reality be as it wishes. He doesn't try to hold onto it in any form. Let it be one, let it be many, let it be void, let it be full. He doesn't mind. He remains joyous. He's got no fixed ideas about reality to which he insists that his experience of reality itself should conform. 'Joyous amidst fearful appearances'. He comes back as it were to the attitude of those five novices. To them certain appearances may be fearful, the loneliness, the solitude, the wild beasts but to him it isn't fearful. He's joyous in the midst of these fearful appearances. Perhaps it refers to meditative experiences too. Perhaps there are fearful apparitions of deities of various kinds but he's joyous in the midst of all those experiences. 'Joyous in my freedom from that state where distractions rise and pass away.' So what does this suggest? How many states does this suggest altogether from this particular point of view, from the point of view of distraction. It suggests first of all a state where distractions rise, distractions in the course of your meditation and don't pass away. Then it suggests a state where distractions rise and do pass away eventually. But he's come to a third state where there is a state of freedom from distractions rising and passing away. They don't even arise in other words not to speak of passing away. They don't have to pass away. So he's gone beyond that state where you get a distraction but after a while it passes away. Now he's in a state where there's no rising of distraction. He's reached a state of freedom

from the rising and passing sway of distractions and in that state of freedom he is joyous. So a very high state of meditation he.- seems to have attained.

'Joyous exceedingly where hardship is great.' That hardships might he be encountering? No food, no clothing, cold, wind, heat but joyous. 'Joyous exceedingly where hardship is great.' Milarepa doesn't do things by-halves.

'Joyous in freedom from sickness. That is also something to be thankful for.

'Joyous that suffering has turned to be joy.' You notice - I don't know whether the English really -does faithfully reflect the Tibetan here. It probably does - you notice he doesn't say joyous that suffering has turned into joy but joyous that suffering has turned to be joy. In other words there's not a change in the suffering from suffering to joy but a change in his mental attitude. The suffering goes on. He continues to experience the suffering but the suffering is now joy. He enjoys the suffering. Or even more than that yes the suffering is joy. That's his state, that's his experience now. He's hungry, it's a joyful experience to be-hungry. He's cold, it's a joyful experience to be cold. That's quite an advanced -realisation isn't it. But sometimes one can feel like that especially if you see the meaning and purpose of the suffering. Maybe you're enjoying it in a good cause. You can actually enjoy the suffering. You're glad that you're suffering because it means something, something very positive.

Mahamati(?): Does that suggest that in the enlightened mind there isn't so much an end of suffering.

S: To the extent that the enlightened mind is associated with the physical body there must always be the possibility at least of physical suffering. There can't be mental suffering any more. There can't be any emotional anguish any more but there can be physical

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suffering. If you cut your foot or your finger you'll suffer pain even though you're enlightened but your reaction to it, your experience of it in a way is not the same as that of the unenlightened person. 'Joyous exceedingly in the mandala of spiritual power.' What do you think this mandala of spiritual power is?. Do you think it has a specific meaning? It seems to refer to his meditative practice though we're not given any details of that. The particular, perhaps, visualisation that he is -doing. Perhaps he's visualising a whole mandala of deities and perhaps the name of this mandala is the mandala of spiritual power. Because then it says, 'Joyous in the dance of bringing offerings.' Who do you think are dancers?

_____, The dakinis.

S: The dakinis. It's as though in his meditation he's visualising a whole mandala of deities maybe with a Buddha in the middle and Buddhas at the four corners and Bodhisattvas in between and dakinis all around and then offering goddesses trooping in with their offerings. He's visualising all this and enjoying it all. So 'joyous in the dance of bringing offerings.' You notice he says joyous in the dance as though he identifies with it all. He is the mandala, he is all the Buddhas in the mandala, he is all the dakinis, he is all the beautiful goddesses trooping in with their offerings and presenting them. He's joyous in all these things. They're all his own experience or transformations of his: own experience.

'Joyous in the treasure of triumphant songs now uttered,' This could refer to songs uttered in- -the context of the puja, the visualisation or it could refer to the songs uttered now. In--other words his song to these five novices. He's joyous singing that song itself. It doesn't make any difference. People come, people don't come. He sings or doesn't sing, meditates or talks to them, he's joyous nonetheless.

'Joyous exceedingly at the sounds and signs of multitudinous syllables, joyous at their turning into groups of words, (Laughter) He's just watching it, all the experiences and the ideas. The words come out of his mouth and he's enjoying this, 'Joyous in that sphere where mind is confident and firm.' It is ~nconfident and firm because it doesn't change however much the outward experiences have changed. 'Joyous exceedingly at its spontaneous arising.' What do you think this means, that he's joyous exceedingly in its, presumably his mind's, spontaneous arising. What is this spontaneous arising of the mind? Is that the pure creativity of the mind. The mind has- become now purely creative rather than predominantly reactive with a little creativity intermittently. Whatever experience arises in dependance upon that arises something even more positive, something even more creative. So he's really got into the creative series of the mind and it's in that that its spontaneity consists. This is spontaneity. So 'joyous at- its manifestation in diversity.' The manifestation in diversity may of course be through these songs that he is singing. They're the manifestations of his spontaneously uprising or spontaneously arising mind. So this is the song that he sings. They must have been really surprised to get a song like that. But the essence of--his message is that Mon is really a beautiful--place and he's living there with a completely joyous mind unaffected by anything. So what does he say then.

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_____ "Let a present be given to mark this meeting of you faithful pupils with. so happy and contented a yogin."

So saying he initiated them and set them practising, and when the right Kind of perception arose in them, he was so pleased that he sang this song expres- sing the essence of good counsel:"

S: So he gives them a present. So what can he give them. What's he got? He hasn't got anything. He hasn't got anything material. He can't give them any food, he can't even give

them any tea, even Tibetan tea -or any biscuits. He says, 'Let a present be given to mark this meeting of you faithful pupils with so happy and contented a yogin. So saying he initiated them.' What does that suggest? What's the best present? The best present is the Dharma. This reminds me of a little experience of my own. I think some of you know that in 19~6 I was invited as one of fifty seven distinguished Buddhists from border areas by the Government of India to visit Delhi for the two thousand five hundredth Buddhajyanti celebrations so in the course of our travels we came to Benares and one of the other distinguished Buddhists from border areas who was a friend of mine a lay Nyingmapa Buddhist called Selong (T) took me into Benares. We went-on our own little tour to see a Tibetan Lama who was living there to learn Sanskrit. He was a very old man. He was over seventy and the Dalai Lama had wanted him to start teaching but he had told the Dalai Lama no he was far too busy learning,he hadn't finished his studies he said and he settled in Benares and he was studying Sanskrit. He wasn't an incarnate Lama he was an ordinary monk. I think his name was (Anyway we met him, found him at the top of a typical sort of, almost like a Hindu ashram, he had a little room at the top but it was quite bare. He was sitting down on the floor with a tin box in front of him. This tin box, little tin trunk served as his sort of desk and table and he had just a little text on this which he was studying. So we met and we talked and he was very very pleased to see me and we talked for about an hour and as we rose to depart he said, 'I really must give you something' He wanted to give me something. He looked around the room (Laughter) and there was absolutely nothing and I could see that he was almost desperate. There wasn't a single thing that he could give because he didn't have anything but he had his rosary so he broke his rosary and he gave me one bead and he said please take this I must have said many millions of mantras on it, it's all I have to give you. It's a little bit like this you see. Milarepa must have had absolutely nothing, maybe not even a rosary so all he could give was this song but in a way he gave the most valuable gift of all which was the gift of the Dharma.

'So saying he initiated them'. Presumably he gave them a tantric initiation. This might have taken some time. He explained the practice and he gave as it were his blessing to them, 'and set them practising, and when the right kind of perception arose in them, he was so pleased that he sang this song. This may -by the way have been months later. 'He was so pleased that he sang this song expressing the essence of good counsel:' What do you think 'the right kind of perception' indicates?

_____, That the practices that they are doing are actually changing the way that they

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see the world.

S: Yes. First of all there was an actual experience. Perception indicates a certain kind of experience and then the use of the word perception suggests that it had a sort of noetic element, an element of insight, an element of insight into reality that is to say. They started seeing things as they really were. 'He was so pleased that he sang this song expressing the

essence of good counsel:' Let's read this verse by verse.

"O Master, Buddha, Body of the Law,
Unfailing teacher of the way across,
Joy of living beings with your works of compassion,
Never parted from me, may you be my inspiration!

Now you practisers and learners of the doctrine who are seated here,
Though there be many ways of carrying out the holy law, The practice of this profound way is
the best.

When seeking to gain Buddhahood in one lifetime,
Do not make much of your likes and dislikes in this life. If much be made of them, you'll
practise good and evil
of all kinds,
And if you practise thus, you'll fall into an evil state.

When you are rendering service to your master, Do not boastfully make much of what you've
done, If you do, then master and pupil will come to disagreement,
And if this comes to pass, you'll not gain the aim of your intention.

When you are keeping vows and obligations,
Do not sleep amongst the village folk,
If you sleep with them, you'll develop false ideas, And if these arise your vows and
obligations will be lost.

When you are studying the scriptures,

Let there be no intellectual conceits.

If these exist the ashes of the five poisons will start to life.

And if these arise, your virtuous disposition will become confused.

And when you are practising in the company of a friend,

Let not your doings and affairs be many,

If the be man , ou'll distract our deep and virtuous intent

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And if this be distracted, the blessings of holy law will- cease.

When practising the rites that you've received as means, Do not use this power to vanquish demons, For if you- do, your own self will rise up as a demon, And if this occurs, the religious practice of the townsfolk will prevail.

And when spiritual knowledge has arisen,

Do not tell about your special powers;

If these be talked about, the language of secret signs

will slip away,

And if this is lost, the signs that mark the way~will lose

their value.

Abandon that which you know is wrong, Evil conduct and lying speech, Pocketing fees at funeral rites And giving advice that is sure to please. Do none of this.

Less indolence and exert yourselves!

S: So these verses represent Milarepa's 5 essence of good counsel to these five novices. In the first verse he says, 'Oh master, Buddha, Body of the

Law.' Who is he addressing--here?

_____ His teacher.

S: Yes his teacher Marpa because from the vajrayana - from the Tantric point of view - the guru is the Buddha, the Buddha at least so far as you are concerned. 'Body of the Law?'

_____; Dharmakaya.

S: Dharmakaya. He sees his teacher as the Buddha and therefore as the embodiment of the ultimate truth or ultimate reality. 'Unfailing teacher--the way across.' Across from where to where?

Kulananda; Conditioned to Unconditioned.

S: Conditioned to Unconditioned. Here you see at least the provisional dualism as it were even though dualism is certainly not the last word of the Tantras, of Vajrayana.

'Joy of living beings with your works of compassion.' What does this tell you about Marpa?

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_____; He's a Bodhisattva.

S: That he's a Bodhisattva as well as the Buddha as it were. In the Mahayana or in the Vajrayana Buddha and Bodhisattva are really alternative expressions. Buddha expressing as it were the more quiescent side of enlightenment and ~odhisattva the --more active side. 'Never parted from me may you be my inspiration.' There's a foot-note here, 'May you ever remain as my first jewel.' In other words on the top of my head or my inspiration. Pouring down inspiration on me. This almost suggests the guru yoga doesn't it. You imagine or visualise the guru on the top of the head and above him the gurus of the lineage right back.to the original transcendental source.

'Now you practicers and learners of the doctrine who are seated here, though-. there be many ways of carrying out the holy law, the practice' of this profound way is thebest.' What is this profound way? What is he referring to?

_____, The Vajrayana.

S: The Vajrayana. ~ertainly not in a narrow sectarian sense. The Vajrayana as opposed to the Mahayana or Hinayana. Vajrayana in what sense do you think?

Kulananda; The essence of the teaching.

S: The essence of the teaching but with what sort~.-of emphasis. What is the sort of hall-mark of the Tantra or the Vajrayana?

_____; A practical approach.

S: A practical approach. More than that even. An experiential approach and especially meditation. So this profound way means really the way of practice, the way of experience, the way of meditation, the way of actual transformation of oneself. 'Now you practicers and learners of the doctrine who are seated here. Though there be many ways of carrying out the holy law the practice of this profound way is the best.' Milarepa's not extolling the Vajrayana or the Tantric teaching in any sectarian way. He's simply saying practice is best, experience is best, meditation is best, this is the profound way.

_____ Would you say that is 'the characteristic of the Vajrayana. I was thinking of earlier on during the seminar it became fairly clear what the difference between the attitudes of the Hinayana and the Mahayana was.

S: Well originally the emphasis of Buddhism itself was just on practice, just on experience. This was the Buddha's own emphasis. If you like on meditation. But this became obscured with time and therefore the Mahayana arose partly as a reaction against that and partly to re-emphasise experience but the Mahayana itself it seems eventually became rather rigid, scholastic and therefore the Vajrayana arose to some extent - this is not the whole story, - the whole explanation - as a movement of reaction against that and a return to experience but a greatly enriched experience. Experience enriched by the preceding Hinayana and

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Mahayana. I mean the experience of the Vajrayana is not exactly the same as the experience of the Theravada even when the Theravada is experience. It does seem to be somewhat enriched. It does seem in a way to go further just as the Mahayana goes further and the Vajrayana of course even further than the Mahayana. It does seem as though there is something added. One gets a definite different flavour as one proceeds from the Theravada to the Mahayana, Mahayana to the Vajrayana. Even when the Theravada and the Mahayana both have their emphasis on experience. There still seems to be some~difference of flavour. Can you say or can you see what it is? There is a difference surely isn't there? Supposed you take some- thing like the Udana. Yes it deals with experience. Something like the Ratnaguna it deals with experience, something like the Songs of Milarepa, they deal with experience. They all deal with experience. In a way you get the Thera vada, the Mahayana, the Vajrayana all at their best, at their most pristine but there still seems to be a difference of flavour so in what does that consist. Can you define it or locate it or put your finger on it?

Sagaramati; It seems to be more like the imagination as opposed to the rational.

S: In which case?

Sagaramati; In th~ Vajrayana.

S: In the Vajrayana. Even as compared with the Mahayana?

Sagaramati; The Mahayana seems to tie in with not metaphysical in a loose sense but cosmic. The Vajrayana's got much more vividness and at the same time more emphasis on mind. Mind takes on a completely different level.

Graham Steven; It's more immediate than the mind.

Kulananda; In a way it's more earthed.

S: In a way it's more earthed but at the same time it's more transcendental if one could use that sort of expression. So in a sense one feels a definite progression doesn't one. As one moves from the Theravada to the Mahayana and then the Mahayana to the Vajrayana. It's as though the inner nature or the inner essence of Buddhism itself, the Dharma itself, is being more fully and more clearly worked out at each stage. Something is brought out more fully, more clearly, more vividly. It was all there in the preceding yantras but not brought out so completely. There at least in principle. I think we have experienced this before when we've gone from Theravada to Mahayana, Mahayana to vajrayana. I think this was the case on that mitra study retreat the year before last wasn't it. So the profound way is the path of the Vajrayana.

'When seeking to gain Buddhahood in one lifetime do not make much of your likes and dislikes in this life. If much be made of them you'll practice good and evil of all kinds. If you practice thus you'll fall into an evil state.' Buddhahood

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in one lifetime. So what does this mean? The highest goal attained now in this very~ life. So how does that compare say with the Mahayana?

_____ It's quite different. The Mahayana has got the tradition of innumerable kalpas of the Bodhisattva and slow progression towards

S: And what about the Hinayana?

_____ (unclear)

S: Classic Hinayana?

_____; (Up to stream entry that's seven lives)

S: No. No. There seems to be a bit of misunderstanding here you can't gain stream entry in this life but you don't have to wait. If you've become a stream entrant there will not be more than seven more lives before you gain enlightenment but you can go on to become an Arahant in this life. So it means that the ideal or the goal as far as the Hinayana is Arahantship in this life. This is in popular terms let us say, popular come classical terms. The goal of the Hinayana - Arahantship in this life, Nirvana for yourself in this life. The goal of the Mahayana - Buddhahood after innumerable lives as a Bodhisattva but the goal of the Vajrayana - Buddhahood in one lifetime. So it's as though the Vajrayana combines the Hinayana with the Mahayana. This life yes as in the Hinayana but not arahantship, Buddhahood as in the Mahayana. So in a way it's getting back to an earlier emphasis. The Mahayana developed its Bodhisattva ideal to an unprecedented extent but in a way it made the ultimate realisation rather remote. In the stressing the greatness of the Bodhisattva and the length of his career it put the goal so far ahead as to almost lose its significance. So the Vajrayana as it were brings it back and says Buddhahood in this life, that is Vajrayana, in the highest sense. This is Vajrayana in the sense of what is called the Anuttarayoga Tantra. It is said that it's only through the Anuttarayoga Tantra or the practices or methods of Anuttarayoga Tantra or Tantra in the highest sense that one gains Buddhahood in this life and in Milarepa's case we remember the situation was particularly urgent because he committed so many sins, to use that expression, that there were only two possibilities before him; to gain enlightenment in this life or to go to hell immediately after he died. He could only escape in that sort of way. So therefore he had to have recourse to the highest tantric teaching. In other words the most intensive spiritual practice. So this is the goal of the Vajrayana in the highest sense. Full enlightenment here and now so it as it were brings all Buddhist traditions back to earth with a bump. It's a bit like Zen in this way, yes it accepts the whole spirit of the Mahayana but that extrapolation of the Bodhisattva career in that way - I won't say it doesn't accept it but it telescopes it - it says as it were yes 'you do pass through all those stages but in the Tantra it's as though there are special methods which shorten it. You go through all those stages much more quickly. You don't take all those kalpas, you just take one life time. So it doesn't deny the letter

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of the Mahayana teaching but in effect it makes the goal, the ultimate experience more immediate. It brings it as it were nearer. In a way it does negate the Mahayana but not formerly.

Dharmarati; How is that different from the Arahant ideal. Is that not sort of dispensable almost to the Bodhisattva ideal?

S: Well don't forget that the Mahayana again was reacting against a rather narrow and restricted Arahant ideal. You could say not the real Arahant ideal as say taught by the Buddha and practised by his immediate disciples.

_____, Don't you also get in the Vajrayana the idea of the Buddha as a Bodhisattva who can sort of reincarnate in a way?

S: In a way you do but we must remember that in ancient India in a way they didn't have any idea of history or much idea about history or about evolution. So for instance supposing at the time of the Mahayana you became aware that the Arahant ideal was very narrow and restricted. You didn't have that evolutionary perspective in accordance with which you could say or understand that this is not what the Buddha actually taught but in the course of centuries this has become somewhat corrupted, it's become more rigid so we've got to get back to what the Buddha originally said. That possibility wasn't open to you whereas the evolutionary sort of mode of thought hadn't developed by that time so you felt that it was inadequate but at the same time it came to you as the Buddha's teaching so you had to regard it not as a degeneration but just as a sort of step, a provisional teaching actually taught by the Buddha and then add to it, in this case add the Mahayana as another stage. So in this way in the course of the unfoldment of Buddhism in India nothing was ever thrown away. It was never said this teaching is just a misrepresentation of what the Buddha said. Let's do away with it and get back to what the Buddha really said - that sort of historical consciousness was not there. They accepted even the limited rigid Arahant ideal as the Buddha's teaching but they classified it as a provisional teaching which only took you so far and then of course you had to get into the Mahayana so instead of going back they in a way went forward and the same again happened with regard to the Vajrayana and the Mahayana. They regarded the Mahayana in its now more rigid form not as a degeneration but as just provisional and that they had to go on further from that. So in a way the further you get away from the Buddha the closer you get back to him paradoxically but for us it's rather more difficult. So we're as it were lumbered with this whole Buddhist tradition. It's rather difficult for us because we've got in a way the unfoldment of Indian Buddhism at least through the three yanas but we've also got our own sort of historical perspective, we can see how Buddhism developed and then degenerated and then had to be revived. We can't see Buddhist history in the orthodox Indo-Tibet terms which makes it rather awkward for us in a way. We have to sort of generally reconstruct or just take what ever helps us from whatever source, from whichever yana or any other source, but you see what happens. So in a way you could say that the

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Theravada in its early pristine stage as represented to some extent - say by the Udana in the Sutta Nipata, the Mahayana in its pristine stage represented by the Ratnaguna. Again the Vajrayana in its pristine stage as represented in India by the songs of Saraha and in Tibet by the songs of Milarepa - these are all very close together even though with different emphases and different flavours because they all stress experience, they all stress practice, they all stress meditation. So in a sense we can go back to the beginnings of all the yanas. It's the further developments, the elaborations and paterfactions of all the yanas equally that are not so useful and so acceptable to us. In fact the scholasticism and ethical rigidity of the Theravada are not acceptable to us. The scholasticism of the Mahayana is not acceptable to us and the scholasticism as it eventually became of the Vajrayana. One mustn't regard the Vajrayana as

historically speaking purely a

matter of experience and practice. As far as I can see in Tibet the Vajrayana developed a sort of scholasticism which even became quite remote from actual practice. It's the sort of ritualism in the narrow sense. You can spend your whole life taking initiations which you never practice. I've met people who've had hundreds of initiations but might not have practised any of them. They're supposed to be initiations empowering you to practice and then a special tantric scholasticism classifying the different initiations and analysing them and cataloguing them and all that sort of thing. It may be the Tantra in a sense but it's not the real Tantra. So just because it's Tantra nowadays as regards say modern Tibetans, it doesn't mean it's necessarily experiential. There's a theoretical emphasis on experience but so is there in other yantras too. Buddhism never loses that experiential emphasis even though sometimes it is merely theoretical. So when you have say professor so and so giving you long lectures on the tantra it's just as much theory as when you have professor so and so giving you long lectures on the Abhidharma or Yogachara philosophy. The fact that he's lecturing on the Tantra doesn't make it any more a matter of experience but some of them seem to think so.

_____, Can you say a bit more about the Anuttarayoga Tantra. (Laughter)

S: Not really no. The Tantra generally is divided into four, four classes. There's first of all the Kriya tantra and then there is the () Caryā, then there is the Yoga tantra and then the Anuttara yoga tantra. I've gone into this in lecture on tape but it represents a sort of progression. It's said that in the case of the Kriya tantra the emphasis is on ritual; in the case of the () Caryā it's equally on ritual and meditation. In the case of the yoga it's mainly meditation and in the case of Anuttarayoga tantra well it's said you can't really say anything at all. It's there -that the Mahamudra or Ati Yoga practice or the direct application some times it is said of the teaching of Sunyata, the direct application of that to one's daily life. This is the Anuttarayoga tantra. It is actually with this that Milarepa is concerned in its Mahamudra form. Mahamudra being the tradition of the Kagyupas and the Ati yoga that is the Nyingmapas but the two roughly correspond.

Dharmarati; The return to an emphasis on the Buddha maybe suggests then abandoning the

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rest-of-the sentient beings to samsara. Does it sort of move away from the Bodhisattva ideal?

S: No because the Buddha is also the Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva then representing the dynamic ideal. In other words in the case of the tantra this whole dichotomy of individualistic and altruistic has been overcome. You could say that in the Hinayana

popularly presented there's an emphasis on individualism at the expense of altruism. In the Mahayana popularly presented there's an emphasis on altruism at the expense of individualism. It is as though in the Vajrayana the two have become one, balanced and blended. So the Buddha is the Bodhisattva. In aiming at Buddhahood you're not forgetting Bodhisattvahood. Even though you aim at Buddhahood in this life your aim is to benefit all beings. So 'When seeking to gain Buddhahood in one life-time' - the highest possible spiritual objective - 'do not make much of your likes and dislikes in this life.' So what does this suggest? When you make much of your likes and dislikes what are you under the power of?

_____, Greed and hatred.

S: Greed and hatred or in more general terms

_____; The ego.

S: The ego or in more general terms Duality. Likes and dislikes implies duality so is Buddhahood a sort of dual state or state of duality. NO it's the state of non-duality par excellence. So if you're seeking to gain Buddhahood in one lifetime and Buddhahood is a state of non-duality on the highest level, non duality of wisdom and compassion and if you are initiated by likes and dislikes which strengthen all the time your sense of duality are you very likely to be realising Buddhahood in this life? Very unlikely indeed. So if one is seeking to gain Buddhahood in one lifetime do not make much of your likes and dislikes in this life.' That's in a way the shortest and quickest and easiest way. Oh I like this, I don't like that, I'll do this but I won't do that, I'll have coffee but I won't have tea.(Laughter) This strengthens duality. Do you see what I mean. Likes and dislikes are something rigid and fixed. There sort of ultimates that can't be transgressed. Supposing just for the sake of example you ask for tea there's nothing wrong with that, prefer tea by all means but supposing by mistake you get a cup of coffee, what's the test. If you quite happily and cheerfully drink that cup of coffee well that's alright. Even though you normally take tea you're not really enslaved by duality but if you get upset and disturbed well clearly you are bonded to duality, you're attached to your particular likings and dislikes. People have all these sort of funny silly little likes and dislikes. They must inherit it from childhood. I don't like parsnips, I never eat parsnips or I never eat my crusts, I don't like crusts. I don't like anything even slightly burned. What does it matter if your bread is just slightly burned eat it all the same, it doesn't matter. It's good for you anyway - carbon. (Laughter). Or I don't like the rain etc. Most of our life is riddled with likes and dislikes most of the

time. Liking and disliking certain people. I like him, I don't like him, I like her, I

don't like her and so on. Our whole sort of ordinary daily life is a veritable sort of net of these likes and dislikes and to the extent that we adhere to them we strengthen duality and to the extent that we strengthen duality we remove ourselves from Buddhahood. The mind is reactive, the dualistic mind is the reactive mind. The reactive mind is functioning all the time in the midst of this pattern of likes and dislikes or web of likes and dislikes not the creative mind. The creative mind will make a mess of them. Even when we get things that we as it were dislike rather than things that we like. So if we reflect and we realise that our whole life is sort of riddled with likes and dislikes of a very petty nature. We like apples but we don't like oranges and when we get an orange we won't eat it and get quite disgruntled and quite displeased if it isn't an apple. What does it matter. People bother and fuss about these things.

Sagaramati; How practical is that for us.

S: If you do have preferences it doesn't matter but you mustn't attach too much importance to your preferences so that when it happens that your preferences are not regarded or are ignored you don't get upset or don't bother.

Sagaramati; But couldn't we even say you can dismiss your preferences.

S: But in a way you can't help having preferences. They might depend to some extent on your constitution. When there's some divergence from your preferences or when your preferences can't be satisfied or met with it shouldn't upset you. You should just accept the situation. Just for once you accept coffee instead of tea. Just for once you get an orange instead of an apple. YOU mustn't be rigid about the things or insistent on your likes being fulfilled or your dislikes respected because they're usually so subjective and the more subjective the less right in a way you have to them and as I said very often they stem from childhood. They're basically infantile. It's little habits you've got into. They don't really deserve any respect. If someone says I just want tea well give him tea by all means but if it happens that he gets something else he shouldn't be upset but just drink it and enjoy it. If it's of course a matter of genuine principle that's another matter. If you are genuinely say tee-total and someone gives you a glass of wine you are right in refusing that but even so you shouldn't get upset. It's not really a question of a like or a dislike.

_____ () what about taste in music and art?

S: There is at the same time a difference in values. One could look at things from the opposite point of view, for instance supposing you like classical music and supposing somebody else doesn't and they think it's dreadful then you might try to say 'it's just a matter of taste, you like classical music, I don't. Classical music is no better than any other kind of music or even no better than any kind of noise.' He denies a higher degree of sort of aesthetic values. Do you see what I mean? 'My taste is as good as yours.'

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But that rather sort of confuses the issue, that way of thinking.

_____ ; Couldn't the same apply to this drink business. Coffee is a more aesthetic drink than Barleycup. (Laughter).

S: Would that aesthetic really be applied to drinks in that sort of way. Some people think wine is more refined than beer don't they. There's a wonderful story in the life of Swinburne. How Watts-Dunton got Swinburne off drink. Swinburne was very much given to brandy. Watts-Dunton his sort of guardian and protector, knew that just to say that brandy was killing him wouldn't produce any impression at all on Swinburne so one day he was with Swinburne and Swinburne was going to have some brandy apparently and he said, 'Algernon I can't understand that a poet like you should drink brandy, it's not really a drink, it's just alcohol, it's just a chemical, it's not the sort of thing a poet should drink. A poet should drink port. Rich red ruby wine is inspiration. As a matter of fact I've just got some really good port. Just the thing to inspire you.' In that way he got him onto port and off brandy. After a while' apparently he did the same thing with port. He said Port is much too thick and heavy for a poet. You want something light, airy and sparkling' and he got him onto something else. I forget what it was. After a while he said this isn't the stuff. This stuff comes from France, a British poet should drink something British, something born of the soil (Laughter) Nothing can beat British ale. So in the end Swinburne was down to a small bottle of ale per day (laughter) and he didn't realise what had happened. (Laughter). He no longer was a confirmed brandy drinker and lived another thirty odd years instead of dying within maybe a year or two. I thought this was an excellent example of upaya kausilya - skilful means but it shows the way you can look at these things and the different ways in which you can evaluate them. He sort of established a scale of values as it were with ale at the top until Swinburne ended up just a pint of ale with his lunch and that was that. He didn't realise what had happened but if Watts-Dunton had said Algernon it's bad for you you should stop it, that would not have worked. He had to appeal to his sense of values, his aestheticism. But there is a difference between taste in the sense of liking and disliking - taste or a liking for coffee as opposed to a taste or a liking for tea; there's a difference between that and taste or liking in the sense of what we'd call aesthetic taste. We can recognise degrees of value. For instance some music is more music than other so one can't regard let's say aesthetic judgement as merely a matter of taste in the sense of all being equally good or equally valid and say all works of art have got the same value, all music has got the same value etc., etc., There's no sort of hierarchy - one can't really say that.

If you investigate it might transpire that one was the more refined drink than the other and therefore more suited to the spiritual person but we usually proceed from the basis of purely subjective likes and dislikes which have got nothing to do with an objective spiritual evaluation. It's that sort of basis which is inimical to the development of the creative mind and spiritual life generally.

_____ That's the way in which a lot of people regard () isn't it. A
matter of

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S: Yes. Personal taste. Your taste compared with my taste and that therefore no one kind of music is better than any other kind. If you say switch off that awful noise you're just expressing your personal dislike of that kind of music.

_____; In a way that's treating music as a sensation rather than something you can....

S: Rather than as an art form.

_____, Maybe some people seem able to combine both. (One talks about the spiritual quality of music but that can be seen as just purely subjective.)

S: Well it's subjective in the sense that it is related to a particular kind of sensitivity but it's objective in the sense that there is an objective hierarchy of degrees of mental development and therefore of mental sensitivity, spiritual sensitivity.

There are a number of people who talk about that's my taste and not yours.

S: Well they're afraid of sticking up for themselves. 'I like meditation rather than getting drunk, well that's just my personal preference.' Well this is absolute capitulation

in the () generally as it were. The really weak kneed approach. If one is into it in that sort of way then they're really not into it at all in a manner of speaking.

Sagaramati; People always say in(certain things you're better than me) and sometimes I say well yes. (Laughter)

S: I'm trying to be. It's a bit like the story of the psychoanalyst or psychiatrist who said that a lot of people came along saying that their problem was that they felt they were inferior and he said well that wasn't a problem at all. They were inferior(Laughter). The problem was that they were unable to accept the fact that they were inferior. But again people resenting what they imagine to be one's attitude of superiority to them is a sign of the complete absence in our contemporary life of the ideal of what we call the spiritual hierarchy. It is not a hierarchy of power but it is certainly a hierarchy of levels of (thought) aliveness and creativity. Shakespeare is better than (

). Beethoven is better than the Beatles. (Laughter) In a way it doesn't matter if you say the Beatles are better than Beethoven because that means that in principle you do accept a hierarchy. If you say it doesn't matter it's just your taste that you like Beethoven or my taste that I like the Beatles or vice-versa it's there that the (unclear). You could say I don't mind it being proved that you are better than me but what I do mind is that saying that one is equal; one is the same. I'm quite happy to admit that I am not so good as you are because my principle is still preserved and maintained. The principle being the spiritual hierarchy. It's not my principle that I'm better than you. My principle is that some human beings are better than others. It may be in this particular instance that you are better than me or I am better than you. I don't mind or

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I do mind but it's a recognition of that principle.

_____, When you argue along those lines then you have to define what is good and what is bad.

S: Yes though it's good and bad in rather a crude sense in this context~ It's a question of overall degree of development. Development in terms of consciousness, creativity and so on. Awareness, responsibility, whatever else makes up the individual. Better means more of an individual, worse means less of an individual. (Once they're enlightened it won't really) matter being an individual in that sort of way. A non-individual is just as good as an

individual and then you have to argue that point (pause) which shouldn't be too difficult. Anyway back to Milarepa.

'When seeking to gain Buddhahood in one lifetime, do not make much of your likes and dislikes in this life. If much be made of them, you'll practise good and evil of all kinds, and if you practise thus you'll fall into an evilstate.' If you allow your life, if you allow your practise, your thinking to be dominated by your likes and dislikes you'll just fall into confusion.

'When you are rendering service to your master do not boastfully make much of what you've done.' What's the principle here do you think? What is this a special case of? What sort of thing?

Dharmarati; People appropriating skilful things.

S: Yes. Rendering service to your master or performing any other skilful action is good but if you boastfully make much of it then to that extent it ceases to be skilful. The ego appropriates it. So why do you think it is sometimes people boastfully make much of what they've done even when it is skilful. It's very often because they want a pat on the head, they want recognition, they want praise. They're not satisfied as it were with simply performing the skilful action. So here in particular, in the case of the relationship between the disciple and the master the disciple shouldn't boastfully make much of what he's done for the master. 'If you do then master and pupil will come to disagreement.' How can this happen?

He won't give you a pat on the head.

S: He won't give you a pat on the head and you'll get disappointed and disgruntled and think he doesn't appreciate you and you might become sullen etc., etc. 'And if this comes to pass you'll not gain the aim of your intention.' That's obvious. This is just plain common sense of life on the part of Milarepa.

_____ Why do people look for approval?

S: Why do you think they look for approval whether from the master or from anybody else?

Apart from the general need of ego-recognition as it were.

Sagaramati; It seems to them that the act isn't enough in itself.

S: Yes the action isn't enough in itself. It's almost like a lack of confidence in what he's done- The desire for general approval seems to be a symptom of general lack of self confidence. You can't approve yourself. In a way also you can't feel you've done something right until someone else tells you or- recognises what you've done. I think one has to be very careful in this sort of way, this sort of situation because very often you'll do things not because you really feel that they are right but in order to get approval and this of course is where the good comes in or another person becoming a sort of group member as it were not an individual.

'When you are keeping vows and obligations do not sleep amongst the village folk.' What sort of situation does this envisage? Keeping vows and obligations usually the practice or the tradition is that when you take up Tantric practice you take certain vows or undertake certain obligations of a spiritual nature. For instance that you will do the practices three times a day - something of that kind so in the Vajrayana great importance is attached to the strict observance of one's vows and obligations undertaken at the time of Tantric initiation. This is just a reflection within the Vajrayana context of a general Buddhist principle.' When you are keeping vows and obligations that is to say when you are observing a particularly strict form of practice or a particularly intense form of practice or when you're practising in a particularly intense sort of way, 'do not sleep amongst the village folk,' What is the sort of scene envisaged. That you are perhaps living in a hermitage, living in a small monastery getting on with your practice but you have perhaps to go from the village, to the village from time to time, perhaps you have to go for food; perhaps someone invites you to give a talk; perhaps you have to go and perform a funeral ceremony but you shouldn't sleep there. What does that suggest? Go there, do what you have to do and then come back to the monastery. Don't get involved in the village life. Don't stay overnight. Don't sleep there. Do you see what I mean. This is quite important in a general sort of way. Return to your base. If you are for instance staying in a community you have to go out for some purpose, maybe to see some people, see some friends, don't get sort of involved - assuming it isn't some other spiritual community - don't stay overnight. Come back even if it means coming back quite late. Come back to your own base, come back to your own spiritual community.

Sagaramati; That's () because if you get up in the morning and you're not in the same house (You don't want to sit do you????)

S: Especially a worldly house. 'If you sleep with them you'll develop false ideas,' This means

if you stay overnight it's not the actual sleeping that does the harm, maybe that's the least harmful part of all because you're asleep. It's living with them on a more extended basis, in a more extended sort of way. If you sleep with them, that is

to say if you live with them, if you associate with them you'll develop false ideas. How or

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why is this? Their ideas, their ideals will rub off onto you. You'll start thinking as they think, behaving as they behave. So when you are keeping vows and obligations, when you are trying to live and practice in a spiritually more intensive sort of way, do not sleep among the village folk. Do not live with people who are not practising in the way that you do and do not really effectively share your ideals. If you have any dealings with them at all or have to have any dealings do what you have to do and then come back to your own place, your own hermitage, your own monastery, your own spiritual community. Because if you sleep with them, if you stay with them for any length of time you are bound to be affected by their particular attitudes and if these arise, that is to say if false ideas arise, 'your vows and obligations will be lost.' Your more intensive practice of the Dharma will be forsaken. This is just again plain straightforward advice. It can be taken literally, it can be taken metaphorically. Return to your practice as soon as you've finished doing what you had to do. Get back to your practice especially if you're concentrating on meditation practice. As soon as you've finished eating, digested your food, get back to your meditation. As soon as you've finished talking with someone who came to see you get back to your meditation. That's in a more specific sense but in the broader sense, well maybe you have to go into town to do a bit of shopping but don't linger, don't stay overnight, don't start staying there, come back to your monastery or your spiritual community as soon as you are outside. You're not yet a bodhisattva. Don't forget that. This is what it's saying in fact. They will have more effect on you than you will have upon them. This seems to be a golden rule for people living in spiritual communities. Unless it's some other spiritual community don't stay overnight. Unless of course in duly mindful fashion you're going to some distant place for some definite positive purpose. Then maybe you can just stay on your own overnight. You still don't have to associate with people for any length of time. It sounds rather anti social doesn't it but you just have to be anti social for a while. If you want to develop your practice and really get on with things. You can wish others well.

In some ways I'm not sure about that. When I started practising a few years ago I didn't go to parties very much after that.

S: You say not going to parties even but it's the staying overnight that is mentioned here.

A very loyal close friend of mine used to resent this. He accused me of being anti social. If I'd gone to parties with him I wouldn't have had any contact with him there at least any positive contact. I think that's a sort of accusation that people can ~ake....

S: They think that a party is really social. I remember my last experience of a party. I think it was my first also - in 1970 in Berkeley College at Yale when I was over there. Some of my students invited me to a party so I thought well let me go and see. So there was a suite - of rooms belonging to two or three students. They lived quite well at Berkeley College. So these were sort of decorated for the occasion. The three rooms were

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hung with sort of () and they put red shades over all the lights so there was a sort of dull red glow throughout the whole place and there was lots of drink of course and people smoking this and that so I didn't come ~round till about eleven o'clock by which time I felt it would have got nicely warmed up and be sort of rather lively and bright and friendly so (Laughter) when I entered this place - it looked quite dark and I had to blink in these dull red lights - and there were people sort of hunched on the floor sitting back against the wall looking quite morose and puffing away and no-one seemed to be talking to anybody else and no one seemed very friendly. One or two were drifting around and some others were drifting off but everyone looked really quite depressed and there was music in the background. Well not background it was so loud that you couldn't have talked anyway even if you'd wanted to. No one seemed to be enjoying themselves. People were drinking quite heavily and there was a lot of drink but no one seemed happy, no one seemed to be having any fun so I tried to get talking with two or three people but it was so difficult with that sort of noise but that was the sort of thing that you had at parties and you couldn't ask them to turn it off. (Laughter). There were about twenty to thirty people sort of stuck there and most of them stuck there until about two and then the whole thing sort of collapsed. Some people literally collapsed where they were and just slept there until the morning and that was the party. I thought there might have been some dancing but no there was no dancing or anything like that. People sitting round in a sort of stupor drinking. Some of them smoking, there was no ~rn conversation or anything like that. I don't know what it's like in England but that was how it was there at Yale, Berkeley college. So certainly there was no sociability. I imagine even a sort of lively party also there's no sociability or real human communication. So don't let people get away with the accusation of being anti-social.

In a way you're more prepared to communicate with people properly.

S: Yes. So' when you are keeping vows and obligations do not sleep amongst the village folk, If you sleep with them, you'll develop false ideas and if these arise your vows and

obligations will be lost. When you are studying the scriptures let there be no intellectual conceits. If these exist the ashes of the five poisons will start to life and if these arise your virtuous disposition will become confused.' See what's he warning the novices against here? A sort of purely academic study. I'm recently going through the typescript of Dr. Conze's memoirs and he gives so many examples of this sort of thing. The way in which one can only say the five poisons are really starting to life in the case of various academics allegedly concerned with Buddhism. So 'when you are studying the scriptures let there be no intellectual conceits.' How can this intellectual conceit arise? With regard to what sort of scriptures is it most likely to arise? Something advanced, something esoteric, something Zen like, something Tantric like. You think that you've got something really very advanced or really very esoteric. You think you've understood it, you're a cut above ordinary Buddhists. Just devout Buddhists who just practice the precepts and practice meditation, you think you're a cut above them. You've understood it all. You regard yourself with authority. You become quite haughty, quite

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snooty. A mere Buddhist has got no right to say what Buddhism is. You know what Buddhism is. You've understood it all. You're the great pundit, you're the authority and if you have this sort of attitude then the ashes of the five poisons, that is to say delusion, wrath, passion, envy and malignity will arise and one really sees this in the case of many purely academic scholars. 'And if these arise your virtuous disposition will become confused.' even if you have a virtuous disposition to begin with.

'And when you're practising in the company of a friend, let not your doings and affairs be many, if they be many they'll distract your deep and virtuous intent and if this be distracted the blessings of holy law will cease.' Here the situation envisaged is of say two people living in a hermitage in a sort of diadic retreat let us say, not a solitary retreat, a diadic retreat. That is to say just two people staying and practising together which is quite a good arrangement sometimes but do not let your doings and affairs be many. Don't spend all your time chatting and cooking together and all that sort of thing if you are on a diadic meditation retreat. 'If your doings and affairs are many you'll distract your deep and virtuous intent and if this be distracted, the blessings of holy law will cease.' If you go away for a holiday fair enough, go away on holiday but if you go away with this one other person for a meditation retreat then be careful, don't let your doings and affairs be many. Again it's quite simple, straightforward practical advice.

'When practising the rites that you've received as means, do not use this power to vanquish demons for if you do, your own self will rise up as a demon, and if this occurs the religious practice of the townsfolk will prevail. Here what he seems to have in mind is magic, a rather sort of magical symbolism. The Tantra took over

a great deal of magical symbolism, for instance it took over things like the four great

rites. There's a rite for instance of destroying, the rite of pacifying, the rite of fascinating and the rite of (). So the Tantra gave all of these a symbolical meaning for instance the rite of destruction. This was a rite for the destruction of enemies, the destruction of demons and so on. The Tantra took it over from ordinary magical practice and gave it a spiritual

meaning, destruction of egotism, destruction of the defilements. So supposing you'd been initiated into the Tantra and initiated into this sort of ritual in its purely spiritual significance then you shouldn't start employing it in the more literal sense for the benefit of worldly people and their worldly ambitions and desires as it were. 'When practising the rites that you've received as means' that is to say when practising the magical rites that you've received in a spiritual sense as a means of your own spiritual development do not use this power to vanquish demons, do not use those rites in the literal magical sort of way as a kind of trade or business. 'For if you do your own self will rise up as a demon' in other words you become intensely egotistical and if this occurs the religious practice of the townsfolk will prevail. It envisages two possibilities. You have these magical rites, you can either practice them for the sake of your own spiritual advancement in the symbolical sense or you can practice them literally for the sake of other people and the fulfilment of their worldly ambitions and desires as a sort of trade, as a kind of village priest, but if you do that then your religious practice will literally be selfish. Just use your magical practice as ordinary folk. Do you see the difference. There were one or two cases of something like this among

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the ex-untouchables when you got people going round who'd been sort of ordained as monks and administering refuges and precepts and converting people for a price. I heard of a few cases of this sort. So there's a parallel there. Do you see. So instead of say performing the ritual, meditating on its symbolical meaning say in the instance I gave, the destruction of your egotism you perform it for the benefit of other people to destroy their enemies or something of that sort and you get a fee for that and you set up in a sort of business in that way. This religious practice of the Tantra gives a sort of religiosity that I was talking about some days ago in connection with ordinary Indians, that they're not genuinely religiously or spiritually minded but they believe~ in they have a sort of belief in the efficacy of magical means for securing material objectives. This is not really religion in the sense of spiritual life. So that's the religious practice of the

townfolk, using magic to fulfill worldly ambitions. But if you are not careful, you, the five novices you'll use the rite that you've received as means to enlightenment in that sort of way. There is that danger. This has certainly happened in Tibet on a widespread scale. That is the old Tibet though of course in the case of quite a few people the spiritual significance of the rite, the spiritual use of them was kept alive but for the average Tibetan a Tantric initiation meant a sort of blessing to help him gain prosperity and well being generally.

'And when ~piritual knowledge has arisen do not tell about your special powers; If these be talked about the language of secret signs will slip away, and if this is lost the signs that mark the way will lose their value.' What sort of telling, what sort of talking is Milarepa having in mind? Does he mean that you shouldn't even communicate these things to fellow disciples? Does he mean that? You shouldn't boast about them because that suggests egotism. So 'if they be talked about the language of secret signs will slip away.' What do you think that means? No doubt there is a sort of technical sense here but in a more general way what does it mean? If your spiritual powers are talked about, if your special powers are talked about, the language of secret signs will slip away. What does this language of secret signs represent?

_____; That you obviously value the whole teaching.

S: Yes but more specifically than that. What do these special powers suggest? What sort of things are () Possibly some form of telepathic let us say just by way of example. If you talk about these things the language of secret signs will slip away what does that mean? So what does telepathy suggest? It suggests a high degree of sensitivity psychic sensitivity but if you talk about these things in a boastful way the language of secret signs will slip away. You'll lose that sensitivity because the language of secret signs is a sort of subtle language. You can only speak that subtle language if you operate in a subtle sort of way. You'll lose your subtlety, you'll lose your refinement. If you talk about those sort of things in a gross, that is to say a boastful, way making a kind of exhibition of yourself. 'If this is lost the signs that mark the way will lose their value' because they will have been sort of prostituted, they'll no longer be signs that mark the way they'll just be signposts of egotism. I don't think this is meant to inhibit communication within the spiritual community but certainly vulgar boasting and making an exhibition

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of whatever one might have achieved or experienced.

'Abandon that which you know is wrong, Evil conduct and lying speech, pocketing fees at funeral rites and giving advice that is sure to please. Do none of this. Less indolence and exert yourselves!' So what sort of life at this stage does Milarepa seem to envisage them as possibly going to lead? It seems as though they've heard about him, they've searched him out, they've had some spiritual experience. It's though they haven't fully committed themselves and the likelihood is that they'll go back, they'll go down as it were, and live as sort of village priests and Milarepa is therefore saying abandon that which you know is wrong, evil conduct and lying speech, pocketing fees at funeral rites - They're just celebrating funeral rites for the sake of the money and giving advice that is sure to please. Ingratiating yourself with the lay supporters by giving them the sort of advice that they will like. Do none of this. Less indolence and exert yourselves! Do you notice a difference between the two songs that we've gone through this morning? The first song is on a very much higher level. Here Milarepa is just giving expression to his own experience but here in the second song he's giving advice suited to the situation of these five novices and it looks rather as though~~at this stage,he is expecting them just to go back and just function within a context of Buddhist life. So what he seems to be afraid of above all is that they will sort of degrade Buddhism as a purely spiritual teaching, a universal teaching, a teaching for the individual, to an ethnic religion and use it as such just as a means of support and a means of livelihood. It seems to be this that basically h~5w~rn~~g against. He's saying as it were well you've had some real experience of Buddhism, some experience of real Buddhism, the real Dharma with me but even if you do go back, even if y~do go back to the village, don't allow that to degenerate, don't start allowing Buddhism to become a purely ethnic thing - a means of your own livelihood. It seems that he's saying something like this. Do you see that? They haven't

attained any firm realisation it seems, just some perception. Genuine perception yes but not enough to safeguard them against those sort of dangers, those sort of errors. So this represents an almost sort of archetypal situation. You attain some genuine spiritual experience but then you're, as it were, intervenes, and sort of tries to misappropriate it for quite selfish ends. You see this with so many, as it were, psychiatrists, it becomes a means of livelihood only. They're not all that concerned with their patients. They don't really give themselves to their patients. They're just about earning money and being a professional middle-class sort of person. You find this in every religion including Buddhism and Milarepa's very aware of this and is warning the novices against that sort of development or that sort of degeneration. So they seem to be on a very different level from Milarepa himself. His advice is very down to earth, in a way quite fatherly, very practical. It doesn't really go very far but it certainly emphasises things that need to be emphasised in their case.

_____ How long had Buddhism been in Tibet when Milarepa was there?

S: The sort of official introduction was in the seventh century. Milarepa was the eleventh century so it'd been already there some hundreds of years leaving aside the question of a possible earlier introduction. But take it that if you're not careful the rot sets in almost immediately.

_____, This is something that amazed me, in India looking through some of the scriptures how the Buddha always had to guard the monks about the way they were going and so on.

S: It may be telescoping events which took place over centuries. It~maybe that all those events did not in fact take place during the Buddha's lifetime and did not involve him personally but nonetheless towards the end of his life surely there must have been some tendency like that. As the circle of disciples became wider, the quality became less.

_____ You can see how easy it is if people just get out of touch with the spiritual community.

S: The gravitational pull never lets up. It's there all the time. It never takes a holiday.

There are one or two stories even about relatives of the Buddha who have become monks and

S: I remember there's a famous old sermon by I think it was Latimer who was burned in the reign of Queen Mary about the devil and Latimer was criticising lazy and idle bishops and he said that the devil was the busiest bishop and he was always active and working in his diocese. (Laughter) He never stopped, he never took a rest, never took a holiday. So he gives these five novices some very plain, very direct advice doesn't he. Anyway just look back over what we've done today and see if there's any point that needs dealing with.

_____, Relating to what we were talking about about the difference between the three yanas, I wonder whether one could say what teachings-and books had actually been written by the Buddha.

S: That's very difficult to say but it does seem that the nearest that we can get to it say in the Pali canon, is the teachings found say in the Udana and the Sutta Nipata and some passages of the verse section of the samyutta nikaya.

_____, For the Mahayana level that was all created later on.

S: Created later on in the sense of the formulations. The spirit was there going back to ~~ Buddha himself but the Mahayana it seemed became dissatisfied with the current formulations. They seemed not to express the spirit satisfactorily. There's also the question of the possibility of separate ancient traditions coming down independently to the Mahayanists.

_____ From the Buddha.

S: Yes through the Mahasangikas. This is all a very obscure area indeed. The perfection

of wisdom tradition seems to go back to the Buddha as far as we can see and so they developed their own expression of the teaching as they felt more in keeping with his actual spirit. Some of the older expressions had begun, though they were genuine and old, to be understood in a rather narrow, rigid sort of way. And again the same thing happened with the Vajrayana. There might have been some tradition coming down through the early Vajrayanists quite independently of or outside the Hinayana and Mahayana but apart from that they sort of gave a fresh expression to their own feeling for or experience of the spirit of Buddhism to some extent in harmony with existing expressions, to some extent new.

_____ So it's not impossible that the Buddha taught some of the Tantra.

S: At least in principle it is not impossible. Maybe not very likely in that full detail - that clearly incorporates all sorts of elements, some of them later, but the spirit of the thing goes back to the Buddha. The general overall picture is of people very much into their individual personal development, giving expression to that, giving teachings and then people appropriating those teachings and for a while really practising them genuinely in the original spirit but then the teachings become an end in themselves and then they elaborated intellectually and all that sort of thing, or practise sort of oversystematised and made very rigid and then someone comes along who underneath all that feels the spirit and concentrates on practising that and then eventually sort-of devises his own way of expressing things perhaps linking up with the old expressions, perhaps not, but in some sort of continuity with them more often than not. Do you see the sort of thing that happened? It's a very sort of complex process in a way though on the other hand quite simple. If you take everything at its face value and try to weave it into a sort of system then it becomes quite difficult. You can do it to some extent but not completely. Is it possible to harmonise say the Abhidharma with the Yogachara teaching or the Yogachara teachings with the Madhyamika. Is it possible to make a unified completely rationally consistent sort of system out of them all. I rather doubt that. I doubt even whether it's very necessary. It would be a nice tidying up sort of thing to do. Some like to have things very intellectually tidy, others don't. They like intellectual confusion. Sometimes for negative reasons, sometimes for comparatively positive reasons but I think the basic question to ask when encountering any teaching of the Buddha, that is within the Hinayana, Mahayana or Vajrayana is what relevance this has to one's own individual development here and now. This is the ultimate unifying factor, and organic one, not a sort of almost mechanical. It's sort of existential rather than conceptual. If you gather together all the things that do actually help you there must be some sort of coherence or consistency between them or among them all and added up they'll make or constitute a sort of organic system sort of naturally put together in accordance with your spiritual needs as an individual. You don't have to work it all out necessarily rationally, at least not at this stage.

Alright leave it there then for today.

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"I beseech my gracious lord that he may grant us joy in our instruction.

Now you new and youthful pupils,

Do not squander your inheritance midst the townsfolk, With their deceitful actions
sometimes good and sometimes evil, But pay attention, O my sons, to holy law.

Go not astray, but keep with me.

Gathering merit more and more, perform the practice. There arises spiritual knowledge, the mist of grace. But this arising is not enough, so now pray exert yourselves.

This instruction in self-exertion is given from love for you, so listen with attention

When keeping a retreat midst lonely mountains,

Do not think about the entertainments of the town.

If you think of them, your mind will be distracted by the evil one, So summon your thoughts within and exert yourselves.

When you relax from making effort in the practice, Think upon the uncertainty of the time of death And be mindful of the evils of rebirth.

Thus giving no thought to pleasurable things in this life,

Be hardened and exert yourselves.

And when you seek instruction in this profound practice, Let there be little of the thirst for knowledge of the scholar; If there be much of it, the ways of the lay-folk will prevail, And if these prevail, a human life will go to waste,

So less indolence and exert yourselves.

And when spiritual knowledge manifests itself,

Do not make a fetish of yourselves by a willingness to talk,

If you talk, the goddesses and dakinis will be disturbed, So practise without distraction and exert yourselves.

And when you're in the company of your master,

Do not look for faults and virtues, good and bad.

If you do, you'll see him as a mass of faults.

Just practise clarity of mind and exert yourselves.

And when you've gathered with your fellows for initiation, Be not desirous of first place and decorations.

If you so desire, you'll disturb your vows by attachment and by anger.

So remain in harmony and exert yourselves.

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And when you're collecting alms amidst the townsfolk,

Do not deceive these folk with falsehoods.

If they're so deceived, you'll fall yourself into an evil state, So make your actions honest and exert yourselves.

Thus at all times and in all things,

Let not your self-esteem or own preferences prevail.

If the dharma will be lost in false appearances. Renounce all lying and deceit and exert yourselves.

To men who exert themselves I now give these precepts, Which in themselves are beneficent,

That they may benefit both self and others.

At the centre of your heart keep generosity."

S: This is his song of advice. Still quite simple, down to earth practical instructions. You notice the connection at the end of the previous song Milarepa says do none of this, less indolence and exert yourselves, It's a bit like the apamadana sampadetha of the Buddha isn't it. 'Then they asked him in what way they should exert themselves and in reply he sang this song.' So the song explains the different ways in which they should exert themselves. So each verse ends with the refrain as it were so now pray exert yourselves or and exert

yourselves. But first of all as he always does Milarepa invokes his Guru, he says 'I beseech my gracious lord that he may grant us joy in our instruction.' Do you see anything significant in this especially in this phrase, 'joy in our instruction'? Why do you think he mentions this specifically? Why not faith, why not understanding, why joy? Why should he be asking Marpa to grant them all joy in particular in their instruction? Unless you enjoy learning you don't learn! (Laughter) If it's all as dry as dust, you won't really learn it so this is a quite important thing, that you must enjoy learning. Enjoy the spiritual instruction which should be like a feast to you as it were. Sometimes we find it is, sometimes we find it isn't but when do we tend to find instruction far from being a joy almost boring and distasteful? When does that happen? Is it always even necessarily our fault. When do you think it tends to happen? What are the factors that make for joy in our instruction?

_____, It's a lack of emotional response.

S: Yes real interest. Openness, receptivity, enthusiasm and also that you're not being taught in a dry as dust sort of way, that the study isn't just intellectual, not just theoretical or academic but that there is real living interest, there is real communication. Then joy will arise and this is what really keeps the study going, keeps the instruction going - joy. So this is very important especially in the case of those who are taking classes at centres. They should always remember this, that you have to sweeten the pill. (Laughter) except that the pill is not really a pill. The pill is not really bitter, the

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pill is actually quite sweet if you can only get people to swallow it. There is a proverb in hindi which says () which means bitter in the mouth but sweet in the stomach. So the spiritual instruction, the teaching is a bit like that. It tastes a little bit bitter at first but afterwards you experience the real sweetness of it when you start digesting it and assimilating it. So people should enjoy the classes - this is quite important. They shouldn't feel that it's all just hard work and that it's all dull and a bit dry and a bit dreary even. So if people are going to enjoy their class what's the most important, in a sense the most basic, rudimentary, fundamental thing about the person taking the class?

_____ He should be positive.

S: He should be positive but even more basic than that in a way. You may be positive by nature but you may not always be able to show your positivity. When are you for instance not able to show it, at least not very much?

_____, When you're tired.

S: When you're tired, yes. So it's quite important if you know you're going to be taking a class in the evening you shouldn't have such a busy hectic day that you're just tired out by the time it comes to take the class. You should guard against such an eventuality unless you have of course quite immense stores of energy. So make sure that you're properly rested and refreshed by the time the class begins so that you've got plenty of energy. You're awake, alive, alert, responsive etc. Otherwise you won't enjoy the class and if you don't enjoy the class how are others going to enjoy it. So this is very important. It's not enough even to be essentially positive but to be not tired. To have plenty of energy available, to be fresh and lively, sparkling. Other wise it won't be a joyful class and people will get the impression that Buddhism is dull and dreary just like everything else that you study in a class as quite a lot of people do think whether rightly or wrongly.

Then Milarepa says, 'Now you new and youthful pupils' Perhaps he's saying this in a quite straightforward matter of fact sort of way. Perhaps he's taking them down a peg or two, making them realise and appreciate how raw and immature they really are. So 'Now you new and youthful pupils do not squander your inheritance midst the townsfolk.' So what do you think that means. What is this inheritance? It seems as though it can be taken in two different ways.

Your good fortune.

S: Your good fortune. Perhaps in the sense first of all of a literal inheritance. They are five young people, five young men. Perhaps their parents or other elderly relatives have died, perhaps they've been left money, an inheritance - so just plain straightforward practical worldly advice. 'Do not squander your inheritance midst the townsfolk.' It could refer to their spiritual inheritance. The inheritance that they've just been receiving

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from Milarepa which they are receiving from Milarepa. Their spiritual inheritance. So how could that be squandered midst the townsfolk. It has been touched on in the previous verse hasn't it in the previous song. 'When practising the rites that you've received as means' - means to enlightenment - 'do not use this power to vanquish demons for if you do this your own self will rise up as a demon and if this occurs the religious practice of the town - folk will prevail.' So 'Do not squander your inheritance midst the townsfolk.' How could you squander it. How could you squander your inheritance in the spiritual sense apart from

practising the rites that you've received as means to vanquish demons and

- things like that.

_____ ; Emotional indulgence in that thing. Your ego just gets too involved with it.

S: Yes right. You might sort of set yourself up as a great lama prematurely just on the basis of your own small amount of knowledge and understanding. So do not squander your inheritance. Why does he say squander because actually you'd be throwing it away. You'd be wasting it. You wouldn't just be spending it. In the end you'd lose it, you'd lose whatever spiritual qualities and experience you'd attained. So do not squander your inheritance midst the townsfolk with their deceitful actions sometimes good and sometimes evil but pay attention my sons to holy law' to the Sadharma. You notice he says of the townsfolk, their deceitful actions sometimes good and sometimes evil. That's quite interesting isn't it but all their actions, good or evil are deceitful. So in what way could their good actions be deceitful or could they be good?

_____ For the wrong motives.

S: For the wrong motives yes. Their actions may appear to be good, may be good in a manner of speaking objectively but there's always some self-interest behind, some selfishness or ambition which is concealed so basically they're deceitful from the spiritual point of view even though good. So do not squander your inheritance midst the townsfolk with their deceitful actions sometimes good and sometimes evil but pay attention O my sons to the holy law. That is to the Dharma itself, to the Buddha's teaching itself. Keep your mind fixed upon that.

'Go not astray but keep with me.' When he says keep with me do you think he means literally stay with him necessarily?

Graham Steven; Maybe be receptive to him.

S: Be receptive to him.

_____ Follow his teaching.

S: Follow his teaching. The Buddha himself said on one occasion that even though one

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followed behind him step by step grasping hold of the edge of the robe, if one didn't follow his teaching then one was far from him. Even if one dwelled a long way away but followed the teaching then one was as it were living in the Buddha's very presence. So to keep with Milarepa is to follow his teaching more than to stay with him physically. 'Gathering merit more and more, perform the practice', the practice being what ever spiritual instruction he had given them. So gathering merit more and more, not gathering merit in the ordinary sense, just heaping up good deeds so you can be reborn in a higher heavenly world but creating a more and more positive basis for the higher spiritual attainment, especially a positive emotional basis of faith, friendliness, compassion, joy and so on.

'There arises spiritual knowledge' that is to say on the basis of the merit. 'The mist of grace but this arising is not enough, so now pray exert yourselves.'

So first of all he exhorts them not to squander their inheritance, to pay attention instead to the Dharma, to keep with him in the full spiritual sense, to accumulate merit; build up a positive emotional base, perform the practice, develop spiritual knowledge and then as a result of the spiritual knowledge will come the mist of grace. A sort of higher spiritual experience not to say higher transcendental experience which seems to come as it were from beyond or from the other side. Something that doesn't seem to be the product of your own narrow individual efforts. But then he warns them that 'This arising is not enough so now pray exert yourselves.' Sometimes people think that when some sort of higher experience comes it seems to come out of the blue like some sort of grace and then that's it, they're there, they've reached the goal but Milarepa says no not so, you still have to go on exerting your selves - you haven't reached the end even when that mist of grace as it were appears.

It's like vision and transformation.

S: Right yes. 'This instruction in self-exertion is given from love for you, so listen with attention. When keeping a retreat amidst lonely mountains do not think about the entertainments of the town.' What sort of situation do you think he has in mind here. That someone goes into a solitary retreat, a retreat amidst the mountains, lonely mountains but then he might start getting bored with his practice and he starts thinking about the entertainments of the town, the 'singing, the dancing, the fairs and the festivals, the processions and the celebrations, the drinking parties, the fun and frolic. He starts thinking about all that. 'If you think of them, your mind will be distracted by the evil one so summon your thoughts within and exert yourselves.' It's very easy to be distracted. We talked a bit about this yesterday didn't we. The gravitational pull of the world is very strong.

'When you relax from making effort in the practice think upon the uncertainty of the time of death and be mindful of the evils of rebirth. Thus giving no thought to the pleasurable things in this life be hardened and exert yourselves.' Do you think this exhortation is more from the standpoint of the doctrine follower or more from the standpoint of the faith follower?

_____; Doctrine follower.

[41]

S: Doctrine follower. So suppose one was to translate this as it were into the language

of the faith follower or to put it in a way that would appeal perhaps more to the faith follower, what do you think one would say?

_____, He can meditate on the three jewels.

S: He can meditate on the three jewels. What sort of more generally than that?

Dharmarati ; Just the same message maybe addressed to him a bit more personally.

S; 'This is going to happen to you'.

Sagaramati; Well the opposite of death.

S: The corresponding positive things. Think more of the corresponding positive things. So what would that be in relation to the uncertainty of the time of death? You could be gaining enlightenment now. That would be a much more positive emphasis wouldn't it. You're relaxing making your effort so it means you're missing enlightenment possibly here and now. Think of the wonderful opportunity you're letting slip. 'And be mindful of the evils of rebirth.' Well just think of the wonderful opportunities you are wasting and things could be so much better here and now if were not to relax from making effort in the practice. It's as though you wanted to get say somebody away from paying attention to some rather ugly woman and one way would be to say well look how ugly she is. Do you really realise that, look at all those

wrinkles etc., etc. That would be one way to open his eyes. But another way would be to say well look at that young woman over there. Isn't she attractive~(~aug~ter~o~gedt him away from the ugly woman more quickly in that way wouldn't you. So in the same way instead of thinking about the negative qualities of the conditioned think more about the positive qualities of the unconditioned. That would be more the way for the faith follower.

_____, It's rather like that story in the White Lotus Sutra of the burning house. You can get them out by talking about something more colourful.

S: Something attractive yes, right. Or how the Buddha attracted Ananda (Sundarananda) into the spiritual life by promising him five hundred heavenly nymphs.(Laughter) There is some difference there because the five hundred heavenly nymphs with pink feet did represent a higher degree, a more refined degree of the mundane, but in the case of the positive counterpart of this it is the attractiveness of the transcendental, not something higher up within the mundane. So it's the difference between driving people and drawing people and that is quite important because in the way that people are usually brought up in connection with religion it's a matter of them being driven rather than drawn and attracted. So they associate with the religious life, if they're associated with anything, with driving, with fear, with threats so it is important to stress the positive side, the attractiveness of the [42] spiritual life and so on. This reminds me of another little story which I've mentioned before I think. It's a modern Indian parable that a man was walking through the rice fields in India, quite a learned man a scholar, and you know that rice is grown in water, so in between the flooded paddy fields there was a very narrow lane not more than a foot wide. So you have to walk along that very carefully in between the flooded rice fields. So this particular person was walking along and found a little calf in his way - the calf had his back towards him and he couldn't get past because the calf was in the way. The only thing that he could do was to get the calf to go along ahead of him. So he started pushing it from behind and it wouldn't budge so he gave it another shove and then tried whacking it and it wouldn't move. So he was getting all hot and bothered when a milk- maid came from the opposite direction and he shouted to her to help him push the calf out of the way. She just put her finger into the calfs mouth and he started sucking it and then she gently drew her finger away and of course he followed the finger to continue sucking and in this way she got him along the path and then she said to the scholar you being such a learned man you don't know how to deal with a small calf! So you see here the gentle drawing method succeeds more than the rough driving method so it's like that with people too. You can sometimes draw them when you can't drive them. So if you're especially dealing with a faith follower sort of person you need to be able to draw them. Some people can't be driven, they have to be drawn by something attractive so you have to point out the attractiveness of the unconditioned rather than try to drive them by insist- ing on the unattractiveness of the conditioned. So here it seems Milarepa's using more the language appropriate to or for the doctrine follower. Maybe they were more of that kind.

Sagaramati; That idea of entertainments that's in practical terms quite important because when you're leaving the world behind you're leaving in a way the () but it seems to be

quite a while before people begin to actually be entertained by their spiritual life.

S: So that's why it's necessary maybe in between to attract people with higher more refined aspects of the conditioned, maybe like music poetry and so on until their emotions become sufficiently refined to be able to become sort of sensitive to that which is purely transcendental even. It's as though the human organism, the human psyche can't do without pleasure completely. You can't function without pleasure. So if you give up the grosser pleasures you have to replace them with as it were more refined pleasures until you get a more spiritual enjoyment coming entirely from within. Though it shouldn't discourage harmless or innocent pleasures like the enjoyment of nature as some of the christian mystics have in fact discouraged. You could say that human beings to a great extent are ruled by pleasure. Pleasure in a sense has a tonic effect on the organism but you must try to ensure that the pleasure is progressively of a more and more refined nature. If you haven't really enjoyed anything for a long time and you feel all down and listless don't you. I mean really enjoyed and been really happy, really delighted. You have this capacity usually when you're very young. In the ordinary way of things you lose it as you

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get older it fades away. You're unable to really enjoy anything. A child really enjoys a day out in the country. A child really enjoys playing, it really enjoys a book, it really enjoys anything, it really enjoys an ice cream but adults seem to have lost that capacity for enjoyment. Even their so called pleasure usually become rather dull and boring and almost a matter or duty rather than a real sheer spontaneous enjoyment. This is what happens very often. Of course there's another side of the picture- the child gets upset very quickly. He experiences real misery perhaps that the adult doesn't but you have to try and keep the positivity of the child and the freedom and spontaneity of the child and its capacity for happiness and enjoyment without that sort of side to it and it's quite difficult. But unless you enjoy what you are doing you can't really do it very positively for very long. It's important that you enjoy your study, you enjoy your meditation, you enjoy your silence, you enjoy your solitary retreats and eventually you should. Even enjoy your fasts.

'And when you seek instruction in this profound practice, let there be little of the thirst for knowledge of the scholar;' What sort of knowledge. The thirst for knowledge of the scholar?

_____;; Collecting information.

S: Just collecting information but why do you think people want to collect information? Why this thirst for knowledge of this kind?

_____, So they can write books about it.

S: Why do you want to write books? Apart from wanting to earn money in that way.

_____; Appropriating.

S: It's appropriating.

Sagaramati; There must be some satisfaction in it. There must be some feeling of security even.

Vairocana; It's just like acquiring material possessions.

S: It has perhaps a greater social and cultural respectability.

_____; there is the form of it where it's quite healthy, where you just want to know about things.

S: This especially one finds when you are young. Children are always asking questions. It's not because they want to accumulate a whole stock of information but here and now this very minute they're really interested. They just want to know. 'So if there be

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much of it' that is to say much of the thirst for knowledge of the scholar, 'the ways of the lay folk will prevail'. What are the ways of the lay folk?

_____, They're motivated just by their worldly desires. Greed hatred and ignorance.

That sort of thing The thirst for knowledge of the scholar just excites that.

S: Lay folk have to earn their living, they have to make money so they buy and they sell, they trade. So if there is much of the thirst for knowledge of the scholar then that knowledge will become a means to a livelihood. It'll just become a profession on the ordinary sense, in the narrow sense.

'And if these prevail the human life will go to waste, So less indolence and exert yourselves,' So there's the suggestion here that the ways of the lay folk, that is to say the majority of the people, involve a waste of human life. This is quite a severe judgement in a way isn't it. Do you see that? The way people usually live, buying and selling, earning their living represent a waste of human life. So do you think this is too severe?

Graham; You just need to look at the face of people who have come out of Liverpool St. Station to go to those huge office blocks.

S: And when they come out of the huge office blocks in the evening. I think I've mentioned this before that in India when there were a number of monks gathered together just talking about the lay people, one of the things that they used to comment on was how miserable they very often were in comparison with the monks. The monks used to say here we are. We're supposed to be leading a very hard life and the lay people feel quite sorry for us because we don't eat after twelve o'clock, we don't have any wives and children, we don't have any houses of our own etc, The lay people feel quite sorry for us but actually we're much happier than they are. It was true. One could always see this. Even the average quite unspiritual monk who didn't do much in the way of meditation or anything like that or didn't study the scriptures much, he was always much more cheerful and happy than the lay person and it was quite noticeable. So less indolence and exert yourselves.

'And when spiritual knowledge manifests itself, do not make much of yourselves by a willingness to talk. If you talk the goddesses and dakinis will be disturbed so practice without distraction and exert yourselves.' So how does one make much of oneself by a willingness to talk? After some spiritual knowledge has manifested it says. It suggests not only a willingness to talk but also an eagerness to talk. So how in that way do you come to make much of yourself?

_____ Boasting.

S: Boasting, yes. Setting yourself up as a teacher by implication you sort of make much of yourself. So 'If you talk the goddesses and dakinis will be disturbed.' What does he mean by

that? Who are these goddesses and dakinis?

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_____ it means your positive state will be disturbed.

S: Your positive state will be disturbed certainly but do the goddesses and dakinis stand for anything more than that.

Graham; The dakini's the higher emotional nature.

S: The higher emotional nature yes.

Graham; Presumably if you adopt this I know it all stance you'll stop really communicating with other members of the Sangha.

S: And in a broader sense the dakinis are the forces of the higher spiritual inspiration coming up from within, welling up from within and if you talk too much or if you become a bit arrogant then those sources of inspiration, those inner sources will tend to dry up. Then you'll be thrown off your psychic balance as it were. You'll be so busy hearing the sound of your own voice outside you won't be able to hear as it were the voices of the goddesses and dakinis within. I expect most people have experienced that, those who have been taking classes or giving lectures, that if you're not careful after a while you can be going on talking but you've lost contact with your own inner sources of inspiration. Has anyone ever noticed that? You just go on talking as it were mechanically but nothing is coming up within. So the goddesses and dakinis have not just been disturbed. They've sort of gone away as it were. They've left you, they've deserted you so it's very important to keep up that kind of contact. So 'practice without distraction and exert yourselves.'

Graham; Even though that may mean being silent for long periods.

S: Maybe. You may have to allow time for the forces of inspiration to well up again. As

with any form of energy when you've been expending it for some time you may need to pause, to rest and allow the energy to accumulate again. It's the same with the higher spiritual energies represented by the dakinis.

'And when you're in the company of your master, do not look for faults and virtues, good and bad. If you do, you'll see him as a mass of faults. Just practice clarity of mind and exert yourselves.' So why do you think the disciple should see the master ever as a mass of faults. That's rather extreme, that's rather strong isn't it? So what does that suggest?

Vairocana; There's part of your nature that doesn't want to evolve. So in a sense you don't want to be receptive so you look for his faults so it gives you an excuse

S: Not to be receptive. And of course one can do the same thing with the spiritual community as a whole especially with the more experienced members of it, to the extent that [46] the spiritual community as a whole in relation to oneself represents a sort of, if one may use the expression, collective guru figure. Do you see what I mean? You can see then the spiritual community as a mass of faults. So Milarepa warns just practice clarity of mind and exert yourselves. Of course one shouldn't be too anxious to look for faults and virtues good and bad in anybody.

_____ It's interesting though that it says don't look for faults and virtues i.e. it's not just seeing them as faults but just trying to see it as a sort of perfect ideal as well.

S: I wouldn't say quite that but it's more like a sort of narrowly moral or ethical judgement. It's more like that. (Pause) If you see people in terms of virtues in a narrow sense you'll see them in terms of faults also in a narrow sense. But it's quite an important point in a way - our attitude towards other people. It doesn't mean that we should be fools or pretend that when people say tell a lie that they're not telling a lie etc., etc., but you can't judge people or see people simply in terms of faults and virtues good and bad. So how should you see people, you can't help seeing them in some way or other. You see faults and you see virtues, you see good and you see bad but you shouldn't see people exclusively in those terms as though reducing them to good and to bad, either good or bad or a combination of good and bad so how should you see them?

_____; You should see them as a developing being in a process of change rather than good or bad.

S: See them as developing human beings, developing individuals. A certain action performed by a certain person might in a manner of speaking be good; performed by somebody else of a different nature and different circumstances it might be bad, it might be a fault. So you have to see, basically, the individual, the human being. Something living, growing, developing, and his actions or her actions and behaviour as the actions and behaviour of that particular human being, not as it were see the actions and behaviour in isolation and sort of label them arbitrarily good and bad out of their context. Their context being the person who performs them. You have to see the person rather than just the actions and just the behaviour.

Graham; Did you say actions and behaviour in terms of the human beings.

S: Yes you have to see the actions, see the behaviour, as the actions and behaviour of a particular person, not for instance disregard the person and only consider the actions and say well such and such actions are always good, such and such actions are always bad so if such and such actions are present then the person performing them must be bad. You don't look at the person and see whether in fact he is bad if that is the term to apply, you just look at the actions and in accordance with some predetermined standards you say that the actions are bad and then you proceed to label as bad the person whom you don't even know. This is why for instance things like historical judgements are so difficult.

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I was looking the other day at a biography of Philip the second of Spain and the author who was English made the point that- ~Philip the second of Spain was really quite a different sort of person from what he appears to be in the pages of the orthodox protestant historians to whom he was the villain of the peace sending the Spanish armada to Britain sort of thing but there was much more to him than that it seems. It's very difficult to know a person. Of course the actions, the behaviour do express a person or something of a person but you have to understand the actions in the light of the person as well as understand the person in the light of the actions. Sometimes the person is bigger than the actions, sometimes of course he's smaller. You can't arrive really at a knowledge of a person simply by the knowledge of his actions or her actions dissociated from the total person, dissociated from, to use the expression, the true individual. In the same way with what a person says. You just can't take the words by themselves. To understand them fully and deeply you have to relate them back to the person who speaks them. Someone who doesn't know somebody very well might hear them say something and then repeat those words to you. You might know the original speaker very much better so you might understand the words which are repeated to you better than the person who repeats them and who originally heard them. You might see that that person repeating those words to you spoken by that person whom you know very well has completely misunderstood them. You know what he meant when he said that because you know the person, maybe know him intimately, but the person who merely heard the words without understanding and knowing that person very well just doesn't really understand what was said. It's the same with actions

Graham; A lot of this seems to come from a christian moral code.

S: Yes indeed. The Tibetans and tantrics generally make very much of the fact you can't really understand - the disciple can't really understand the actions of the guru. Of course this can be made the basis of a great~deal of humbug and even exploitation but in principle it is true. Supposing the guru is enlightened or more enlightened than the disciples and if what the guru is has to be taken into consideration in understanding his actions but how can you understand his actions fully even if you don't understand him. So therefore how can you judge? Clearly there can be a lot of misunderstanding here and even room as I said for humbug and exploitation but nonetheless it doesn't alter the truth of the principle. You cannot fully understand the actions or the words of someone more developed than yourself. It's impossible. Any more than a dog can understand the actions of its master. So therefore Milarepa says, 'And when you're in the company of your master, do not look for faults and virtues, good and bad. If you do you'll see him as a mass of faults.' You can't even understand your master's virtues as it were, not to speak of his faults. 'Just practice clarity of mind and exert yourselves.'

Sagaramati; What do you mean by clarity of mind. Mindfulness?

S: Mindfulness. I think it means somewhat more than this. It suggests an element of insight I think.

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'And when gathered with your fellows for initiation, be not desirous of first place and decorations. If you so desire you'll disturb your vows by attachment and by anger, so remain in harmony and exert yourselves.' The initiation referred to here is presumably the tantric initiation. So when you're gathered with your fellows for initiation be not desirous of first place and decorations. Strange to say these things do occur sometimes. You find people wanting to be first or to sit in the first place, to be initiated first and so on. This is why the usual Buddhist tradition is that you are initiated more often than not in order of your what I call natural seniority. This settles any dispute. So if you so desire you'll disturb your vows by attachment and by anger so remain in harmony and exert yourselves.' What is the general principle involved here? What is the general sort of, maybe almost negative characteristic that Milarepa is criticising?

_____, Competitiveness.

S: It's competitiveness. So what is this competitiveness. There's been quite a bit of discussion about it recently. For instance let's sort of give the discussion a rather controversial kick off by saying it has been alleged that men are more competitive than women so what does one mean by this? That is this ~competitiveness and are perhaps men more competitive than women and if so why? Is competitiveness a virtue or is it a weakness. Has it any utility at all or is it just silly as young women for instance very often say with reference to the more obvious forms of masculine competitiveness. Is it just childish or what is competitiveness or why do people compete?

Vairocana; The feeling that you can get things by force.

S: Is it?

Vairocana; Taking in some way, taking by force.

Sagaramati; It's a sort of situation in which you can feel your own strength over and above somebody being weaker than you.

Graham; Measuring yourself up against or by other people.

S: Yes.

_____, It could have a biological root.

S: It could have a biological root yes. What sort of biological root?

_____; In terms of survival.

S: In terms of survival yes so in what way does that have survival value(d), that sort of

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competitiveness or competitiveness in that sense.

_____; The strongest will always survive.

S: No. Of course the strongest will but it isn't quite that. Competitiveness is related to another thing or competitiveness is more accurately expressed by another word which is dominance. That we think of as competitive or which manifests itself as competitiveness is a striving for dominance. So what is that striving for dominance?

Vairocana; A desire to put the ego in a more secure position so it won't be threatened.

S: I think that in a way is a bit too psychological. It's almost neurotic. Biologically what's this striving for dominance? What does dominance imply? Dominance within what?

Dharmarati; The social order.

S: That kind of social order?

Sagaramati; A hierarchy.

S: A hierarchy yes. Dominance really is an attempt to find as high a place as possible within the hierarchy of the group to which you belong. This is what it really is. So when that happens, when everyone has found his place what have you got? You've got a pecking order, a power structure. Not only a power structure, you've got a hierarchy of power with the

strongest at the top and the weakest at the bottom. Now to come back to the biological does that have survival value?

_____ Definitely.

S: Of course it has. ~ecause you're organised for defence for instance, you're organised for survival. So it would seem as though a hierarchy of this sort, a dominance hierarchy, is essential to the survival of the human species. But what is it based upon in say precivilised times, primitive times. First of all physical strength, skill, cunning, intelligence.

Graham; Natural ability.

S: Natural ability. So it's as though the struggle for dominance is really an attempt to find your natural place in the hierarchy of power. So in that sense it's a quite healthy thing. It's not neurotic. For instance if you've got the natural ability and strength and skill to be a leader or to be the leader it's only natural that you should gradually work your way up the hierarchy to occupy that position. It is good for the group that the strongest and most capable person should be at the top. That is to say the truly most strong and capable, and that the weakest should in fact be at the bottom and not at the~~~ top.

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So thi~ hierarch~ical structure and this attempt to achieve dominance has got a survival value and therefore competitive in this sense is not altogether an unhealthy thing within the context of the group. Do you see what I mean? But the question arises has this sort of hierarchy anything to do with the spiritual hierarchy? Are you necessarily more of an individual because you occupy a higher position within the dominance structure? Not necessarily~So It's important not to confuse the two things. So alright, what about women. Are women less competitive than men. In other words are women less interested in finding a position within the dominance structure or within the hierarchy as it were?

_____, Yes.

S: They are. Well historically it seems almost invariably not so why not?

Kulananda; Biologically in a patriarchy there's no need.

~g~~amati: Patriarchy is the natural expression....

S: Of the dominant structure, right

Kulananda; There have been matriarchies.

S: No this is denied by modern scholars. Matrilineal societies were not matriarchal societies. Matrilineality is different from matriarchy. That's an exploded myth apparently that there ever were matriarchal societies. So in as much as men to begin with are physically stronger than women and as it were more extrovert and women were more concerned with the production and nurture of children and food gathering and things like that and men more concerned with war and defence it was only natural that men should evolve dominance behaviour and ~therefore should be more competitive than women. So therefore when you get a lot of men together there's always the struggle for dominance, always the attempt to find out who is stronger than the other and men are always sort of trying it on in this way it seems.

The young bull is always challenging the old bull just to see whether he could go up one in the hierarchy. So this is a quite healthy and a quite natural thing provided it doesn't get out of hand but it doesn't have anything to do with the spiritual hierarchy. This is what is important to remember. So it is useful to have this dominance hierarchy as I've called it when there is anything practical to be done. This is where it comes in very useful because there's a natural order of capacity and you understand the extent to which you can rely on one another and people with little ability are not put in positions of responsibility ideally. A natural healthy sort of social order. But women don't function in this sort of way. One could say that women are more co-operative than men, maybe co-operative in a different sort of way because even this dominance structure is co-operative because you're co-operating to get something done and it seems that if things are to be done on a big scale you can't do them in the purely co-operative way, that is to say with everybody having an equal voice, equal responsibility and equal everything in that kind of way. There has to be a sort of power structure. But from a spiritual point of view this

is to be regarded as instrumental and provisional only and not as having any absolute value. So to come back as it were to the ~FWBO you probably will always find that the men tend to run things. To run the centres and so on more than the women, not because they're more spiritually advanced necessarily or more spiritually evolved but because they find it easier to form this sort of dominance structure which is the way of getting things done organisationally whereas women don't. So it does seem as though the women will be concerned with smaller scale operations, especially among themselves. Things that can be done by a small number of people in intimate relationship co-operating closely together more or less on an equal basis. That seems to be the more natural way for them. But that does not imply in itself any spiritual inferiority on the part of the individuals involved.

_____ ' The danger is that the power structure becomes identified with the spiritual hierarchy.

S: That is the danger yes. But the stronger and more cunning become regarded as it were as the true individuals or as more individuals than the others but this is of course not necessarily true. Someone who is more truly an individual may at the same time be stronger and more cunning than other individuals or those who are less individual than himself but not necessarily so. So if on the occasion of an initiation which is a purely spiritual occasion you're playing your dominance games that is entirely inappropriate. That is appropriate for the group, not for the spiritual community.

Mahamati ; That sort of qualities do you associate with cunning?

S: It suggests a degree of intelligence but a lack of straightforwardness. Getting things done indirectly or even dishonestly. A lack of openness. Not taking people into confidence. Tricking them, deceiving them. Getting your way in that sort of manner. That would be cunning. Overreaching people.

Mahamati ; Does that go with competitiveness?

S: Yes I think it does. I think it has a sort of survival value because if you're conscious of lack of physical strength and you know you can't overpower people physically but you're more

intelligent than they are then you can use your intelligence to circumvent or counteract their greater physical strength. But if you do it for purely selfish ends then that intelligence becomes cunning.

Mahamati; So that wasn't a particularly healthy aspect of competitiveness.

S: It's healthy from the survival point of view within the context of the group but not from the standpoint of individual spiritual development or the spiritual community. Intelligence is a survival asset as well as strength.

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Mahamati; I was trying to relate what you were saying about competitiveness being healthy to the positive. To the positive group.

S: In the positive group people wouldn't need to be cunning because things would be kept open but in a society or a community that wasn't very positive, even a positive individual might need to be cunning.

Kulananda; Perhaps i~positive correlative is skill in means.

S: Yes but there's also the motivation. If you use your intelligence to circumvent others who are either more strong than you or less intelligent than you - to use your intelligence in a selfish manner, then the cunning becomes a negative quality one could say. One can use one's cunning to circumvent others in a quite positive sort of way. Openness with them isn't possible. You use your greater intelligence to counteract their unskilful activities but in as much as their activities are unskilful you can hardly take them into your confidence and let them know how you are going to circumvent them or counteract them. Certainly not let them know in such a way that they can defeat what you are doing. There is such a thing of course as neurotic competitiveness but what do you think that is or how does that arise? It's when your whole psychological security rests on your having a certain position in relation to other people and you can hardly survive without that psychologically. ~ut I think a normal healthy human being, that is to say a male, has a natural tendency to ascertain where he stands in relation to other men. Whether he's one up or one down and so on and that is entirely healthy but it hasn't got very much to do with spiritual life or spiritual development except to the extent that the human and healthy is the basis of the individual in the spiritual sense or

individual development in the spiritual sense.

So in a way there's no harm in competitiveness if it's a bit playful and not taken too seriously and just enables one to understand people's relative place in a sort of provisional, hierarchical structure just for purely practical purposes. You understand who is more capable, who is stronger, who is able to do this better, who is able to do that better. There's no harm at all in knowing this, in having this sort of provisional structure but one must never identify that with the spiritual hierarchy.

It might well be that someone who's quite useless and is impractical and not all that smart might be quite a spiritually advanced person.

S: I'm not so sure about the not all that smart! (Laughter)

Sagaramati; If that person was spiritually advanced he would really know himself.

S: Yes.

Saramati; He would know his limitations, his abilities.

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S: Yes he'd be much more likely to; yes! and there'd be much less sort of jockeying for power in the case of such a person or such people because they'd just step quite quietly and unobtrusively into the position that their mundane qualities entitled them to without any fuss or bother. They wouldn't mind if they took the highest place. They wouldn't mind if they took the lowest. The danger arises when the higher you get in the hierarchy of dominance, as it were, the less individuality you find. The people high up in the hierarchy of dominance just become mouthpieces of the group pure and simple.

Sagaramati; Aren't there sort of parallels? We talk about the strong member of the group but he's able to keep going when other people flag but there is a sort of parallel in the spiritual. If somebody is positive they are going to develop even when otherSflag.

S: Yes. So they would be dominant in a purely spiritual sense. They'd be higher up in the purely spiritual hierarchy. Someone who is physically weak would keep on going perhaps spiritually where strong men fell by the wayside.

'And when you're collecting alms amidst the townsfolk do not deceive these folk with falsehoods. If they're so deceived, you'll fall yourself into an evil state, so make your actions honest and exert yourselves.' So when you're collecting alms amidst the townsfolk. What does this imply? That the five novices are sort of monks, at least to the extent of collecting alms. So when you're collecting alms amidst the townsfolk. Relying on public charity as it were - dana - Do not deceive these folk with falsehoods. How could you deceive them with falsehoods?

_____; Promising them some sort of worldly gain.

S: Yes assuming that it wasn't possible for that to happen.

Dharmarati; () about your needs and about your resources.

S: Yes.

Graham; By putting on an act.

S: Putting on an act, yes. 'So if they're so deceived you'll fall yourself into an evil state, so make your actions honest and exert yourselves.' So make your actions honest. What does this mean do you think?

Graham; Be yourself.

S: Re yourself, yes. Don't put anything on. Don't pretend. Is that easy do you think? It's very difficult.

'Thus at all times and in all things let not your self-esteem or own preferences prevail. If they do, the dharma will be lost in false appearances. Renounce

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all lying and deceit and exert yourselves.' So thus at all times and in all things let not your self-esteem or own preferences prevail. So how would you let your self-esteem or your own preferences prevail. What exactly is meant by those things?

_____, Don't be solely concerned with your self

S: Right, or your own likes and dislikes. Don't make that the dominant factor. 'If they do prevail the Dharma will be lost in false appearances.' A sort of pseudo-religion, a pseudo-dharma will take its place. The dominance hierarchy will be mistaken for the spiritual community. The pecking order will be mistaken for the spiritual community. 'So renounce all lying and deceit and exert yourselves.

'To men who exert themselves I now give these precepts, which in themselves are beneficent that they may benefit self and others. At the centre of your heart keep generosity.' So to men who exert themselves I now give these precepts. That exactly are precepts. What is meant by precepts. We went into this quite a bit on the Door of Liberation seminar. Anyone remember that? What is a precept?

Sagaramati; Isn't it something distilled from the teachings but applicable to your own...

S: Right. so Milarepa has distilled this advice from his own practice and realisation of the teaching and applying it directly to the needs, the present situation of these five people. So 'To men who exert themselves I now give these precepts which in themselves are beneficent', which can only do good, 'so they', that is the men themselves, 'may benefit both self and others.' And then he gives a final reminder, 'At the centre of your heart keep generosity.' Generosity obviously in the sense of a willingness to give, an openness, a spirit of dana.

So any points arising in connection with this song as a whole?

Sagaramati; That bit where you said if you're honest you be yourself.and that's hard.
~Surely that should be quite easy.

S: It should be. In a way it is. the point has been made for instance that a child has to be taught to tell lies and if you think about it that's quite a point. That a child is naturally truthful. Not because it's got any idea about truthfulness being a virtue but because that's the natural way it is. For instance, supposing someone comes knocking at the door and the child goes to the door and the child is asked is daddy at home and the child says, 'Yes'. You can teach the child to say that no daddy's not at home, even though he is but you have to teach it. But spontaneously of its own accord the child will say yes he's at home, whatever the consequences. The child doesn't know any better as it were. So in that sense honesty and straightforwardness is natural and therefore quite easy. You don't have to learn it but you do have to learn to tell lies. You do have to learn to be crooked and not straightforward. That is assuming you're having a positive healthy sort of upbringing and not twisted by your environment or early conditioning but once you've been conditioned, once you've been taught to tell lies, once you've been taught to be dishonest,

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it's very difficult to get back to that primitive pristine spontaneity and honesty and directness and openness. It takes quite a lot of effort then. It is not so much an effort to be honest but to get rid of that conditioning of dishonesty.

Mahamati; It does seem to be virtually impossible. (unclear)

S: Hmm. That's a sad reflection on our society then. Do you think it is impossible because it depends most of all on the parent. Is there any quite objectively valid situation in which the parents might teach the child to speak untruth or to tell lies?

_____ Perhaps with regard to its interactions with other children.

S: Can you give an example.

_____, I can't think of a specific example but I know there is a period that children go through where they get (quite tough) and a child that isn't like that is going to have a really difficult time because it can't handle that situation.

S: But does that involve him becoming dishonest or telling lies for instance?

_____; It certainly means he can't be spontaneous in that~situation.

S: But that applies equally to all the children and they have to sort it out among themselves don't they. Maybe as a result of that some sort of almost dominant hierarchy will be established and they'll know where they stand but I doubt very much whether any deliberate telling of lies or anything like that will be necessary. It seems to be part of the process of socialisation.

_____, In a sense that is where society starts. Then the children start creating these groups they're creating social structures which they're imitating.

S: Because they're not individuals in the true sense to begin with because of the lack of awareness and so on. So the creation of the social structure, provided it's a healthy social structure, is a part of the means to individuality. You don't develop more as an individual by keeping away from social structures. It depends on the kind of social structure whether you are helped to develop as an individual or not. The child could still, interacting with other children be quite honest about how he or she thinks and

feels regardless of whether the group - the other children - permit him to carry that

out. Say alright I want to do so and so but OK you all want to do something else, I'll go along with you. He's still being quite honest and not pretending. I think it's very doubtful whether a child would pretend because a child is also quite malleable, he can change what he wants to do quite genuinely. It isn't as rigid as it would be perhaps in the case of an adult. He can actually want to do what the others want to do even though he originally wanted to do something different. The child isn't so fixed as the adult.

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Some people seem to keep their honesty and straightforwardness and openness into adult life

don't they. It does seem to be a possibility at least under favourable circumstances. They do some times have a disconcerting effect on other people. Sometimes children do. I remember in the very early days of the Friends someone was coming along to a class at Sakura and one day he arrived almost in a state of shock and we sort of asked him what had happened and he said something had happened to him that had really shaken him. He said as he was walking along the street he saw a perambulator with a baby in it so he stopped to look at the baby and the baby turned its head, the two eyes came round and gave him such a look PONK like that and he said they were so direct and so honest it was quite terrifying and he said it had quite shaken him. He said he realised that adults never looked at one another like that. They'd lost that direct gaze. He said it was quite unnerving. At least we can say it's possible to be much more honest than we usually are even if perfect honesty isn't always permitted by circumstances. But I think the point is that honesty is natural. You have to learn or to acquire dishonesty which is usually required by adjustment to the group and other people's needs. You can be quite honest about what you think and feel even when you're not able to carry them out on account of your consideration for other people. Say I don't agree with you but never mind I'll go along with you if you like, I don't mind but with my own mental reservations. You don't have to pretend that you agree with him or like exactly what you are doing. In a way it's just a matter of say preference rather than any moral principle.

I heard a play on the radio once and I believe now there are films like this but I haven't actually seen any where you not only hear what the actual characters are saying out loud but you hear also what they are thinking and sometimes what they're thinking is at variance with what they're actually saying. This must be quite interesting. For instance in one of these plays the character walking along the street sees a woman and says 'Oh hello Mrs Smith how are you?' and this other voice says at the same time, 'Silly old cow!' (Laughter) but there's a lot of this going on isn't there. You keep up one kind of conversation with somebody and another conversation as it were is going on in your head.

Graham; A film called 'Providence' is very much like this. It's about an old man's views of his step-son and his daughter in law and how he doesn't really want to change these views. You see the reality in the bright blue morning.

S: Right. Let's go onto the next song.

Graham; "When he had sung this they set about exerting themselves in the practice of contemplation and cultivating indifference in this life

and with complete faith they placed before the master, a mandala in gold and asked for instruction in the essentials of right views, contemplation and practice in an abbreviated form. The master replied that they should let the gold do for their supplies and sang this song giving the main points of right views, contemplation and practice;"

S: So when he had sung this they set about exerting themselves in the practice of contemplation and in cultivating indifference to the things of this life.' We're to imagine presumably quite a number of months passing, even years, 'and with complete faith they placed before the master a mandala in gold and asked for instruction. It's a tradition that when asking for Tantric initiations or teachings you make an offering and very often a mandala is offered, a mandala in the sense of a symbolic representation of the whole universe as has been described in some of the lectures. The idea being that you offer or would like to offer the whole world, the whole universe, everything mundane, for the teaching because the teaching is so precious or so valuable that in order to get that you're willing to give everything that you have. In modern times this is sometimes commuted to a cash payment or sort of fee if you like, but sometimes it was the practice to make a mandala of a special kind, To offer maybe a golden mandala, a sort of golden model of the whole universe expressive of your willingness to offer everything that you have. So this it seems is what the disciples did on this occasion. They placed before the master a mandala of gold, with the intention that he should just take it and use it - maybe sell the gold and buy his supplies and so on. 'And asked for instruction in the essentials of right views, contemplation and practice in an abbreviated form. The master replied that they should let the gold do for their supplies.' In other words he accepted the mandala, the golden mandala, and then he gave it straight back to them. He didn't want to keep it for himself. He said let it do for your supplies. In other words just keep the gold, sell it in order to get supplies to maintain you while you meditate and sang this song giving the main points of right views contemplation and practice.' This is a quite important triad by the way - views, right views as it's usually understood, contemplation and practice. The right views is the samyak drsti or the drsti, views; contemplation, the samadhi, the dhyana and practice, the carya. These are the three great aspects of spiritual life in a way - that there should be a right view, a right theory, a right philosophy; then the practice of actual concentration in meditation and then the right way of life or even right lifestyle if you like. So these are the three things they're asking about and they're asking about instruction in them, in the essentials of right views, contemplation and practice in an abbreviated form. Something short and simple that they can understand and practice easily. So these things are traditionally considered very important, that you should have right views or right vision; that you should have a right practice of

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concentration and meditation and a right way of life.

Dharmarati; Is that like Sila, Samadhi, Prajna?

S: It's a bit like that but more sort of backwards. It's more like Prajna, Samadhi, Sila but the right views are rather like the basic intellectual structure which supports or makes possible the arising of prajna and practice, carya, is a bit wider~ than sila. It means your whole way of life, your total lifestyle we might say, your whole way of living.

_____ Is this standard?

S: This is very standard, yes especially you get it in Tibetan Buddhism. Sometimes it is asked of a certain lama what is his view, what is his contemplation, what is his practice. He might have his own sort of specific method as it were. His view, what he especially taught might be for instance the Madhyamika teaching, his particular contemplation might be say the meditation on Manjughosa, his particular practice might be that he always begs his food and never ate after twelve 0 clock. That might be his special practice. So every lama has as it were his special or the view that he in particular emphasises. His special contemplation, his special practice. And every school in a sense. So you might say that first of all there's the Buddhist right view, Buddhist contemplation, Buddhist practice and then the view contemplation and practice of the school within that and within the practice of the school the practice of the particular lama, that is the points that he mainly emphasises.

Let's go on then verse by verse.

"May the lord and master ensure by his power That the way of right views, contemplation and practice May be established in completed self-perfection."

S: What do you think of this word power. What do you think it means here?

_____ Spiritual power.

S: Spiritual power which in a sense is not power at all. Anyway read the whole song and then we'll discuss it verse by verse.

"For right views, realisation, for practice and the fruit that they all bear,

For each of these four there are three points to drive

home.

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Now if of right views these three points are explained,

One consists of uniting all appearance as thought,

One consists in the clear nature of thought itself,

One consists in the absence herein of any notion of self.

Now if of realisation the three points are explained,

One consists in the transfer of mundane thought to

the absolute,

One consists in the state of the pure bliss of knowledge,

One consists in unaffected composure.

Now if for the practice three points are explained, One arises in the power of practising the ten virtues, One consists in purity while abiding amidst the ten evils, One is the pure void unaffected by adversity.

Now if for the fruit three points are explained, Nirvana is not gained as something distinct, Samsara is not avoided as something distinct, One's own thought is confirmed in the Buddha-State.

Of all these three points there's one point we drive home,

And that is the point of absolute voidness. It is done by a master who is skilled at the task. If you speculate greatly it's not driven in, But if you comprehend all at once, the point's driven home.

The crest jewel of all who practise the Dharma, The yogin has won it when it shines in his mind. So you my pupils let your heart rejoice!"

S: So let's go through this. 'May the lord and master ensure by his power,' i.e. his spiritual power, his spiritual influence, 'that the way of right views, contemplation and practice may be established in completed self-perfection. For right views, contemplation, for practice and for the fruit they all bear, for each of these four there are three points to drive home.

Now if of right views these three points are explained, one consists in uniting all appearance as thought, one consists in the clear nature of thought itself, one consists in the absence herein of any notion of self.' This is as it were a bit philosophical. One consists in uniting all appearance as thought. This reflects as it were Cittamatra or Yogachara

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point of view. What does one mean by appearance for instance - all appearance?

Sagaramati; Anything perceived.

S: Anything perceived or all phenomena. That these are thought. What does one mean by that?

_____ They're not separate from your mind.

S: Not separate from your mind. In other words you can't perceive anything apart from your perception of it and all perceptions are perceptions of your mind. This doesn't mean that all perceptions are reduced to your mind in the purely subjective sense but all things - those which you usually think of as yourself and those which you usually think of as objects, are mind. So one consists in uniting all appearance as thought. You don't think that standing behind your perceptions of things are things which exist apart from the perceptions. That is not of course solipsism, to use the western terminology. It doesn't mean that everything exists only within your own individual mind but that you have ideas or perceptions which you think of as perceptions or things but in a sense the things are the perception~ the perceptions~are the things. So one consists in uniting, bringing together, all appearance as thought. Existence, from the Yogachara point of view is essentially mental.

Kulananda; Mental but not subjective.

S: Mental but not subjective. Or mental but not only subjective from the mundane point of view, that is from the point of view according to which the distinction between subjective and objective exists at all. We shall deal with that in a minute. So one consists in the clear nature of thought itself. So in what sense is thought itself clear?

Is it a reference to the voidness?

S: It could be a reference to the voidness yes. The clear nature of thought consists in the fact that in the ultimate sense within thought, within that one mind as it were there's no distinction ultimately of subject and object. Not even any thought of that so hence the third point - one consists in the absence herein of any notion of self. There's mind, there's consciousness, there is awareness completely bright, completely pure, completely illuminated but therein no ultimately, no absolutely existing subject and object and not even a notion of a self in the ordinary sense. So this is the
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right view or the three points by means of which right views are explained. So this is a bit like a kind of unification of the Yogachara philosophy so to speak and that is the Madhyamika. My friend Mr. Chen used to say that the main difference between the Yogachara philosophy and the Madhyamika philosophy was that the Yogachara tradition first of all reduced everything to mind, the one mind and then it reduced that one mind to the voidness but he said that the Madhyamikas on the other hand reduced everything to the voidness directly. That is to say they reduced both so-called matter and so-called mind to the voidness without reducing matter first of all to mind. But the Yogacharins were more concerned it seems with the path of graded steps so they said as it were first reduce all appearances, all phenomena to the one mind and then see that that one mind is perfectly clear. In that one mind there's no distinction of subject and object, that the one mind, in other words is void or is the voidness. So Milarepa seems to follow here the Yogachara rather than the Madhyamika tradition though both of course end up in or with the void, sunyata.

'Now if of realisation the three points are explained,' Realisation or contemplation, 'one consists in the transfer of mundane thought to the absolute, one consists in the state of pure bliss of knowledge, one consists in unaffected composure.'

Kulananda; What is this one consists?

S: That is one point consists. These are the three points. Point one is.. point two is and so

on. So one consists in the transfer of mundane thought to the absolute. Now what do you think is meant by that? The transfer of mundane thought to the absolute. Is that even the best way of putting it. Taking the english quite literally? You could take it as meaning thinking about the absolute rather than thinking about mundane things. In that way you transfer your thought from the mundane to the absolute.

Graham ; Could you give an~ example of that.

S: Well first of all you're thinking about wealth and riches but then you start thinking about the absolute so it's as though you've transferred your thought i.e. your mundane thought usually preoccupied with worldly things to the absolute. You direct your ordinary mind to the absolute, you think about it. Do you think that is what Milarepa means here. Is that enough. Does it go far enough?

Sagaramati; It's talking about a realisation.

It's talking about a realisation. So what would perhaps be a better way of putting it rather than speaking in terms of the transfer of mundane thought

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to the absolute.

Talk in terms more of transformation.

S: Transformation. So can you talk in terms of transformation of thought. What do you usually talk in terms of transformation of?

Sagaramati; Your whole being, your mind.

S: ; Consciousness

S: Your whole being, your mind, consciousness. But even more than that.

_____ Energy.

S: Energy yes. Transformation, sublimation of energy. It's leading your energy as it were from or out of the process of the reactive mind into the process of the creative mind and so to the absolute. So now if of realisation the three points are explained, one consists in the transfer of mundane thought to the absolute', the transformation of one 5 energy from the circle or the cycle to the spiral. 'One consists in the state of the pure bliss of knowledge.' By this time you're well up the spiral evidently. In dependence on samadhi has arisen knowledge and vision of things as they really are so this is the state of pure bliss of knowledge. It's a blissful state and at the same time it's a noetic state, a state of intense positivity and at the same time a state of complete clarity. And this is unaffected by any worldly thing so Milrepa goes on to say. One consists in unaffected composure.' Composure 5 probably not the best word here but what do you think is really meant, composure. Equanimity in the highest sense, the transcendental sense. And unaffected, natural spontaneous. When anything untoward happens you don't just have to grit your teeth and bear it, you don't mind it, you're completely unaffected by it in the depths of your being at least. You might be affected by it physically to some extent but not psychologically, not spiritually.

'Now if for the practice three points are explained, one arises in the power of practising the ten virtues.' So what are these ten virtues?

Perfections.

S: It could be. It's not clear. It could be the ten kusalah~armas, the ten precepts. It could be either of these. Since the context is Mahayana come Vajrayana it's more likely to be the ten Paramitas, the ten perfections as you called them, but it isn't completely certain that it is those.

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But the ten kusalahannas seem to be referred to more often in the Mahayana than - in the Pali canon.

S: This is true.

'One consists in purity while abiding amidst the ten evils.' I'm not sure what these ten

evils are. One usually speaks of the eight evils or eight lokadharmas but one can imagine what they are.

-- ; Could they just be like the opposites of the ten precepts?

S: Could be. It could be the ten akusaldharmas in which case they'd be those not of oneself but of other people. One consists in purity while abiding amidst the ten evils. Taking them in that sense clearly if you're trying to remain pure in the midst of those who are practising the ten evils, the ten akusaladharmas it is very very difficult. So this is the real practice. Practising when nobody around you is practising. Then you really are practising. It's as though there are three stages of practice. Let's take at least for the moment the ten virtues to be the ten kusaladharmas. 'One arises in the power of practising the ten virtues but the second consists in purity while abiding in the midst of the ten evils. The first might be an instance where you're practising the ten virtues and everyone else is practising them. There's no opposition from your environment but in the second place one practices them, one remains pure as it were with regard to them even while abiding amidst people who are following the ten evils, who are doing the exact opposite to what you are doing. So this is surely a higher stage of practice and then what about the third? 'One is the pure void unaffected by adversity.' There you've gone beyond even self and others so that's a higher practice still. You're unaffected by surroundings altogether. You can't be influenced.

In the case of the second you're rather like the lotus growing up singly out of the mud.

'Now if for the fruit three points are explained, Nirvana is not gained as something distinct, Samsara is not avoided as something distinct, One's own thought is confirmed in the Buddha-State.' What does this suggest? What has one transcended now by the time one reaches this stage?

_____ Dualism.

S: Dualism, yes. One gains Nirvana, one achieves Nirvana but not as something distinct. One is away from the Samsara, one is escaped from the Samsara but one doesn't avoid it as something distinct. 'One's own thought is confirmed in the Buddha-State.' What does the use of this word confirmed suggest?

_____ Irreversibility.

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S: Yes but even more than that?

Graham; Rooted.

S: Rooted. But really it was that all the time. You're really being confirmed. You're in that state all the time except you just didn't know it. It's that that makes all the difference. Like the man who had the jewel in the corner of his robe all the time but didn't know it.

Sagaramati; Do you reckon that's what somebody would feel like.

S: Oh yes definitely. Because it's outside time. So when you come to that point as it were outside time then you cannot but realise that you have been there all the time. So therefore necessarily when you've gained enlightenment you realise that you always were enlightened and therefore that you were never unenlightened and so this is why so we are told that some of the Zen masters at this point just let out a laugh because they say how absurd it was, how ridiculous, that they'd ever imagined that they were anything but enlightened. (Laughter) It was such a silly mistake. (Laughter) Especially as they had to suffer so much on account of it, all completely unnecessarily.

Sagaramati; Is it as light as that? (Laughter)

S: It isn't light at all. You know in ordinary life if you've been worrying a lot over something, really worrying, and then you suddenly realise or you get a sudden piece of information and you know you didn't need to worry like that and you think you were so silly, were so absurd that you worried and you just didn't need to have worried. So it's rather like that raised to the highest power as it were. You say well what a fool I was, worrying and struggling along and thinking I was this and thinking I was that but it wasn't so at all. Of course not. You can afford to laugh when you get to that point. (Laughter). What a silly Buddha I was! (Laughter) So one's own thought is confirmed in the Buddha-state. It's not anything that you really come into possession of. Your possession is simply confirmed.

'Of all these three points there's one point to drive home and that is the point of absolute voidness. It is done by a master who is skilled at the task. If you speculate greatly it's not driven in, but if you comprehend all at once, the point's driven home. So this is the most important thing quite clearly. 'Of all these three points there's one point we drive home and that is the point of absolute voidness. So why is that so important do you think? Well this is of course the Mahayana and also the Vajrayana term for ultimate reality. But why is it so important as it were under that particular aspect. What does voidness imply or suggest? There's no limitation, not being tied down to any one particular thing, any one particular form or stage of development. So it suggests complete openness. I think Guenther sometimes translates this openness of being. It means

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that you can develop in an unlimited fashion in any direction as it were. So it's the absolute voidness which is the guarantee of your absolute freedom to develop so that's the one point we drive home. 'It is done by a master who is skilled at the task. If you speculate greatly it's not driven in.' It's only too easy to speculate about the void especially if you're acquainted

with Mahayana philosophy. I think I've mentioned how I once asked a friend of mine in Kalimpong in Tibetan, a layman but very interested in Buddhism who always used to frequent the monasteries on Lhasa, and spend a lot of time with the monks, I once asked him what was the favourite topic of discussion among them and he said 'Oh the thirty-two kinds of voidness. I can't imagine that that discussion was always free from speculation and intellectuality. 'But if you comprehend all at once; It's not serial as it were. Reasoning is serial, success is first this point and because of that point such and such point but vision, transcend- ental vision isn't like that. It's all at once. So if you comprehend all at once the point's driven home, you just see it and of course you know which scriptures devote themselves mainly, almost exclusively to absolute voidness- that's the Prajnaparamita scriptures. That's their one point. Prajna being the subjective as it were counterpart of sunyata.

'This crest jewel of all who practise the Dharma, the yogin has won it when it shines in his mind. So you my pupils let your heart rejoice~' What is this crest jewel?

The voidness.

S: It's the voidness itself. The culminating achievement, the highest achievement, the crowning achievement as we would say. 'The yogin has won it when it shines in his mind.' Not when he really thinks or speculates about it. But is it a thing? Is there a thing shining in the yogi's mind? No. It's the yogin's complete state of openness and freedom. 'So you my pupils let your heart rejoice.' Let your heart rejoice because if you practice faithfully this is what you will experience in the end.

Alright any further points about this song. Milarepa goes rather farther than he's gone in the previous songs. It's a much more advanced instruction given after the disciples had meditated for quite a while. What sort of general impression does it convey?

_____ Simplicity.

S: Simplicity yes. It's very direct, very straightforward. There's nothing complicated about it, nothing abstruse in away, not intellectually abstruse.

You also find in quite a few of Milarepa's songs that he's very fond of point number one and point number two and so on. Very often ther verses of the songs are put in that sort of way.

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(unclear)

S: Ah. That's quite a point. There is of course the tradition that he was a great yogin but with for instance, regard to the life of Milarepa, the so-called legend life it seems that this is the work of a mad poet yogin of two or three centuries later. There's some information about this in a source book of Buddhism translated by Stephan Beyer. It seems that the life of Milarepa was put into that form and some of the songs either composed or at least polished up by this yogi, as it were put into the mouth of Milarepa, as far as one can make out, this is what seems to have happened. But about the hundred thousand songs I don't know~any information about that. Traditionally they are considered the songs of Milarepa but whether that mad or crazy poet yogi living after Milarepa had anything to do with it I haven't been able to find out.

_____ So the biography of Milarepa is taken from the life of the mad one who lived three hundred years later. Is that what you said?

S: No. But there was this mad or crazy, let us say, poet yogi living in the fifteenth century, four hundred years after Milarepa and he wrote the life of Milarepa from material that was available but he wrote it in an extremely fascinating sort of way and interpolated these songs. I just don't know what sort of research has been done, perhaps none at all but there might well have been some authentic original songs which he had access to and incorporated but where a particular episode seemed to need a song and there was no song he might well have composed one himself but being a great poet yogi anyway also it didn't matter. It was equally genuine from a spiritual point of view. I don't remember the name of this yogin. It's clear with the story whoever wrote it had quite a gift of narrative and all that kind of thing. I expect you know there is a new translation of the life of Milarepa, very new by an old friend of mine Lobsang Lhalungpa. The prose parts are quite good but the verse part though maybe a bit more literal they don't read nearly as well I'm afraid as Evans Wentz's version even though his English is a bit old-fashioned but at least it reads rhythmically and somewhat as poetry. I'm afraid Lhalungpa's version isn't as successful in that way any more than Garma Chang's is. This is~ quit~ good, this particular chapter translated by Snellgrove.

Sagaramati; Blake when he talks about this idea of all things are mental- would it be a similar sort of view to the Yogachara.

S: I think in a way yes because in the eighteenth and seventeenth century there was all this discussion started by Locke on, what were they called, Locke made the distinction between the primary and the secondary qualities of matter and then Berkeley showed that even the primary qualities were subjective so to speak whereas Locke had held that only the secondary qualities~

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were subjective. So in that way you get a position of what has been called mentalism.

Sagaramati; I just got the impression the way Blake put it it was a bit different. It was almost as if it was something he actually saw not something that he'd come to by any intellectual means.

S: No right. If you make that sort of hard and fast distinction between a thing as it is and a thing as you perceive it you render existence or reality unknowable which is of course the position that Kant found himself

in. The thing in itself that is the thing that exists apart from being known by anybody was unknowable.

Because the very act of perceiving it changes it.

S: Not that. That's only another way of phrasing the same misunderstanding. _____
There is an important scientific principle which states this.

S: Yes. The principle of uncertainty.

Mahamati; This position of mentalism, is that (unclear)...

S: Yes I think one could say that but there is not a thing that you change by knowing it apart from your actual knowing it but on the other hand that is not solipsism from the Buddhist point of view. You're not reducing the object and subject. There is still an object yes but the object is also mental. There is no sort of unknowable material or as it were, any other material substratum. In other words the matter as Berkeley says is a purely theoretical construct. So the object of the theoretical construct is the subject also of the theoretical construct. What you have is a continuum which can only be described or is best described as mental within which there is a sort of objective pole and a subjective pole but not an object entirely distinct from the subject which the subject knows through its ideas in a manner of speaking but which remains in its reality inaccessible to it. It's not a very easy concept to grasp even as a concept. We usually think of things. We think of things existing apart from our perception of them. In a manner of speaking they do but not in the way that we usually think they do.

One of the reasons why Blake was very anti Locke is something to do with the sort of people that that philosophy in the end produces. That you see reality as being something very separate from that.

S: It eventually produces or it is itself a product of alienated man, one dimensional man.

What it eventually produces is the one-dimensional man.

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Mahamati; Why's that?

S: Because you progressively alienate yourself from experience or from life. You cease to feel in the end.

Mahamati ; But how does that arise from (unclear)

S: First of all because it's an empiricism and because of the importance given to theorisation based on just empirical experience and then it's as though the theorising just takes on the life of its own and just goes its own way and in that way ends up with pure abstraction when you're just talking about these and ~ taking them for reality and you're cut off from real life or real experience. Philosophy becomes purely academic. That's on the one hand. On the other hand you get the utilitarian scientific approach which isn't concerned to feel things or empathise with them but just to use them, use natural resources and then you get technology eventually. So both are alienating. Academic philosophy and also extreme technology.

Kulananda; No room for the aesthetically appreciative.

Yes it would seem that there ought to be but in practice it seems not. Locke for instance never investigated into the beautiful or seemed to show any sensitivity to it or seems to have had any interest in the arts or literature, poetry and so on.

Mahamati; Well (I'd incorporate the first one against my own experience.)

S: Yes but it's a theoretical empiricism or academic empiricism. You make an idea of the empirical the starting point of your theorising. You don't sort of practice it as it were. You just experience it more intensely as your starting point. You don't try to intensify your empirical experience.

Kulananda; In a way it's still a question of this is objective and true and nothing else is possible so you can't expand your own experience.

S: So Locke must have been a person of a particular kind of temperament to begin with.

_____ There's quite a difference in reading Locke and Berkeley. Locke's rather dry and dusty but Berkeley's got ~quite a bit of spark to him.

S: Well you've got a much more beautiful style and much better feeling for language, much more polished and aesthetic in a way. He has been compared to some extent to Plato in that respect whereas Locke's sentences are very convoluted and I'm sure it's not without significance that Kant as a writer is a very bad writer and Schopenhauer a good one and Nietzsche a good one. The style is the man we're told. I'm sure it's no accident. For instance

Plato was a very good writer and Berkeley, even Hume - compared with Locke

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anyway. But the German philosophers were mostly very bad writers. It's not that they were just technical, they had no feeling for words, no sense of literature. That whole side of them was atrophied-but being a good writer won't make a philosopher. Some of the critics say about Schopenhauer he was a good writer, not really a philosopher. But it is so that in the seventeenth century something happened in England that T.S. Eliot referred

to as a dissociation of sensibility; a sort of separation between the emotion and reason basically.

_____ In the seventeenth century.

S: In the seventeenth, yes. More prominent around the middle of the seventeenth century. You feel a strain and tension there between the emotion and the intellect whereas before that it seems as though they've been united.

Sagaramati; In a sense though Schopenhauer's is a way () that. This

is (unclear) and if you

want to understand something you try to almost experience it.

S: Yes. To empathise with it. To sense it or to know it in another sense. Of course that can be vulgarised and travestied but still I think (he) knew the right track. One also can't help feeling this was the same sort of thing about Mahayana philosophy on the whole. The Mahayana does emphasise experience, the Vajrayana emphasises experience but judging by much of the literature one wouldn't have thought so because it's as though the emphasis on experience is almost a theoretical emphasis. People talking about experience far too much rather than having it. It's a little bit like - to cite an amusing parallel - the author of the Kama Sutra. The author of the Kama Sutra is (Vatsyayana) who is reputed to have been a life long celibate. (Laughter) He probably had to be in order to compile this great tome. (Laughter). So it's much the same you feel with some of the Mahayana writers of a later date. They're writing about experience but they're so busy writing about experience they never have time to have any. So one must beware of the purely theoretical emphasis on the value of experience. I think that's what often you get. Suppose you told the average person who didn't know anything about Buddhism, emphasise experience and not theory then you hand him a Buddhist text almost at random. Well he wouldn't get the impression more often than not that Buddhism really placed its emphasis on experience. Not in practice. There's a theoretical emphasis on practice very often but more often than not not much actually in the form of practice.

_____ Perhaps that's why people are attracted to Zen things because at least they are

about people having experiences.

S: I think there the misunderstanding's even more subtle because here you are rejoicing theoretically in the fact that the Zen people are giving up all the conceptual formulations. Again it's purely academic, it's purely

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theoretical. It's one removed further. It's all the more dangerous in a way. So you sit back and enjoy your book on Zen looking down upon all the people who are occupied with Buddhist philosophy in a~theoretical way. You can enjoy reading about the Sixth Patriarch tearing up all the scripture~ It's almost like having a study group about the uselessness of study groups. That everybody thoroughly understands on ~the course of the study group the uselessness of study groups. They go on having more and more study groups explaining this more and carefully with every body agreeing that study groups are completely useless. They know because they've been on so many. They've understood it tho roughly. They have them every weekend. Zen does end up a bit like that.~

_____ Is there a biography of Hakuin besides the one in Trevor Leggett' book?

S: There is one which I have I think. Autobiographical writings of Hakuin. With a long introduction.

Let's leave it there for today.

S: Let's carry on then.

Mahamati; "When he had sung this, the pupils asked, Is there nothing more in it than to pray earnestly to a chosen master who is skilled in the way of instruction and never ~fails?'

The master we5 pleased. 'As for chosen masters who know the way1 they appear under these headings,' he said, and sang this song:

Master1 pupil, instruction, these three, Effort, fortitude faith, these three, Wisdom, Compassion, Absolute, these three, All these are constant knowers of the way.

A holy and perfected Lama is the knower of the way

who clears the darkness;

Faith that never tires is the knower of the way that leads to happy states;

Realisation of the five special powers is the knower of the way that is released from friendship and from separation.

The instruction of one's master, rightly established in succession, is the knower of the way that makes manifest the three Buddha-Bodies.

The Three Jewels in which we seek protection, these are the knowers of the way that never fail.

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Led by these knowers of the way, the yogin reaches the Land of Great Bliss.

He abides in a condition free of perturbation, free of speculation,

His own joyous realm of self-knowledge and self-release, His own firm foundation of sure knowledge, true knowledge.

In this desolate valley, this place where no men dwell,

The yogin's joyful song resounds as thunder, On all sides falls sweet sounding rain, And the flower of compassion spreads out its petals. The fruit of Pure Thought has ripened to the full, And the action of Enlightenment now pervades all things."

S: So 'when he had sung this the pupils asked, 'Is there then nothing more in it than to pray earnestly to a chosen master who is skilled in the way of instruction and never fails?' The master was pleased. 'As for those chosen masters who know the way, they appear under these headings,' he said, and sang this song;' What do you think Milarepa is getting at? There seems in a way to be a little contradiction here at least on the surface.

Kulananda; Masters aren't necessarily human beings.

S: Yes. Masters aren't necessarily human beings. The pupils asked, 'Is there then nothing more in it than to pray earnestly to a chosen master who is skilled in the way of instruction and never fails?' . So the master was pleased. He was certainly pleased with their faith and their devotion but he saw a limitation so he goes on to refer to chosen masters who know the way in the plural and to say, 'they appear under these headings' as if to say don't think that the human teacher sitting in front of you and speaking is the only teacher, the only knower of the way so he enumerates various knowers of the way. In other words various teachers in his song. So do you think the attitude of the disciples is a general sort of thing? What forms does

it take. What does it consist in?

Sagaramati; This idea of having more than one teacher. Spiritual teachers seem to be something that's very very very rare. If you find one you wouldn't naturally go looking round for another one.

S: No but Milarepa isn't really saying that. For instance he is saying in effect that effort . . . '~master, pupil, instruction, ~these three, effort fortitude, faith, these three, wisdom compassion, absolute, these three, all these are constant knowers of the way.' and in his introductory remarks he says and refers to chosen masters who know the way. So he is suggesting

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that yes, the master is the master, the pupil is the master or the pupil's faith, instruction is the master, effort is the master, fortitude is the master, faith is the master, wisdom is the master, compassion, the absolute, and then he specifies 'a holy and perfected lama is the knower of the way who clears the darkness.' That's his specific function. 'Faith that never tires is the knower of the way.' It's specific function is to lead to happy states. So he's saying as it were don't think that you can receive instruction and guidance only from your lama, only from your teacher. You can receive it in all sorts of other ways, even from your own mind, even from your own mental activity, your own practice. Don't rely upon the lama exclusively in an unhealthy sort of way to such an extent that you shut out the possibility of receiving any instruction at all from other sources. ~ Say, for instance if the lama's not around don't say well there's no one to instruct me, no one to teach me, what can I do? Not that sort of attitude. Certainly the teacher is the teacher, the lama is the lama but one can be learning all sorts of things from all sorts of other sources both human and non-human all of the time. This is I think what he's trying to say. He's pleased with their faith and their devotion but he seems not so pleased in a manner of speaking with their apparent tendency to limit the possibility of receiving instruction to himself in the literal sense. If you wanted to be very devoted you could say well it's my teacher, it's my lama who's appearing to me and manifesting himself to me in all these different ways. If you feel or think like that that's fine but don't limit the possibilities of receiving instruction or don't as it were use your faith and devotion to your own lama in such a way as to limit the possibility of your receiving instruction in other ways. This doesn't suggest other human teachers but being open to instructions which come from the dharma itself as you study it, from your own mind, from your own experience. You don't have to have it all spelled out to you by your own individual teacher. Books in the running brooks, sermons in stones etc., etc., as Shakespeare says. So all these various chosen masters have a particular function to fulfill as it were and he says that master, pupil, instruction, effort, fortitude, faith, wisdom, compassion, absolute, all these are constant knowers of the way. What do you think is meant by that? All these masters apparently are knowers of the way but these are constant knowers of the way.

One can rely upon them.

S: One can rely upon them. Constant perhaps in the sense that they're the basic, the most

essential. They must be there. Without them there is no knowing of the way. Without a master, without a pupil, without instruction, communication between them. Without effort fortitude and faith, without wisdom, without compassion, without the absolute, there is in fact no knowing of the way. These are the absolute minimum, the bare essentials.

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It seems to mean that though it is a little obscure I must admit.

Kulananda; All three are interdependent.

S: They're interdependent, each group yes. No master without a pupil and no instruction without both master and pupil and so on. So a holy and perfected lama is the knower of the way who clears the darkness. Milarepa here seems to be indicating the specific, if you like the special function of the human teacher, the human guru. He is the knower of the way who clears the darkness. His particular function as it were is to clear the darkness. Sometimes in India the word guru itself is explained by way of a sort of symbolical etymology as the destroyer or dispeller of darkness. This explanation seems to be connected with that but what does it suggest. It suggests quite clearly that the human teacher's, the lama's main function is to clear the darkness. So what do you think is meant by clearing the darkness? What is this darkness?

_____ Ignorance.

S: Ignorance, yes but perhaps ignorance in a rather specific sense in the form of _____ ?

Graham - Conditions.

S: No.

Vairocana; Avidya.

S: Well that is ignorance in general but more specifically? Sagaramati; Just not being aware.

S: Yes but more specifically than that.

Mahamati; Ignorance of the Dharma.

S: Well you can even learn about the Dharma from books but what specific form or forms does ignorance take? What particular intellectual forms?

Sagaramati; A wrong view.

S: Wrong views yes. It would seem as though Milarepa is saying the principle function of the lama is to clear up or clear away wrong views, Think about that. Why do you think

that should be said ? And also recollect what is the very first sutta of the Theravada Pali Canon. The Theravada Pali Canon contains an enormous amount of material. It's several times longer than the bible. It's divided into three pitakas and the first pitaka is the sutta pitaka which is divided into five nikayas. The first nikaya is the Digha nikaya, the collection of thirty two long discourses and the very first of these thirty two long discourses and therefore the first sutta, the first text in the entire Pali Canon is the

_____ Brahmajala Sutta.

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S: The Brahmajala sutta and what does that deal with?

_____ Wrong views.

S: Wrong views. So the Buddha makes as it were a clean sweep of these wrong views right at the beginning. This is what is suggested. So you see here the Buddha functioning as guru in this sort of way, clearing away the darkness of wrong views, sixty two wrong views altogether. So why do you think this sort of thing is said? Why do you think similarly that this particular discourse was placed right in the forefront of the entire canon?

Why should it be so important to clear the darkness in that specific manner, that specific sense.

_____ That's the very bedrock isn't it?

S: It's the very bedrock. Wrong views are so pernicious. They're also so complicated, so entangled that it's practically impossible for you to clear up your own wrong views by your own thinking and your own study. It's as though you can do almost anything else by yourself off your own back by your own unaided efforts but to get rid of your wrong views you require a lama, a personal teacher. Someone who will argue the toss with you, go into it with you, reason with you, refute you. Otherwise it's very difficult to clear up your wrong views. So a holy and perfected lama is the knower of the way who clears the darkness, the darkness of wrong views particularly. So it's almost as though well it is as though Milarepa is saying that the principle, the specific even the distinguishing function of the teacher, the spiritual teacher, is to clear up, clear away the darkness of the wrong views of the disciple. Because so long as he entertains those wrong views he can't really make very much progress, they will really get in his way. And so long as wrong views are present no perfect vision can arise. Wrong views obstruct perfect vision. They obstruct therefore the experience of the transcendental.

Sagaramati; Does that mean that if you had had some sort of insight and you had a head full of wrong views you could sort of misappropriate that insight in a way.

S: In a way you could.

Sagaramati; I don't mean transcendental insight.

S: Yes well this is the sort of thing that the Buddha describes in the Brahmajala sutra itself. You misinterpret your own dhyanic experience for instance and you interpret it perhaps as mystically, perhaps in terms of union with god and so on.

Then Milarepa says, 'faith that never tires is the knower of the way that leads to happy states.' It's as though he's saying faith is a guru especially faith that never tires and what is its specific

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function? 'To lead to happy states' or more fully~~-perhaps to lead to states of positive emotion or to lead to the arising of skilful mental events. This is the particular function of faith so in that way faith is a teacher, faith is a knower of the way. So we notice here a quite interesting emphasis in these two lines. One as it were intellectual, the other as it were emotional. It's the function of the human, the personal teacher, to clear away the darkness and it's the function of faith to lead to positive and ever more positive emotional states. So this is

). If the darkness of wrong views is cleared away and if one is progressing to ever more and more positive mental states then your progress is well assured. You may well experience the path of vision and also the path of transformation.

Mahamati; Doesn't that give the impression that (intellectual approach?

S: It does.

Sagaramati; It's more to do with communication.

S: Well you could say that the teacher could inspire faith in the disciple simply by sitting there but you don't get rid of the disciple's wrong views simply by sitting there however beautiful you may look. You have to have recourse to discourse, to argument, to discussion. You have to as~~it were take the offensive, you have to attack, attack the disciple's wrong views. So even though the teacher may be inspiring faith in the disciple, attacking and clearing away the darkness of his wrong views is his more overt and active function as it were, at least according to this classification, this way of looking at things. So in what way is faith that never tires the knower of the way that leads to happy states? How does faith that never tires lead to happy states? How is it able to function in that particular way. Bear in mind what these happy states are. They are all sorts of positive mental events presumably.

Kulananda; Maybe there's an orienteering function.

S: Yes. Orienting towards what.

Kulananda; Ultimately towards enlightenment.

S: Ultimately towards enlightenment. So when faith is strong in the mind an unskilful mental state can hardly be present. The happy states could mean happy states of rebirth but even so that would suggest a sort of dhyanic experience and therefore involve all the positive mental events. Faith leads upwards. Faith leads to the ever more and more positive. Not belief of course. So here we have the intellectual, the reason and also the emotional side of things looked after or provided for.

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Then 'Realisation of the five special powers is the knower of the way that is released from friendship and from separation.' What are these five special powers. What do you think they are?

Sagaramati; The five spiritual faculties.

S: They're probably the five spiritual faculties which are known as powers, bala, when they've become firmly established. So realisation of the five special powers of faith and understanding, energy and meditative tranquility and awareness. These are the five special powers that are the knower of the way and which have the function of releasing from friendship and from separation. Now how do you think this is? What do you think is meant by friendship in this connection? It's more like a sort of worldly intimacy in the course of which you depend upon somebody else. It's more like association and dissociation. So why should the realisation of these five special powers have this particular function. Why should they be a knower of the way that is released from friendship and from separation?

Kulananda; They make for self-containedness.

S: Make for self-containment. You become more of an individual. So friendship and separation take place here within the context of the group. So once you develop these five spiritual faculties to the point where they become powers or forces, you are really very much an individual. You're no longer dependent upon the company of other people. Your mind being separated from them. So it's these five special powers or development of these five special powers that teach you that. Independence. Independence of company. Equanimity in the face of separation.

Then 'The instruction of one's master, rightly established in succession, is the knower of the way that makes manifest the three Buddha bodies.' So the holy and perfected lama has already been mentioned. Now it refers to one's master so do you think a different kind of teacher is implied here?

Kulananda; Could it be one of the esoteric refuges? Perhaps the yiddam.

S: No but the context does seem to be tantric. It's as though the wholly perfected lama is a teacher in general perhaps a Mahayana teacher one might say, who clears up one's wrong views but here perhaps it's the tantric guru that Milarepa has in mind because he says, 'is the knower of the way that makes manifest the three Buddha bodies'. And this is very much a tantric way of looking at things. You know what the three Buddha bodies are - Dharmakaya, Samboghakaya, Nirmanakaya. So how does this particular knower of the way make manifest the three Buddha bodies? What does that manifesting of the three Buddha bodies refer to?

Kulananda; Tantric practice.

S: But more specifically.

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Kulananda; Visualisation.

S: It involves that but where's the connection?

~~;Initiation.

S: ~Yes but where's the connection? But it's by or via one's own body, speech and mind. What in us is body speech and mind in the Buddha is Dharmakaya, Samboghakaya and Nirmanakaya. So very often it is said in Tantric language that gaining enlightenment consists in the transformation of one's body principle into Nirmanakaya, one's speech principle into Samboghakaya, one's mind or heart principle into Dharmakaya and that this is effective by the process of the Tantric or Vajrayana sadhana. So the initiation and instruction of the master enables one to do this. Not simply to gain enlightenment in the more general sense as it were but to transform one's body into Nirmanakaya, one's speech into Samboghakaya and mind into Dharmakaya. It's a fuller more complex richer realisation if you like according to the Tantra. So the instruction of one's master rightly established in succession, that is the master who has a teacher of his own right back to the original source of that particular tradition, is the knower of the way that makes manifest the three Buddha-bodies. That is to say who helps one to transform one's crude, mundane body speech and mind into the enlightened unconditioned body speech and mind of a Buddha, in other words the three Buddha bodies. So it's as though in the first line of this particular verse the guru is a guru in a more general Buddhist sense but here it specifically seems to be the Tantric guru.

Mahamati; Is it possible to say what that would mean. Transformation of the body etc.,

S: Sometimes the unconditioned body's called the Vajrakaya in still more tantric terminology. It's a bit like what I was saying some days ago about a being always being embodied. Do you remember that? It's a little bit like that. That if there is no ultimate duality between conditioned and unconditioned there must always be or appear to be a body and when the mind is as it were enlightened mind that body is a Nirmanakaya. This is probably about as much as one can really say.

'Then the three jewels in which we seek protection, these are knowers of the way that

never fail.' They also help us, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. They also guide us and they never fail. That is obvious isn't it. The Buddha never fails, the Dharma never fails, the spiritual community, that is to say the transcendental community, never fails. You can always depend upon them. They are always there. They always do their bit if only you will do yours. If you'll only jump into the air the law of gravitation can be relied upon to work.

So 'Led by these knowers of the way', that is to say master, pupil instruction and so on and then the holy and perfected lama,

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faith that never tires, realisation of the five special powers etc., 'the yogin reaches the land of Great Bliss.' What do you think is significant about this? The reference to the land of Great Bliss? Well it's very concrete isn't it, not a state, not an experience, a land of Great Bliss - Mahasukha - a characteristically Tantric expression. Great Bliss. So what does this emphasise once again?

Kulananda; Extreme positivity.

S: Extreme positivity. That spiritual life isn't sort of dry and emotion-less. It's the same emphasis of course in the Theravada originally. We mustn't forget that. Nirvanam paramam sukham - Nirvana is the supreme bliss. One Japanese Buddhist writing, I remember, some years ago said that he thought the description of Nirvana as bliss extremely sensual. What do you think that tells one about that particular Japanese. If you object to the description of Nirvana as bliss.

Sagaramati; The only feeling he had was sensual.

S: Yes he seemed to have forgotten that Dhammapada verse. Also patience is the highest forbearance.

So 'led by these knowers of the way the yogin reaches the land of Great Bliss. He abides in a condition free of perturbation, free of speculation.' The condition free of perturbation seems to have a sort of emotional connotation and free of speculation a sort of intellectual connotation. One is the equivalent of the other, corresponds to the other.

'His own joyous realm of self-knowledge and self-release, his own firm foundation of sure knowledge, true knowledge.' The yogin lives in that realm like a king as it were.

Then of course Milarepa comes back to his own situation, 'In this desolate valley, this place where no men dwell, the yogin's 5 joyful song resounds as thunder.' What does that suggest, this sudden transition?

_____ He's been talking about the yogin's land of Great Bliss and now he's talking about where he actually is.

S: Yes that is his land of Great Bliss. He is living in the land of Great Bliss in this desolate valley - that's his land of great bliss. This place where no men dwell, ~~~~ yogin' S joyful song resounds as thunder, On all sides the sweet sounding rain falls, and the flower of compassion spreads out its petals. The fruit of pure thought has ripened to the full, and the action of Enlightenment now pervades all things.' What is he describing here? He's describing his own realisation isn't he. His joyful song is like the thunder. His teaching is like the sweet sounding rain, the feeling of compassion that he has for his disciples is just like the flower opening its petals and his knowledge, his wisdom is just like the ripened fruit and the fragrance of that, the influence of that is like his enlightenment which is for the benefit of all living beings.

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_____ He's got a marvelous ability to extract from his physical environment symbols for his realisation.

S: Yes.

Alright let's go on then~.

Sagaramati; "When he had sung this, they thought that as he was content wherever he was staying, they should invite him to their country. So they besought him saying: 'O holy master, as your calm of spirit is inviolate and here is no need for you to perform deliberate practice, please come to our country, and accepting the meritorious offerings of the generous lay-folk, benefit all beings by turning the wheel of the doctrine.'"

S: So what exactly are the disciples doing here? What would you say is their mental attitude?

Sagaramati; They're a bit greedy.

S: A bit greedy, and what about the argument they use - 'Oh holy master as your calm of spirit is inviolate and there's no need for you to perform deliberate practice, please come to our country.'

Sagaramati; It's a rationalisation.

S: There's~ an element of rationalisation here.

_____ Cunning.

S: Cunning yes. But anyway what does he reply.

Dharmananda; "But he replied, 'It is this practice of mine in the mountains that benefits all beings, and although his practice may be inviolate the strength of a hermit consists in his remaining in the mountains,' and so he sang this song:"

S: So a very straightforward neat sort of reply. Alright so how does his song go.

_____ "By responding to the grace of my master we have met
together,

May he bless us with a ripening of our natures and complete release.

~o~ You worthy practisers of the doctrine who are seated here,

I shall sing you a song of instruction of profound import, So be not inattentive, but surrender
here your power of hearing.

The white leopard of the snowy heights,

The leopard lording it amidst the white and snowy wastes, From others he has nought to fear,

The leopard lording it amidst the snow,

Herein his strength consists~.

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The eagle, royal bird of the russet crags, Stretching his wings through the expanse of the
heavens, Of a fall down the precipice he has no fear, The eagle's flight to the summit of the
heavens, Herein his strength consists.

Below in the waters of the ocean,

Nimbly moves the darting fish

Of drowning he has nought to fear, 'Tis in his darting that his strength consists.

In the branches of the mountain trees of Mon Nimbly move the monkeys, great and small, Of
tumbling down they have no fear,

It is their nature, this playfulness of every kind.

Beneath the bowers of the forest glades, The striped Indian tiger moves with agility, He has
nought of fear of fearful things, It is his very nature, such pride in his adroitness.

In the forest of Singala

Milarepa practices the Void:

Of slipping from this state he has no fear, ~Tis~ in its long retaining that his strength consists.

~nwavering assimilation of the mandala That purifies the elemental sphere, Has of error

nought ~b fear,

'Tis in adhering to the inmost essence that its strength consists.

In assimilation of the inner practice with veins and breath and bindu,

The obstructions and the hesitations that manifest themselves,

Do not mean the teaching's faulty;

They are the protest of hastily departing notions.

In experiencing the power of this practice of the Innate the many various forms appearing

Are not the false perception of a mundane mind, But the arising in dependence of the various notions.

In the ripening of potentiality, of the act with its cause and effect,

To see the separate forms of good and evil, Does not mean that one's practice is in error.

For they are clear concepts of discriminating knowledge.

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As for hermits who are able to remain firm in their practice,

Their small yearnings towards the world,

Do not mean they're seeking news of it;

They're just an inner sign of the turning back of momentary desires.

That I, a yogin, who practises this profound way of the doctrine,

should keep to mountain crags,

Does not imply hypocrisy and foolishness,

But an innate desire to practise one-pointedly.

These many songs of Milarepa

are not just foolishness intended for distraction, But profound admonition for the benefit of you pupils who are gathered here."

S: So what Milarepa was saying in the early verses of this song is quite clear. He's saying the white leopard is safe so long as he remains in the snow. The eagle is safe so long as it remains in the air, the fish is safe so long as he remains in the ocean, the monkey is safe so long as he remains in the trees. The Indian tiger is safe so long as he remains in the forest and Milarepa is safe so long as he remains in the Void and also as long as he remains in the

mountains. So apart from giving a reply to these five novices what is he saying, what is he sort of reminding us of in these verses?

Sagaramati; The importance of a right environment.

S: The importance of a right environment but more specifically than that perhaps.

Sagaramati; That they're all individuals.

S: All individuals. But it's also warning us against over confidence and reminding us how much we do depend on that positive environment and that we shouldn't venture out of it prematurely. Even he, Milarepa, is being careful, as it were, maybe at least to set a good example to others. Perhaps there is in fact no danger of his slipping from that state. Perhaps he could quite easily go off to Mon but he prefers as it were to set a good example to others who may not have his stability, by remaining where he is in the mountains and in any case that is what his guru had instructed him to do. It's very easy to go forth from one's retreat into the world or where- ever but it's very difficult to maintain one's spiritual experience. The experience that might have been quite easy for you to maintain while you were staying in solitude. I think nearly everybody has found that haven't they? Going back wherever you go back to after a retreat or after a solitary

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retreat, even after a weekend in the country; it isn't easy to maintain your positive mental state in those changed and less helpful surroundings so don't be over confident. This is sort of what Milarepa is saying. No one should be over confident, no hermit or no yogi, no spiritual practitioner should be over confident or leave his retreat prematurely. There is a parable somewhat like these verses of Milarepa's in the Pali Canon where the Buddha says that the deer are safe so long as they feed high up on the mountainside but if they come down near the fields to nibble the crops then the hunters may get them. So in the same way if the monks stray away from their ancestral pasture which is the pasture of meditation and solitary life, if they stray down and start nibbling at the fringes of worldly life as it were then Mara may get them. It's so easy to be distracted.

Then the following verses refer to spiritual practices especially tantric practices, and are a little obscure. I rather suspect that the translator had only a vague idea about them and is translating simply the words but let's try to make some sense of them. 'Unwavering assimilation of the mandala that purifies the elemental sphere has of error~ nought to fear. 'Tis in adhering to the inmost essence that its strength consists.' So what is this mandala and what is this unwavering assimilation of the mandala? Well the mandala probably refers to the visualised forms, that is to say the circle of visualised forms that the yogi is meditating upon, perhaps a particular Buddha in the centre, other Buddhas and Bodhisattva at the corners. Unwavering assimilation of the mandala that he's not only concentrating upon it but that he has as it were absorbed it into himself, has incorporated within himself, within his own spiritual experience, his own realisation, all the qualities that those particular Buddhas and Bodhi- sattvas personify and embody and in that way the elemental sphere. One might say his own cruder and baser nature has been thoroughly purified and therefore of error he has no fear. 'Tis in adhering to the inmost essence that its strength consists.' Presumably the inmost

essence of the mandala, that is to say its central point.

Then he goes on to say, 'In assimilation of the inner practice with veins and breath and bindu, the obstructions and the hesitations that manifest themselves do not mean the teaching's faulty; They are the protest of hastily departing notions.' The sort of experience he's referring to is a really very general one though here it's described in specifically tantric terms. The assimilation of the inner practice with veins and breath and bindu.' The veins and breath and bindu have a technical sense here. It's not really veins, it's more like nerves, it's nadi, the currents of nervous energy within not just the body but the whole sort of psycho-physical being. Breath the prana or inner vitality one might say, the energy and bindu is specifically the masculine sexual energy. I think the note here is a bit misleading. So what Milarepa is saying that when one is concerned with inner practice in connection with the assimilation of the

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nerves, the basic psycho-physical energy and the sexual energy. In other words when one is trying to transmute and sublimate that energy obstructions and hesitations may manifest themselves. But that does not mean the teaching is faulty. 'They are the protest of hastily departing notions.' In other words on account of that sublimation of energy or redirecting of energy that is taking place within you there are all sorts of little symptoms. These symptoms might seem at first sight to mean that something is going wrong. Maybe the teaching is wrong, maybe you're not practising it properly but really they're just reactions of your conditioned being that show that something is happening, in fact that things are going alright and he refers to them humourously as 'the protests of hastily departing notions.' Certain wrong views or certain wrong attitudes are departing and as they depart they make their little protest. (laughter). It's rather like that but there is nothing to worry about. That is all that is happening. So 'In the assimilations of the inner practice with veins and breath and bindu, the obstructions and the hesitations that manifest themselves, do not mean the teaching's faulty; They are the protest of hastily departing notions.'

Sagaramati; Is this something that can go on over quite a long period of time?

S: Yes one would imagine right up to the last moment itself, as it were. So long as there is a conditioned being to react at all, though presumably the reactions would be on ever higher and more subtle levels. There can of course be physical symptoms. A quite well known one is diarrhoea. This is well known in meditation centres. (Laughter)

Sagaramati; I thought it was the food! (Laughter).

S: Well apparently not though one might have suspected it. In some meditation centres this might be so in the East but it does seem to be a sort of psycho-somatic symptom in many cases.

_____ ; So if you experience unpleasant sensations in the course of meditation that's really nothing to worry about.

S: Broadly speaking nothing to worry about. Unpleasant physical sensations like nausea, nausea is a quite common one. But it is possible on occasions that one is practising wrongly and is therefore experiencing physical symptoms, especially if one is over tense one may experience headache and so on and even tensions in different parts of the body. That means that one is practising wrongly and one should adopt a more relaxed attitude.

_____; Would it be worth practising just sitting if you are experiencing that sort of tension?

S: It certainly wouldn't do any harm to practice just sitting but to practise~ just sitting if you are in a tense state isn't very easy. You might just start feeling bored. You need to be really relaxed to practise just sitting.

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Sagaramati; What would you do then in a situation like that. I think you get it more with visualisations - sometimes if you're trying to mentally do things without much feeling in them you get v~ry tense.

S: Broadly speaking as far as I see with people who come along to classes, especially in the early days when I was at Hampstead,(we don't get it so much) headaches which are the product of tension which persist. That is headaches coming when one meditates can't be dispelled by just a few words of advice about relaxing. One usually finds that that particular person is in quite a bad state. This is what I used to find in those days and that it was a question of a complete change in their basic attitudes, their whole way of life. They were so stiff, so rigid, so buttoned up, in a way they shouldn't be meditating. Maybe they needed some therapy first to let themselves go a bit and establish contact with their emotions. If such people were to take up meditation especially mindfulness of breathing or vipassana as some of them were in those days well one can guarantee head- aches. They're not ready really to meditate in those extreme cases. They're mostly older people, some even quite middle-aged. So one has as it were to go back and start right from the beginning, strengthen the psychological foundation especially the positive emotions and feelings. I used to feel quite sorry for these people who used to insist on coming and meditating. They usually went to vipassana classes too and to the Zen meditation and they'd be suffering all the time from headaches but someone before I came along had convinced them that suffering was good for you and it was a sign of progress so they carried on and some of them were onlyconvinced that they ought to relax after several years and after I'd mentioned the matter a number of times. They didn't really believe me. They felt that they were getting on well with their meditation and that I just didn't know. They really thought that and of course if they are convinced that they're getting on well with their meditation and these terrible headaches are signs that they're getting on very well indeed and are becoming quite spiritually advanced and that they actually had experienced the truth of dukkha (laughter) then if you tried to suggest that they're merely tense and need to relax you're taking them down from their spiritual pedestal at the same time. It means a lot to them to be on that pedestal and to think that they are quite advanced and are well into meditation and some of them had been doing it for years and years so they wouldn't very easily give up that sort of emotional investment but quite

clearly they just needed to establish contact with their emotions. I remember one of them very well - he was a very nice pink faced, clean-shaven chap of about forty, plump and stout - I think he was a solicitor's clerk or something like that, in a black suit and a very stiff white collar and he always seemed like a taylor'~ dummy, he was so stiff. And he had a terrible headache all the time that he ever meditated and he used to meditate regularly and he said he felt as

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if he had a band or iron around his head getting tighter and tighter all the time but he was coming along to Sakura classes as long as I was ever taking them and it did sort of penetrate his brain eventually just a little bit that he was in fact tense. By that time his meditation had got into so much a habit and this sort of band of iron~had become so much a way of life as it were, almost like his bowler hat, that he just couldn't give up and he was teaching meditation when I last heard of him. He was having his own meditation classes. So this seemed really extraordinary, very sad, but he was convinced that he was well into meditation. He sat certainly very well. He had a good posture and could sit without moving for quite a long time but he was so stiff and so unrelaxed and clearly so alienated from his feelings, he didn't seem human really but one could do very little. He just couldn't really be convinced about his own state. Somebody else had told him before I came along that he was doing very well and was well into meditation and well on the way to enlightenment and he sort of believed that and that he had to go on. As far as I know he's still in that state and this is~~aft~r fourteen or fifteen years. He must be about fifty-five or something like that.

_____; Do you think it's important then for the metta bhavana to be done?

S: 0 Yes. People like that are usually quite suspicious of the metta bhavana and think it's a pious little practice which is OK for worldly lay- buddhists but not a real spiritual practice at all. They quite despise the meta bhavana. They of c~urse needless to say find it quite difficult even impossible to do and depreciate it quite strongly. Or else they believe that they're full of metta and don't need it. Some of them even in this completely alienated state believe that they're full of metta. They actually believe this and they will tell you if you suggest they ought to practice metta bhavana they'll tell you that they experience it all the time. because they have the idea of metta - they know what the definition of it is and they accept it and they think about it and they agree with it. so they think that they have it because they don't know the difference between a thought and an emotion really. It's extraordinary. They really are examples of alienated awareness.

_____; For mild cases of alienated awareness which seem quite common especially among people on retreats, do you think the metta bhavana is..

S: Well they have to get in touch with their emotions and if they're alien- ated because they've got unrecognised negative emotions it seems almost sort of standard procedure that they have to get into contact with these negative emotions first and experience them and from the negative go on to the positive but I think, I suspect that in such cases where you're blocked and alienated because you're refusing to recognise and experience negative emotions you can't go directly to the cultivation of positive emotions. I suspect that you have to go through the experience of the

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negative emotions first. But at least acknowledge them, at the very least acknowledge them.

Sagaramati; Is there any connection between these physical irritations we get and the psychic centres? A guy in Manchester came to see me and he was always saying he'd been practising meditation for quite a while and he described what he got in his head as a sort of vortex of energy like you said which was turning round and round.

S: I think it's quite suspicious if you start having your experiences in the head without having them lower down first. You can experience a sort of dry sort of electric energy in the forehead but that is not really a spiritual experience. It does sound a bit alienating but people do have sort of experiences in the centres as it were. They can feel sort of bubbly sensations or tickling sensations up their spine or near the heart or in the stomach and so on. This is all a sign of loosening up energy. It's not really much more than that. If people are a bit sort of psychically sensitive they may have sort of visions associated with that. Again it's not of any great significance but it's good. In a sense it shows there's something happening, something being churned up, something loosened and they should just carry on with whatever practice they are doing.

Milarepa goes on to say, 'In experiencing the power of this practice of the innate the many various forms appearing are not the false perceptions of a mundane mind, but the arising in dependence of the various notions.' What do you think is meant by the 'Innate' here? (Sahajja) in Sanskrit. The congenital literally. It's a particularly or specifically Tantric term and what does it suggest. What does it try to point out do you think?

Kulananda; A kind of essence.

S: A kind of essence, yes but what kind of essence?

Kulananda; Is it going too far to say Buddha nature?

S: Buddha nature, yes but Buddha nature is a more general term. Why refer to Buddha nature as the innate?

_____; Because it's there all the time.

S: It's there all the time yes. It isn't something you have to acquire or even to attain in a way. It is there. It's innate in you. It is the innate. So in experiencing the power of this practice of the Innate the many various forms appearing, that is of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and so on are not the false perception of a mundane mind. In other words they're not the symptoms of the sort that we've been talking about. You mustn't think of Buddha nature or enlightenment or the Innate as something sort of abstract, something sort of colourless. It's rich and full of content and variety and beauty. So you get all sorts of glimpses of this in the course

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of your spiritual progress. So these sort of glimpses are not false perceptions of a mundane mind. They are genuinely higher spiritual, even transcendental experiences as the riches of the innate become more and more manifest to you. The arising in dependence of the various notions. this isn't really very clear but we can see what the meaning really is. So there is a difference between spiritual experiences which are just like reactions of the conditioned mind and spiritual experiences which are sort of glimpses of the riches of the transcendental. Because we think of the absolute or can only think of it or Buddha nature, in sort of abstract terms usually we tend to think it was something rather contentless, featureless, blank but the tantric tradition especially reminds us it isn't really like that at all. It's very rich in content. It's like white light which contains within itself all the colours of the rainbow.

'In the ripening of potentiality, of the act with its cause and effect, to see the separate forms of good and evil does not mean that one's practice is in error, for they are clear concepts of discriminating ~no~le~g~~# What do you think this means?

Kulananda; You can see good and evil without falling into dualism.

S: Yes you can see them operating on their own level, good as good, evil as evil, without regarding them as absolutes.

This is ethical dualism not metaphysical dualism.

When it says to see the separate forms of good and evil does it mean that there are actually separate forms, perhaps personifications of them?

S: I don't think it means that. It did occur to me to wonder whether he might be referring here to peaceful and wrathful forms of deities but no, I don't think he is because the first line says, 'In the ripening of potentiality, of the act with its cause and effect, to see the separate forms of good and evil,' - the different forms of good and evil are the different kinds of suffering and happiness that come to you as a result of your previous actions in accordance with the law of karma. So even though you're enlightened, even though you're above duality you still see skilful actions on the mundane level as producing happiness and unskilful actions as producing pain. In other words your realisation of sunyata does not cancel out the fact that you see the operation of the law of conditionality on the mundane level. The absolute truth does not negate the relative truth on the level of the relative truth. In fact the absolute truth that makes the relative truth possible. So because you are enlightened you do not ignore the law of cause and effect.

There's a Zen story in this connection, a very famous one. It's the one about the fox spirit. I don't think I remember it quite correctly but I'll mention it nonetheless. There was a fox spirit haunting somewhere and a monk apparently performed some sort of exorcism and managed to help him and then asked how did you manage to become born a fox spirit. He said originally I was

a Zen master and he said - again I'm not sure of the details that one day one of my disciples asked me about the state of enlightenment in regard to karma and I said when you gain enlightenment you go completely beyond the law of karma and for that terrible mistake I was reborn as a fox spirit for five hundred births. So then he asked the monk what should I have said. I'm not quite sure what exactly the answer was but it was something like this. That the correct answer was, when you are enlightened you do not get in the way of the law of cause and effect or something like that. In other words suggesting enlightenment didn't negate it completely on its own level but enables you to see its relativity in the light of the absolute. So to think that the unconditioned negates the conditioned on its own level is an extreme view, a very extreme view. One might say going deeper still, that one sees the conditioned and the unconditioned as non-dual. There is duality between conditioned and unconditioned or between duality and non-duality only from the standpoint of duality. From the standpoint of non-duality there's no duality between the dual and the non-dual. So good and evil, conditioned and unconditioned, dual and non-dual, these are clear concepts of discriminating knowledge. Discriminating knowledge makes use of these concepts without being misled by them.

'As for hermits who are able to remain firm in their practice, their small yearnings towards the world, do not mean they're seeking news of it; They're just an inner sign of the turning back of momentary desires.' So he says there are hermits who are able to remain firm in their practice but from time to time they may just have a feeling of attraction towards the world on account of previous conditioning. He doesn't mean that they're really interested. It's just a sign of the turning back of momentary desires. And then he speaks about himself directly

'That I a yogin, who practices this profound way of the doctrine, should keep to mountain crags, does not imply hypocrisy and foolishness, but an innate desire to practice one-pointedly.' So why should his keeping to mountain crags imply hypocrisy. In what way could it imply that? He didn't really want to stay there, he just wanted to impress people and get the name, the reputation of a great yogi. Or foolishness - he just didn't know anything better to do. Like a savage. But his real reason is an innate desire to practice one-pointedly. He just wants to simplify everything, he just wants to concentrate only on his practice and he can best do that in the mountain peaks, that's why he's really there.

Kulananda; Innate doesn't (restrict) because it's naturel.

S: Yes, it's what he really wants to do, not what he thinks he ought to do. It's an innate desire.

'These many songs of Milarepa are not just foolishness intended for distraction but profound admonition for the benefit of you pupils who are gathered here.' It's very easy to take admonitions non-seriously.

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This reminds me of what was said by one of the modern existentialist writers, in fact the first of them, Kirkegaard, in one of his writings he says that the whole of organised christianity is

based upon one great assumption - that god is a fool - (Laughter) and he gave an example. He said that every Sunday you go along to church and you hear the preacher talking about all sorts of things and tell you to love your neighbour etc., etc., but you know that he doesn't expect you to take him seriously and he knows that you know this so it's all a great big farce. That he teaches on Sundays these things that he knows you're not going to take seriously and you know that he knows that you're not going to take them seriously and you both think that you're fooling god. (Laughter). You both think that god accepts this as christianity and thinks that you're good christians but god is a fool. You all think god is a fool! So it's only too easy to get into this sort of state. You get it with Buddhists too. The bhikkhu gives his little sermon, his patter, which no one is taking seriously and he doesn't expect them to take it seriously and they know he doesn't. (Laughter) and it's just a good old custom and so on. I had some experience of this, I've mentioned this before in connection with the so called Buddhist wedding. I used to celebrate or at least to bless Buddhist weddings quite often in India because there was a great demand and every one went especially among the ex-Untouchables so at first I used to do this quite happily and I used to give a talk quite seriously from my point of view that you are both Buddhists, both the bride and the bridegroom are Buddhists so therefore it is to be expected that whatever you do in life you do it for the sake of the Dharma, for the sake of your spiritual development, so similarly with your marriage. Why have you come together, just to help each other in the course of your spiritual development. So I used to say this quite seriously and I used to think at the beginning that they took it seriously, that they really had decided to get married to help one another in their personal development but then it gradually dawned upon me, quite a few years ago, that it wasn't always the case. (Laughter) That they weren't taking my words seriously. They sat there and listened quietly faces down (Laughter) hands together taking it all in but in the end it sort of dawned on me, this is just a face, it's a sort of charade we're going through, they're not taking it seriously. So then from that moment I found it more and more difficult to celebrate these weddings. I thought I'm just lending myself to some sort of dishonesty, some kind of stunt, it's all just to impress the neighbours and all that kind of thing so I lost my enthusiasm for these sort of functions. In England also I was quite chary of performing them. At first I thought maybe with english Buddhists it's different because after all they decided to be Buddhists, it's their own conscious deliberate decision, so again with some enthusiasm I used to say you've come together as Buddhists, as individuals, why do you want to get married, just to help

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help each other in your spiritual life and development and at first I thought

well yes they were taking it seriously but in the end I realised they weren't. Again in the same way they listened to Bhante and heard all these things piously but they weren't - taking it seriously. That wasn't the main reason why they'd come together. They'd come together, been brought together for very different reasons. I doubted whether when they were alone together they really seriously discussed the Dharma or really seriously trying to help each other in their spiritual development, No. I thought this is just a big hypocrisy I just don't want anything more to do with it and I left it to other people I'm afraid to do these things if they still felt able to do them and this is what is happening now. (Laughter). I don't deny the possibility in theory that people might get married for this sort of reason or there might be some element of this but it's usually not very common and it's certainly hardly ever the main

reason why people marry. To help each other in their spiritual development. It would be very good if it was because every body gets married practically. It would be nice to think that they did it to help each other develop as individuals, even psychologically not to speak of spiritually but it doesn't seem like that at all. So this is the sort of thing that I have in mind. you just say your little piece and what's expected of you and no one takes it seriously. I sometimes feel quite sorry for say church of england clergymen who have to get up in the pulpit every week and say things in which they don't really believe to people who probably don't really believe them just to keep the whole show going. It must be really soul destroying - if you have a soul to begin with anyway - really soul destroying. No wonder they drop out and

get jobs in the social services and so on. At least they can believe in that to some extent. So Milarepa's warning against this sort of thing. 'These many songs of Milarepa are not just foolishness intended for distraction,' I'm meaning what I say, I mean it seriously, 'But profound admonition for the benefit of you pupils who are gathered here.' I had another experience of this sort, I remember it now, at Centre House when I gave a beautiful lecture on the Bodhisattva Ideal and all about dana and generosity and helping others and sacrificing yourself for others and every one was very pleased and carried away by the lecture, how wonderful and how wonderful the Bodhisattva ideal is and doing things for other people. They were really happy with this. So after the talk and after we had our beautiful puja and recited all these lovely verses of Shantideva's somebody got up and said to about forty, fifty or sixty people who were present, 'Could one or two people please help with the washing up?' and not a soul stirred. Not one person came forward. So how seriously were these words of mine really taken. one would have expected that the way that people were beaming with pleasure that they would be prepared to sacrifice themselves in the jaws of starving tigresses immediately afterwards! (Laughter) but they weren't even ready to stay for ten minutes and help with the washing up. So the aesthetic appreciation of

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a spiritual talk is a quite different thing from being spiritually receptive to it.

Airight 'when he had sung this

_____"; "When he had sung this they said, 'That is all very well, but although you indeed dwell in the mountains, you must surely have built up a citadel of meditation and suchlike aids against hopes and fears.

'The master replied: 'The citadel of meditation and other similar aids of mine are like this, ' and so sang this song:

I bow at the feet of my father, the wish granting gem,

May he bless you, my children, with an abundance of aids.

I beg him to bring you to firm knowledge

In the divine fortress of your own body.
Frightened by fears, I built up a castle.
The voidness of absolute being, this was that castle,
And of its destruction I now have no fear.
Fearful of cold, I made up a garment,
The producing of warmth within, this was that garment,
And from cold I now have no fear.
Fearful of poverty, I sought for some wealth,
The seven glorious and inexhaustible jewels, these
were that wealth,
And from poverty I now have no fear.

Fearful of hunger, I sought for some food, Absorption in the absolute, this was that food, And from hunger I now have no fear.

Fearful of thirst I sought for a drink, The nectar of mindfulness, this was that drink, And from thirst I now have no fear.

Fearful of melancholy, I sought for a friend, The blissful void, this is my lasting friend, And from melancholy I now have no fear.

Fearful of straying, I sought for a way, The practice of two-in-one, this was that way, And of straying I now have no fear.

So I, a yogin, complete with all desirable wealth, Am happy wherever I stay.

At Yolmo in the tiger cave of Singa-dzong One trembles with fear at the roar of the tigress
And this sends one involuntarily to strict seclusion. There arises compassion at the play of her cubs,

And this reduces involuntarily the thought entanglement

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The cries of the monkeys cling to one's mind,
and this causes involuntarily a feeling of sadness, But at the chattering of their young one just

wants to laugh,

And this produces involuntarily an elevation of spirit.

Sweet to the ear is the sad son of the cuckoo with its tremulous note,

And one is caused to hearken involuntarily,

And the varied cries of the raven are cheering to his neighbour the yogin.

Happy is the state of one who lives in such a spot as this,

Without the presence of a single companion, and even in this one is happy.

And now by the song of this rejoicing yogin

May the suffering of all beings be removed."

This is one of the more simple straightforward songs. Milarepa says, 'I bow at the feet of my father, the wish-granting gem,' This is of course Marpa, his guru, 'May he bless you, my children with an abundance of aids. I beg him to bring you to a firm knowledge in the divine fortress of your own body.' They're asking him about his citadel of meditation but he's reminding them of the fact, as it were, that they have their own citadel, their own divine fortress, which is their own body, their own psycho-physical organism, within which firm knowledge can be attained and he begs his guru Marpa to bring them all to that firm knowledge, to fulfill that wish of theirs as it were, because the guru is the wish granting gem.

'Frightened by fears, I built up a castle. The voidness of absolute being, this was that castle, and of its destruction I now have no fear.' So what does he mean by the voidness of absolute being

being his castle. What does a castle represent here? It's a fortress isn't it, a refuge, somewhere safe, secure. So in what way is the voidness of absolute being or universal voidness, absolute voidness itself, a castle. Where does fear spring from?

Kulananda; A threat to permanence.

S: Yes but even more basically. Fear springs from duality. If there is no duality how can there be fear. No self, no other how can there be fear. So the voidness of absolute being means the voidness, the emptiness, the ultimate non-reality of the very distinction between subject and object, self and others. So if that is obliterated or if that is transcended there is no fear because there's no self, there's no other. So 'frightened by fears I built up a castle. The voidness of absolute being, this was that castle, And of its destruction I now have no fear.' His attainment is irreversible.

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He's realized the absolute truth, realised sunyata, realised the non-duality of subject and

object. So no fear and this is a very important emphasis

in Buddhism as I've mentioned before, the state of Abhaya or non-fear, fear- lessness. Fear indicates an attachment to self whether body or mind or any other aspect and in turn it implies duality. Self as opposed to non-self.

Mahamati; In the verses that came before about how he's going to leave the mountain, he didn't really mean that literally because he can't

S: It's as though I mentioned earlier on - it was more as though he was setting a good example, perhaps he could have moved down from the mountains but he knew very well there were lots of hermits who couldn't and he also says that that was his guru's commandment. He benefits people best in that way, maybe by setting that kind of example of complete non-compromise, Having no truck with worldly affairs whatever. It's a very extreme example in a way, it's more extreme even than that of Gautama the Buddha and it surely has produced a tremendous effect in Tibet. It's a very outstanding sort of practice and so uncompromising, spending the greater part of his latter life at least after he left his guru in these solitary places simply meditating without any care about food or clothing or anything of that sort. A very sort of conspicuous example. So that must have inspired so many yogins, so many hermits. So that was his practice for the benefit of all but as we shall see towards the end he does leave that particular spot.

Then 'Fearful of cold I made up a garment, the producing of warmth within, this was that garment, and from cold I now have no fear.' What is this warmth within?

Tummo.

S: Tummo. It's the so-called psychic heat which is a particular kind of meditation practice. It can be taken quite literally. It has also a symbolic significance but it can be taken quite literally and one can literally experience this sort of psychic heat and then of course you have no fear of cold. But taking it non-literally, taking it symbolically but not still at the very highest level what do you think cold represents.

_____; Loneliness.

S: Loneliness. One says they feel cold but it isn't really cold as regards temperature but they feel lonely. So what does the warmth then in that case signify?

Sagaramati; Contentment

S: Contentment, emotional positivity which you experience as a sort of warmth, a sort of glow~of well being, radiant. So fearful of cold I made up a garment, the producing of warmth within' it's the within that's important, 'this was that garment and from cold I now have no fear.'

'Fearful of poverty I sought for some wealth, the seven glorious and inexhaustible jewels, these were that wealth, and from poverty I now have no fear. So what are these seven glorious and inexhaustible jewels? There are two sets as far as I remember. there's the set of the elephant jewel, the horse jewel, the councillor jewel, the wife jewel, the commander in chief jewel, there's that set, the seven jewels of the chakravartiraja, but then also I sort of also vaguely recollect there are the seven jewels in the sense of things like faith, dana and so on. More like seven positive mental events. So both could be meant here. If the first set Milarepa will be saying he's like a king, he's like a chakravarti- raja by virtue of his spiritual attainments he has all wealth. Or he could be saying his wealth is all these positive mental events, these positive mental states. So he's got no fear any longer of poverty in the ordinary sense. One could take it in both ways. The seven jewels are

ratna) in Sanskrit.

'Fearful of hunger I sought for some food, Absorption in the absolute, this was that food and from hunger I now have no fear.' One is reminded of a verse in the Dhammapada where the bhikkhus are represented as saying, (pitti pakhabba vissami) which means we shall live feeding upon joy. So there is this sort of nourishment as it were to be gained from meditation, I don't know if anyone's ever experienced this. The joy, the priti is a sort of nourishment which keeps you in a state of well being as it were. Positive mental states are nourishing to the whole psycho-physical organism even quite literally. I'm not sure what word absolute here represents but clearly it's some kind of higher meditative experience that is meant. So fearful of hunger I sought for some food, absorption in the absolute, this was that food and from hunger I now have no fear.'

'Fearful of thirst I sought for a drink, the nectar of mindfulness, this was that drink, and from thirst I now have no fear. Here he's becoming a bit metaphorical, a bit poetical as it were. He's thinking of mindfulness as a sort of nectar that one can drink. Mindfulness also drives out fear.

So 'Fearful of melancholy I sought for a friend, the blissful void, this is my lasting friend and from melancholy I now have no fear.' Do you think melancholy is the right word here in English? Maybe depression would be a better word. I'm reminded of the very sad case of Doctor Johnson - he once said that he was so fond of conversation and company because if he stayed by himself alone then his melancholy would drive him mad. So company was a distraction and therefore a relief from his own mental state but we might say in modern terminology he was an acute depressive.

_____, Shelley was like that as well wasn't he.

S: So fearful of melancholy I sought for a friend. So in this sort of state

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it isn't exactly a friend in the real sense that one is looking for. It's just company, distraction from oneself. Then he says, the blissful void, this is my lasting friend and from melancholy I

now have no fear. It's that blissful void inner experience which one could say implies a transcend- ing of the duality of subject and object so how can you feel lonely when you don't even experience yourself as a separate individual in the ordinary sense, not as an ego distinct from other egos. You could even go so far as to say that so long as there is a sense of separate selfhood you always feel a little bit lonely even when you're with other people, if you're sufficiently mindful. Has anybody ever noticed that? The mere fact that others are others means that you are lonely. If you can't be fully with someone. Sometimes it happens the more you're with them and the better you know them the more you realise that they're different from you and think differently and that yo~re in fact completely alone. They don't enter into your thoughts, they don't know how you feel even though you may be side by side with them you are on your own. So sometimes being with other people if you are mindful and aware in a positive sense, enhances your feeling of loneliness.

Sagaramati; That can be exhilarating.

S: Yes if you are a reasonably healthy sort of person. you are you and they are they. There is no real mingling not on that level anyway. ~hey can be millions of miles away from you mentally even when you think that they're very close. So don't expect from others more than others are able to give. There can be a certain amount of warmth, a certain amount of comp=anionship and of course there can be spiritual fellowship but no amount of warmth and ordinary friendship can alleviate that sense of sort of existential loneliness. If it helps you to forget it then it's fulfil- ling a negative function.

Sagaramati; That's what defines real communication. It does sort of give you that sort of exhilarating feeling of your unique individuality.

S: It's as though you can only really start being together when you accept the fact that you are not together, not trying to smother the difference or to seek some kind of comfort and oneness in a sort of regressive sense.

_____; Could you call the positive aspect aloneness and the negative one loneliness? They are quite different things in a way.

S: The Americans have a word 'lonesome' don't they. (laughter)

Sagaramati; On your own.

So 'Fearful of straying I sought for a way, the practice of two in one, this was that way, and of straying I now have no fear.' What is this two-in-one. What is the practice of two-in-one. Two-in-one what? I think it translates yuganadha which is the unity or non-duality of wisdom and

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compassion at the highest level. This is a specifically Tantric way of looking at things or practice. The practice of two-in-one, the practice of yuganadha. So fearful of straying I sought for a way. What does that imply? What does it imply to say you're fearful of straying?

_____ ; You're still aware that you can fall into lower states.

S: You're on the path but you're not quite sure whether you are on the path, whether it's the right path, whether you're afraid of ~going off that so there's a sort of duality of right path and wrong path but when you practice the two-in-one, the essential non-duality of wisdom and compassion then it's as though there's no distinction between path and non-path, you've gone beyond all duality. There's no possibility of going astray because, well you could say there's only one path, you could say there's no path at all. So the fear of going astray is removed. There's no question of any alternatives any longer, no question of choosing between them, no question of a right path or a wrong path. You've gone beyond all dualities by uniting in your spiritual experience wisdom and compassion. The archetypal forms as it were of the right and the wrong paths are samsara and nirvana, but since you see wisdom and compassion as one or as not two you've transcended even the distinction of samsara and nirvana - conditioned and unconditioned, so there's no question of your going astray. You can't go astray. Whatever you do is the path. Needless to say this refers to a very high spiritual level indeed.

'So I, a yogin, complete with all desirable wealth, am happy wherever I stay,' He doesn't really mind in the last resort where he does stay so far as his own happiness is concerned. He's equally happy anywhere. And then he goes on to say, 'At Yolmo in the tiger cave of Singa dzong one trembles with fear at the roar of the tigress and this sends one involuntarily to strict seclusion.' So what does it mean this trembling with fear, Do you think he himself is really trembling with fear or is he just talking about yogis in general?

_____ ; Yogis in general.

S: Yes he's probably talking about yogis in general. At the same time there does seem to be some reference to his own experience. It's as though he enjoys the roar of the tigress. He allows himself to feel a bit frightened and enjoys that. He doesn't suppress his natural reactions as it were, and this sends one involuntarily to strict seclusion. Why should that be?

_____ ; It's giving him vigour.

S: It's giving him vigour. There is a sort of terror, a pleasing kind of fear which just makes you feel courageous, makes you feel heroic because of the proximity of danger. It makes one want to practice all the more so you go involuntarily, naturally into strict seclusion, just

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so you can practice. 'There arises compassion at the play of her cubs.' This is the other side, 'And this produces involuntarily the thought of enlightenment.' So you've got the two together which Tsong Kha Pa stresses as very important, the withdrawal from the conditioned and then the arising of the bodhicitta, the arising of compassion and these two are to be brought together.

'The cries of the monkeys cling to one's mind.' We don't hear cries of monkeys in this

country except in the zoo but they feature very much in Chinese poetry don't they. References to the cries of the monkeys. What are they supposed to convey? In Chinese poetry they seem to convey a melancholy, mournful impression, something very touching. You just in the far distance hear a monkey crying or calling. It's something quite melancholy, rather sad. You associate it with the evening, with rain, with mist, with shadows. So the cries of the monkeys cling to one's mind and this causes involuntarily a feeling of sadness. A sort of pleasing sadness. 'But at the chattering of their young one just wants to laugh and this produces involuntarily an elevation of spirit.' So what's Milarepa sort of doing here? He's sort of using his natural reactions and turning them in the direction of enlightenment. You notice when he says the cries of the monkeys cling to one's mind and this causes involuntarily a feeling of sadness, he doesn't allow the feeling of sadness to develop into sort of depression or melancholia. He at once as it were checks it or corrects it by attending to the chattering of the monkey's young so that he just wants to laugh, and then he turns that desire to laugh in a positive direction - and this produces involuntarily an elevation of spirit.' When you feel happy and joyful and laughing there's energy there. There's a sort of elevation of spirit as he calls it and you can use this, guide it in the right direction up the spiral.

'Sweet to the ear is the sad song of the cuckoo with its tremulous note, and one is caused to hearken involuntarily, and the varied cries of the raven are cheering to his neighbour the yogin.' This seems to be just a bit of poetry as it were, just to be taken for its own sake, no special sort of spiritual meaning. He's just enjoying the place, enjoying listening to the sounds of these different birds.

'Happy is the state of one who lives in such a spot as this, without the presence of a single companion, and even in this one is happy.' He doesn't say one is happy in spite of this. One is happy in this. 'And now by the song of this rejoicing yogin may the sufferings of all beings be removed.' That's his sort of transference of merit at the end of the song. Any further points about this particular song?

Andy Skelton; Are not those last few verses the opposite of that aesthetic appreciation you were talking about. Something quite creative?

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S: Oh yes one could say that, yes. It's not just aesthetic appreciation. It involves that or includes that but then those emotions that arise in association with that or as a result of that, he just turns in a very positive direction.

Kulananda; As if there's two things going on. Firstly he allows himself to sink into his natural state but he turns what happens then into something inspiring.

S: He doesn't suppress his own emotional reactions. They're quite healthy. He allows himself to feel sad, he allows himself to feel happy but he leads all those emotional states in the right direction. He's not an ascetic in the ordinary sense, he's not puritanical.

Mahamati; Does this tell us something about the enlightened mind.

S: Yes. One could say it's not in a way a direct expression of the enlightened mind because

it's as though he still at least as far as this verse is concerned, has the need to lead his thoughts and his mental and emotional energies in the right direction.

Sagaramati; Wouldn't it be like the first verse where he's talking about the joyousness of the... (Unclear) It's just a flow of things and it changes into the conditioned and then into the unconditioned.

S: It could be taken in that way, though he does mention a feeling of sadness. Presumably the completely enlightened mind doesn't feel that.

Mahamati; Can one say when Milarepa is speakin~ from the standpoint of the enlightened mind?

S: I think sometimes one can but sometimes it's difficult to tell whether he's speaking from his own sort of pre enlightenment experience or whether he is just adopting as it were the attitude of someone who has not yet quite gained enlightenment. Speaking on behalf of those five novices as it were.

Mahamati; It seems as though he doesn't care.

S: As though he doesn't care. As though in a way there's not much difference. He's not hanging on to his own experience of enlightenment as it were. He doesn't mind identifying with the experience of the non-enlightened and sort of placing himself in their position. It's though he doesn't mind whether he appears as enlightened or non-enlightened or whether you think he's enlightened or non-enlightened. It doesn't really matter to him any more.

Alright read the concluding prose paragraph.

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"And then those novices, experiencing aversion to the world and a strong realisation of the truth, did not descend from the mountain, but took their vows, and by dint of practice reached the very limits of perfection."

S: So originally it seems their idea was to go back after receiving instruction but after hearing all this teaching, all these songs, they experienced aversion to the world, not just a psychological reaction but a genuine withdrawal, a sort of de-commitment and a strong realisation of the truth. So they did not descend from the mountain where they were~with Milarepa but took their vows - maybe vows as monks - and by dint of practice reached the very limits of perfection. So then what happens?

"Then Milarepa was instructed by his guardian divinity that he should now return to Tibet and promote the welfare of all beings by practising in a lonely mountain place, as this would be of benefit to the doctrine and to men and animals and all other beings, so he directed his mind towards Tibet."

S: The place where he's staying is somewhere on the present day Nepal/ Tibet border so apparently the guardian deities, guardian divinities, instruct him to return to Tibet proper. But

still to promote the welfare of all beings by practising in a lonely mountain place. So he directed his mind towards Tibet. What do you think it means, this instructed by his guardian divinity? Perhaps it's a bit like Brahmahumpati appearing to the Buddha, an aspect or facet of his own enlightened mind telling him what to do. The part as it were so to speak that refers to practical mundane things and movements and journeys. Maybe you could say the Amoghasiddhi aspect.

So what general impression do you get from what we've studied this morning? What sort of impression do you get about Milarepa or about the five novices? Or about the Vajrayana?

Dhammarati; It seems to put absolute experience so within reach.

_____ ; There's something about the way in which the material is presented that's at the same time light, almost light-hearted.

S: Yes there's also a sense of humour in Milarepa. It's very different from the Indian Buddhist material isn't it or at least the Indian Buddhist material of an earlier period. It's very different from the sutras, especially the Pali Suttas, very different from the Abhidharma, even very different from the Mahayana texts in many cases. There's a quite distinctive feel, a quite distinctive flavour about it.

Kulananda; The bit I'm a bit uncertain about is how it refers to placing so much emphasis on being in touch with oneself and practising and simply getting on with that and yet increasingly we're involved with all manner

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of things which at one time or another are going to pull us off in a sense because we're not living in mountain caves.

S: Well in a way involved with them out of sheer self-defence because if you are sufficiently strong and you can't go away to a mountain cave anyway because there aren't any mountains, no caves, then the only thing you can do is to create a positive environment in the midst of the society in which you live and this can be only through concerted efforts by creating in one way or another a spiritual community. Once you create a spiritual community you have to get recruits and that means you have to open recruiting centres. (Laughter). It does seem by Milarepa's time the Buddhist tradition was very strongly established in Tibet and well understood and appreciated by a lot of people. So there was understanding of what he was about and support actually, though he himself disregarded these things there were faithful people who had come to know that there was a yogi staying up on the mountainside and who'd trudge up the mountainside with something for him to eat and drink because they understood the value of what he was doing. One could presumably get up to the top of Snowdon and try to meditate there if one wasn't disturbed by the trippers and tourists and sightseers and mountaineers and skiers and geologists and fossilists and entomologists and engineers (Laughter) and all that! and did find a quiet little corner what will people do?

They'd either think you were wildly eccentric or a bit mad or report you to the local health authority (Laughter). But they won't think that you are a yogi and should be supported and come trotting up with food and drink. That would be most unlikely but it certainly happened in Tibet at this time, when Milarepa was there. So though he in a way doesn't bother about food and drink they were there and they were available and supplied even though in a very rough and simple form and he could manage. But it's very difficult in the modern west, maybe almost anywhere in the world now apart from perhaps the Himalayas to some extent, to live in this way. So therefore as I say in sheer self-defence you have to create a spiritual community, in other words a sort of mini Pure Land or mini Happy Land where conditions are relatively favourable, relatively positive and within the context of which and with the support of which you can get on with your individual development in association with other people. I think that's all we can do in the modern world. We can't get away from the world

so we have to carve out a little pure land in the midst of the world. That little Pure Land being the spiritual community. Escape is no longer possible, escapism is but not escape. Escape is becoming increasingly difficult. I think there are places up in Sweden and Norway and Finland where one could get away. I doubt if one would be brought food and drink and so on. You'd have to provide for yourself or you'd have to rely on the spiritual community to send you supplies. Again that involves a spiritual community or implies a spiritual community to look after your needs

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while you are in that sort of retreat. Maybe the ravens will feed you. I don't know. I wouldn't personally rely on that, that might just be weakness of faith. I don't think I'd like to rely on the Finns to feed me, not ordinary Finns who didn't know about Buddhism. So there's no alternative really to the creation of a spiritual community and that will involve one at least initially in a certain amount of contact with the world but less and less perhaps as time goes on, as the spiritual community gets bigger and bigger, it might be possible eventually for someone to spend his whole life within the spiritual community having very little contact with the world directly, or having it only when he felt really able to and strong enough to have that. I think many of us even now have most of our dealings only within the spiritual community, not any real contact outside, certainly not to shake us very much. Even when we do meet people from the outside it's mostly in the context of a class. So that suggests a sort of affinity or sympathy or agreement to begin with. If you do have to go out into the world on some mission come back into the spiritual community as quickly as possible.

Dhammarati; A criticism of the FWBO that I hear -from people is when they say that we're out of touch with the world.

S: First of all what does one mean by being in touch and what is the value of being in touch? What do people mean by being in touch with the world?

_____ ; Quite often they mean just having a job and living as most other people do.

S : They mean really being alienated. It's not the meaning of being in touch it's being alienated. Even if you are a member of the spiritual community you're in touch with nature, you're in touch with the sky, the air, the sun, the trees, flowers, human beings, members of the spiritual community are also human beings. At least they're also people.

Sagaramati; I think what they usually mean is in touch with what's going on on a trendy sort

of level, the latest music. When I was asked I said Bach - I'm getting a bit out of touch with the world!

Kulananda; It's the most amazing assumption that the world is this tiny area of experience.

S: Everybody's eating and drinking every day, ~talking every day, maybe one is reading.

What about newspapers and keeping in touch in that sense?

S: They keep you informed to the extent that they are reliable - question mark - don't they? About certain things. I think that there are certain people within the spiritual community who should know what is happening in that wider sense so that they can formulate policies relating to the Movement

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as a whole but I think the more people stay away from such things the better. I don't think it's very good for anybody to be a regular newspaper reader not every day. Maybe one or two people might need to for the sake of the Movement as a whole just to know what's going on, if anything happens which impinges upon us or anything in the news that is useful to us like govern- ment grants to co-operatives and things of that sort or if an atomic power station is going to be built very near where we were thinking of having a retreat centre it's useful to know that so that you can avoid the area or protest perhaps in advance if possible.

Sagaramati; I think also there's a feeling of language. Language changes and you get new terms. If you're not dealing with people in that sense you get out of touch with their lingo.

S: When I came back to ~ngland in 1904 I realised I was sort of out of touch because I was twenty years behind the times. For instance I'd never seen a launderette or hea~rd of one or a supermarket these were quite new things to me. Or a record player, I'd only been familiar~with the old gramophone, I'd never seen a record player nor a cassette recorder, I hadn't seen one of these things until I came back. It was a modern tech- nological marvel. And of course I missed the old trams, they'd disappeared since I was in London last. All sorts of changes like this. Just a very ordinary one - when I left England men's trousers had buttons on them and when I came back they had zips! (Laughter) This took a bit of getting used to! (Laughter) There were so many little things like this. But I wasn't out of touch in any human sense.

Sagaramati; People have mentioned with regard to taking classes that you shouldn't set up too big a gap between the people coming~in to the class and you. You can appear to be more in touch by knowing what they re interested in and therefore being able to communicate with them.

S: It might be useful from the standpoint of upaya kausilya in those taRring classes to do that but that's not very difficult. If you're in London all you have to do is read your Time Out each week. That's probab~y enough. Or to keep in touch with some younger if not Order member' -maybe mitra or Friend of the Movement who is in touch in this sort of way. Of course you have to be careful to get it right otherwise nothing is more ridiculous than the wrong use.-of

the latest in jargon. You mustn't mix up say the latest popular football team with the latest popular pop group. That really will show you're an old fogey. (Laughter) But on the other hand you can also capitalise on your very remoteness as some magistrates apparently do or have done in the past. When for instance the name of say Greta Garbo is mentioned in court the magistrate bends forward and says who is Greta Garbo? (Laughter) Magistrates seem to do rather the opposite now and are trendy but it was quite impressive and people did use to be impressed by

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this then, their sort of judicial remoteness. They felt it assured them of even-handed justice, that the magistrate was above the world as it were. Remote from all these sort of human concerns. So one could cultivate that sort of image. Never having heard of the Beatles because you've been meditating. (Laughter) Though we're told that nowadays children of eleven or twelve in school have never heard of the Beatles in one case. That trend has gone even. But at the very best%even if you are acquainted with the latest trends and can use the latest language it only helps in establishing a very initial superficial contact. Really you have to be able to fall back on something Wniuch more than that. That is ~ertainly not enough and you can dispense with it I think really. It's your own sort of sincerity and commitment that should come across, not your trendiness or relevance or update-ness or in touch-ness.

_____ ; Don't you think that there are such things as moods and ideas which will sweep through society which you can just miss out on if you are cut off from society. Not knowing these can be a barrier to communicating with people.

S: Not real communication.

_____ ; It's hard not to pick up on those any way if you're just commun~ icating with others. You don't necessarily have to read the newspapers and so on to pick up on those sort of things.

S: Communication is surely a quite human sort of thing. It shouldn't depend on something transient and fashionable but upon basic human qualities that remain relatively permanent. If someone sort of dismisses you just because you can't speak this latest lingo, it's very unlikely that they will have a real possibility of communication, being really able to communi~ate. Someone who's really able to communicate wouldn't be as superficial and dismissive as that I would have thought.

_____ When you're thinking in terms of the Movement in almost political terms then (Unclear)

S: I don't know, I think what people want more often than not is a clear cut image as it were or clear cut principles - what you stand for. They will learn your language quick enough then if what you stand for is suf- ficiently sharply cut and sufficiently precise and clear.

Dhai:imarati; I suppose th~ initial oontact is the important one even on a superficial level. You have to be attractive.

S: I think super' ficial contact or contact through super ficial things is of real importance only to quite superficial people. I think it's your human qualities that must come across. It's these which will establish the

beginnings of real communication. There's no harm if one can appear to be a bit trendy or familiar with what's going on . It does help a little bit

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but only I think quite superficially and provisionally. One need not go out of one's way very much to learn these sort of things.

Especially if one is rather older I think one has to be a bit careful of trying too self-consciously to keep up with trends which are current among younger people. You might use the language quite correctly and it's quite obvious that you're familiar with all these things' but some- times the younger people might feel you're making yourself a bit ridiculous even by being interested in those things or knowing those things. They don't expect you to know them. Then they start feeling you're just trying to keep up, not allowing yourself to grow old gracefully. You're just clinging on to your lost youth.

Kulananda; It's rather foolish.

_____ Is that what the japanese refer to as () (When you get old men going to parties.)

S: Yes. It's a bit pathetic sometimes. It's bad enou~gh to see a young man at a party not to speak of an old man. (Laughter) Unless it's a party of old men (Laughter) That can be real fun! Especially when they talk about the young ones. There's no harm if a relatively young Order member is a bit in touch with things or seems to be in touch with things of this sort. As you get older you do have to be a bit careful about that and allow yourself to be a bit dated, it's' expected of you anyway. Don't make a sort of self-conscious effort to keep up with t~e teenage Joneses. On the other hand don't adopt a patronising attitude of ah well I've been through all that in my day, you'll get over it before long. That can be a bit annoying for the young when they're taking these things quite seriously .. I'm thinking of teenagers.

Sagaramati; I'm guilty of that.

_____ ; It seems to me that on the political front it seems that what has been happening over the last ten or fifteen years has been that political changes have been accelerating in certain areas of the world in particular. Because of this there are arguments as to why one should keep in touch with what's been going on.

S: I read in a newspaper the other day, this is Britis~h politics, that in Parliament they

repealed some two hundred odd acts of Parliament which were no longer apparently relevant, so I couldn't help wondering what they repeal. No one seems to be bothered very much. They could well have repealed some ancient statute that did protect some form of freedom or liberty, but there's no further information. It was just these two hundred odd statutes and parts of various others which had been repealed. It was just a short paragraph and that was that. Half an hour's work for the House of Commons but how many MPs had read through all these acts that were being repealed and actually realised what in fact they were blotting out from the

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statute book I just wouldn't like to say. They date back to the fifteenth century. It makes one a bit suspicious doesn't it. It certainly made me suspicious. When you remember for instance that squatting was carried on for a few years under an act of the fourteenth century. It was a legal right almost to squat under certain conditions. I think one has to watch them or else otherwise your freedom is sort of whittled away without your realising it. For instance any acts of Parliament affecting charities for instance, we should watch quite carefully because that is the sort of framework within which we're set up. All our centres are charities so we should know if anything happens to change that status.

Sagarainati; I think the only argument for keeping in touch politically is that if you're dealing with say Marxists you'd need to read up Marxist doctrine and try and understand their views.

S: At least so you understand what they are talking about.

Sagaramati; That could be a bridge to communication.

Yes. That's true. It would save a lot of misunderstanding and arguing at cross purposes. I was talking with Lisa yesterday discussing translations of the ten positive precepts. Apparently it's rather difficult to translate purify into Finnish. They've got the noun purity more or less as we have but they don't quite have the corresponding verb. You can have wash or clean but not purify. So if you translate to purify the mind as we would say it comes out as to wash the mind like sending it to the laundry. So we were wondering what could be done about that. So the nearest that we got was. ... I made a suggestion that she should look around for such a word as to beautify the mind or to beautify action or to beautify speech because I said beauty and purity are quite closely connected in Buddhism anyway. So this question of language also comes up when we're trying to translate our material from one language to another in a quite literal fashion. For instance in the same way when the Basic Puja was translated the Buddha was a man as we are men not a murmur from the ladies whereas we had one or two murmurs in England. Why? There's no distinction of gender in their pronouns. It's all the same. It's so easy to translate that with no possibility of any reaction or misunderstanding.

Sagaramati; How would that be in our language. The Buddha was a being as we are beings.

S: Being is too broad because it includes animals.

Sagaramati; A human being.

S: A man~'according to the:dictionary the primary meaning of man is a humah being, not male human being, that's only its secondary meaning. So here in the basic puja we use in the sense of its primary meaning or a human being. One would have said human being except that the metre doesn't allow

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it, it isn't a very poetic expression~J The Buddha was a human being as we are human beings, this is the meaning, not that the Buddha was a male as we are males, no~because then it wouldn't be applicable to women but women are also human beings so it must be understood in a sense applic- able to both.

Sagaramati; Once it was pointed out to people they'd have no excuse for reacting.

S: One would have thought so but it isn't alw~ys the case. But then it isn't reasonable to expect people to be reasonable. (Laughter) One should never be surprised that people are unreasonable. If oneself reacts to their reaction well you're being unreasonable about that. Of course people are unreasonable of~course they react emotionally. What else did one expect? It would be surprising~if they didn't. People are not rational. In some ways it's good that they're not. Not narrowly rational. There are other factors there which are in the long run a good thing. So it's silly to be all hurt and surprised and shocked when people react in a non-rational way even to something rational. Of course they will.

Anyway time is very nearly up so we might- as well close there.

**MILAREPA AND THE NOVICES SEMINAR
END OF SEMINAR**