

## General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

### Hidden Treasure

From the mid-seventies through to the mid-eighties, Urgyen Sangharakshita led many seminars on a wide range of texts for invited groups of [Order members](#) and [Mitrās](#). These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Triratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

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

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

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

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

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

*Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team*

**Sangharakshita in seminar**  
**"Milarepa's First Meeting With Rechungpa"**  
**from "The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa".**

Held at: Padmaloka July-August 1980

Those present: The Venerable Sangharakshita: (The following were not all present for the whole seminar which was held over two weekends) Subhuti, Abhaya, Sona, Kovida, Kulananda, Lalitavajra, Virabhadra, Ray Chipps, Mike Keogh, Chris Pegrum, Campbell McEwan, Colin, Andy Friends, Clive Pomfrett.

S: All right let's begin. Go around the circle reading. Would someone like to read those first two prose paragraphs and Milarepa's first song?

"As prophesied by Marpa, Milarepa went to the upper part of Gung Tang. When he arrived at the Castle there, he found that many people were building a house and asked them for some food. They replied "We are working on this building. You can see that we are very busy and have no time for that sort of thing. It looks as though you have plenty of time to spare, so why don't you join us in the work?"

Milarepa said, "Yes, I now have plenty of leisure, but I have earned it by finishing the construction of my 'house' in my own way. Even if you do not give me any food, I will never work on a worldly building which I would most certainly abandon". The men asked him, "How did you build your house, and why do you spurn our work so strongly?"

Milarepa sang in reply:

Faith is the firm foundation of my house, Diligence forms the high walls, Meditation makes the huge bricks, And Wisdom is the great cornerstone. With these four things I built my castle, And it will last as long as the Truth eternal! Your worldly homes are delusions, Mere prisons for the demons, And so I would abandon and desert them."

[2]

S: So let's have a look at that. What is the general impression one gets from this particular passage? What does one learn from it about the attitude of the people who are building that house towards Milarepa? How do they see Milarepa, how does he appear to them?

Chris: They resent the fact that he's not working when they're all hard at work. He appears to be lazy.

S: He appears to be lazy. He appears to have nothing to do, and also don't forget that he approaches them and he asks them for some food. What do you think is the significance of that? I mean in their eyes, how do you think they take it. How do they seem to take it?

: That food should be earned.

S: Yes it's almost as though they're saying that food should be earned. He's not a monk, he's just a sort of wandering yogi and he has no visible means of support as far as they can see. He doesn't do any work and he's approaching them begging for some food. So they say "We are

working on this building. You can see that we are very busy and have no time for that sort of thing." What do you think they mean by that? By "that sort of thing", what are they actually referring to?

Clive: Sort of meditation.

S: Possibly.

Kulananda: Earning merit.

S: Possibly. It depends upon whether they recognize him as a yogi or whether he just looks like a beggar. It could mean that they've no time to stop and give him food. It could mean that. It seems a little bit ambiguous. And then they go on to say. "It looks as though you have plenty of time to spare, so why don't you join us in the work?" You see the work that they are doing is visible, it's obvious, but the work that Milarepa is doing or the work that Milarepa has done is not so obvious. So to those who are occupied or to those who are preoccupied with quite mundane, visible, tangible things, it's as though those who are occupied in some other way are not doing anything.

You remember this famous story that I sometimes tell from the biography of Osbert Sitwell. Some of you have heard it I'm sure. The Sitwells were a very famous literary family in the 20s, 30s and 40s - there [3] were two brothers and a sister and they came of a quite well-to-do family and they had an enormous family house, I think it was in Yorkshire somewhere, and Edith, the sister, lived in one of the wings; Osbert, one of the brothers lived in another wing and there was about half a mile apparently between these two wings, and in those days it was I think either just before or just after the First World War, there were plenty of servants around. So servants used to go to and fro with messages between the two wings. So one day Osbert gave a maidservant a message to be delivered to Edith but only if she was not doing anything, only if she was not working. If she was working, if she was doing something, she was on no account to be disturbed and the maidservant should just quietly bring the message back without delivering it. So anyway half an hour later the maidservant came back and Osbert asked her, 'did you deliver the message', and she said 'Oh yes, I delivered the message' 'My sister wasn't doing anything then' 'Oh no she was doing nothing at all, she was just writing!' You see. So in the eye of a person like that to be writing is not to be doing anything, is not to be working. If she'd been washing dishes that would have been work, if she'd been bricklaying that would have been work, but she was sitting at her desk and writing, that was not work. She wasn't doing anything.

So very often people who are preoccupied with tangible things think that to be preoccupied with intangible things is to be not doing anything. So it could have been that if these people building the house had seen Milarepa as a yogi, even if they'd recognized him as a yogi, in their eyes a yogi would not have been doing anything. What does a yogi do? Well nothing at all, he just spends his time meditating, and so in the eyes of people of this sort to be meditating is not to be doing anything and we do come up against this sort of attitude don't we, in the case of many people who hear about meditation or who hear that you are meditating. In their eyes you are not doing anything. Meditation is not work.

So one can look at it in this way that even though these people could see that Milarepa was a yogi they couldn't appreciate the fact that a yogi also worked. On the other hand - the passage

is a bit ambiguous - they might have just seen him as an idle beggar whom they just didn't have time to stop work for and give some food. So they're not altogether unkindly or perhaps it's meant a bit ironically, they say "We are working on this building. You can see that we are very busy and have no time for that sort of thing. It looks as though you have plenty of time to spare, so why don't you join us in the work?" All right so Milarepa says, "Yes, I now have plenty of leisure, but I have earned it by finishing the construction of my 'house' in my own way" So what do you think Milarepa means by that? "I now have plenty of leisure but I've earned it by finishing the construction of my 'house' in my own way" - what is he talking about? What is he referring to? What is this 'house'? Well he'll tell us in a [4] minute so there's no need to go into that, but why does he say that he now has plenty of leisure?

Kulananda: He's finished his work.

S: He's finished his work. In Pali texts when the Arhant's attainment of Arhantship, of Enlightenment, is spoken of, there are various stock phrases. One is "He has laid down the burden", He has done what was to be done Kavan Karaniyam - he has finished his work. So Milarepa is in that sort of state one might say, he has gained Enlightenment so to speak. He's done his work. He's got nothing further to do, but again how literally can one take that? Is it that one ever sort of reaches a fixed point where everything has been done and there is in fact nothing more to do? Can Milarepa's words be taken quite literally in this respect? Is it that he had nothing more to do.

Virabhadra: Is it that he didn't have anything to do in the sense that of practising skilful action. Maybe he's now at the point where he can act skilfully, attain...

S: In Hinayana terms one could say he's passed the point of no return or one might say in terms of the Mahayana that he had traversed the eighth of the Bodhisattva's ten bhumis, there was no danger of him falling back from that. But whatsoever the context there is this notion of irreversibility, of reaching a point having reached which you cannot fall back into the purely reactive process. Whatever you do henceforth can only be creative. You can go only from one level of creativity to another, from a lower level of creativity to a higher, from a narrower sphere of creativity to a wider sphere of creativity and so on. One could also say that Milarepa has done, he's finished doing whatever was needed for himself, one could look at it in that way. He had as it were done whatever he needed to do just for his own sake but he still has a lot to do for other people out of compassion, and this is of course why he was approaching these people in the first place. It wasn't just that he wanted food. Milarepa didn't bother about food, we know that, but he was approaching them apparently for food just so as to establish contact with them, to get into communication as we would say. To give them an opportunity of talking to him, to give him an opportunity of talking to them, because he knew, perhaps without thinking about it consciously, that some good for them could come out of that.

Clive: In the story about Milarepa building the towers is the tower actually a material tower or is...

S: As far as we can tell from the life of Milarepa the tower was certainly a material tower - he built more than one tower - because he had to [5] build it with stones that he carried himself and he had to carry some of those big, heavy stones on his back and he got sores on his back. So as far as we know it was very definitely a material tower even though of course there are

symbolical overtones. The building of that tower so far as he was concerned was not just the building of something material. It has a different significance and a different kind of effect and that brings us to the whole question of this symbolism of the house here in this particular passage. They are building a house, a material house. He has built a house, a house which as we shall see is non-material, but how can one take this, this whole question of building a house?

: Is it like a refuge?

S: Yes, it's like a refuge, but before you start building a house what do you have?

: Foundations.

S: Yes but the foundations are part of the house so before you have the house at all in any sense what do you have.

Voices: [Various inaudible suggestions]

S: Yes well put it in Aristotelian terms you've got the material cause, you've got the efficient cause but what else is there? Well there's the formal cause and the final cause. That is to say you've got the idea of the house and the purpose for which you build the house in your mind. You've got a plan, an idea in your mind, this is really what comes first. Isn't it. You have an idea, you have a picture, you have a need which the building of the house would fulfil. So first of all you have something in your mind, an idea, something abstract, whether it's in the case of those people or in the case of Milarepa, and then you sort of body it forth in the material world. So doesn't this suggest anything to you as it were. Does it suggest anything at about the nature of life itself as we live it.

: the material in the world could be an expression of the symbolical.

S: Yes, everything that you do in a way is symbolical. At least it's expressive because whether you are conscious of it or not or whether the idea in your mind is very clearly formulated or not you are all the time giving expression to something within yourself. Supposing you do actually build a house, supposing you do decide to build a house, supposing you need a house and you decide to build it yourself and supposing you've got the land and you've got the money for materials and you accumulate the materials - you'll start building the house in a [6] certain way and this will not be governed only by strictly utilitarian considerations. Suppose you decide to have red bricks instead of grey bricks or suppose you decide to have square windows or circular windows, will this not tell something about you? So it's as though one can look on one's life in terms of its being a sort of working out in material terms of not just your ideas but in a way the idea which is you. And it is also significant that the process of rebirth, the process of taking birth itself is likened to the building of a house. The Buddha does this in some famous verses in the Dhammapada where he says addressing ignorance, his own ignorance, that "housebuilder I have seen you now" I have seen what it is that causes this whole process of birth and death and then rebirth to be repeated over and over again. I have seen what it is that causes the house of this worldly life to be built again and again and again.

So it's as though here in this particular passage, in this particular section, we have much the same sort of symbolism, this sort of bodying forth in material terms of something that is

within you as an idea, as a tendency, as an impulse, but back of all these ideas, back of all these tendencies, back of all these impulses there is, in a manner of speaking, you and essentially it is that which you are bodying forth. So if one uses the language of the house, this is sort of three dimensional. One can also use two dimensional language and speak of the creation of one's own mandala. It's as though here you are with all sorts of raw materials. So far as you are concerned the world is just a collection of raw materials and here are you sort of giving your form as it were to a certain part of the world, to a certain amount of the material which the world contains, as a means of expressing what you are. We are doing this all the time and creating or setting up a certain kind of pattern, a certain kind of structure which is good or bad, positive or negative, skilful or unskilful according to the state of mind with which or out of which, or state of being with which or out of which, we create it. Mandalas also can be three dimensional, not just houses but palaces.

So it's as though there are overtones of this sort of thing in this particular passage. The householders are not just building a house, they're giving expression to a particular kind of attitude and this is why Milarepa says "Your worldly houses are delusions, mere prisons for the demons".

Kulananda: They're involved in a reactive process.

S: Yes or that they are the expression of a reactive process. They build a house as a place of security, a place of refuge. Maybe a place in which or upon which they can carry on all sorts of unskilful activities. That's what a house means to them. It's not just putting up four walls. There's far more to it than that.

[7]

: In a way those forces that govern these ideas are they like the unconquered dakinis and nagas.

S: What ideas are you speaking of?

: The ones out of which you act out... Your desire to build a particular house...

S: Yes, because you can look upon your building materials as it were which are not only outside you in the world but also again in another sense inside you, depending on what you are building. You can look at them in two ways. You can look at them as it were as completely passive, for instance material things are completely passive relatively speaking. You use stone, that's passive. If you use wood it's passive in the sense that it doesn't put up any active resistance. But your materials may in another sense be human beings. You may be trying to do something with or create something with human beings. That's a very different matter because they can put up active resistance. Stone or wood can put up passive resistance because it has a certain weight, it has a certain quality which you have to respect, which you can't violate but human beings can put up active resistance and then your own mental forces, your own impulses, when they become the material so to speak, the raw material, of a more subtle kind of house building, a more subtle kind of creation well they can put up a very violent resistance indeed, and it's that perhaps which is symbolized or suggested by the nagas and dakinis because of that sort of thing. They have to be won over before you can do anything with them. You can't approach them violently. Well in a manner of speaking you can, in a manner of speaking you can't. You have to approach them like Padmasambhava and

bring them under control by one means or another before you can do anything with them or create anything with them. You have to tap them. You have to be in contact with them of course and that's important.

So it's as though there's a sort of not only contrast but a clash between their worldly building, first of all they're building a house in the quite literal sense, they're using materials, using stones, clay and so on and they're building that house for a certain purpose, with a certain idea. But Milarepa has built a house of a quite different kind. First of all it isn't a material house at all. He's been building his house in a sense with himself, with his own faults, his own emotions, his own inner energies and he's been building it with a quite different motive from what these people have been building their house. So their building of their house is a completely reactive process, his building of his house is a completely creative process, so how can he possibly join in the building or their building of their house? How can you be creative and reactive at the same time? How can you be reactive and creative at the same time. The [8] two don't really overlap. You can't really be engaged in the two processes at one and the same time. So when they invite him to join in the building of their house, they're really inviting him to participate in the reactive process, which he cannot do. In a sense he doesn't have that freedom. The nearest he can get is to approach them for alms. By approaching them for alms he is giving them in a way the opportunity of just being a tiny bit creative. They refuse that. The nexus between them which he gave them the opportunity of establishing was that nexus of dana, the first of the Paramitas. He gave them the opportunity of taking that first step and establishing a link between the reactive process and the creative process. They were not able to take that opportunity, they were not able to forge that link.

So then he had to draw their attention to the fact that their reactivity and his creativity were completely antithetical, that there's no question of him helping them to build their house. He just refused to join in.

: You don't do anything unless you believe in it. He says you would most certainly abandon ... it's only pointless.

S: Yes, right. "Your worldly houses are delusions, mere prisons for the demons and so I will abandon and desert them." In other words far from helping you to build a house - if I had one I'd leave it as quickly as I could. He's not obviously referring to just those four walls and that particular roof, but to what the house represents. He's referring to its deeply symbolical significance. Do you think that house does have this deeply symbolical significance for people still in view of people's increased mobility in the modern age?

Kovida: It's interesting that ( ) actually built his house towards the last part of his life.

S: Didn't Yeats or at least a tower. Yeats built a tower. Walter Scott built his own house - Haversford or rebuilt - I'm not quite sure which, but he clearly was bodying forth with his particular Gothic fantasies.

Kovida: A lot of rich people have their own houses built for them and designed.

: A lot of people had follies built in the form of towers.

S: A folly is just a sort of architectural fantasy which has got absolutely nothing to do with

any particular function. It's not a church, it's not a palace, it's not a mansion, it's just an architectural fantasy, it serves no purpose. That's its, in a way, utility. So architecture has this sort of [9] symbolical significance but in the case of the home, the house, your house, your ancestral house, we don't have so much of that now as we used to because people are much more mobile than previously.

Virabhadra: There's a lot of energy invested in getting a home. The new married couple. It's quite a big thing just to get their house.

Chris: You may be mobile but it seems that once you have a house it's really a question of transferring... You sell your old house and buy a new house. It's a bit like a snail carrying the house round with you.

S: But that's rather different isn't it because when your house was firmly set down in one spot and remained there perhaps for centuries and you lived where your parents had lived and where their parents had lived, you get a quite different sort of feeling, don't you?, from what you get if you just carry around your shell with you wherever you go. So I think it might be a bit difficult for us to appreciate the full force and weight of this house symbolism nowadays.

But anyway we can appreciate it sufficiently. "Milarepa says, "Even if you do not give me any food, I will never work on a worldly building, which I would most certainly abandon" The men asked him, "How did you build your house and why do you spurn our work so strongly?" Perhaps they haven't yet understood him. Perhaps they still think that he's got another kind of house, a material house, somewhere else and having built it he's not interested in helping them build theirs. But they also want to know why he spurns their work so strongly and in his song sung in reply he explains. You notice that Milarepa sings songs. Apparently this is much easier to do spontaneously in Tibetan than in English because the Tibetan language is monosyllabic and usually their poetry consists of a certain number of syllables repeated, that is to say a line of eight syllables and another line of eight syllables, another line of eight syllables and so on. So if you were to write or to sing Tibetan poetry [Bhante "sings"] Dom Dom Dom Dom Dom Dom Dom, Dom Dom Dom Dom Dom Dom Dom and that's about the only meter you could get unless it's Dom Dom Dom Dom, Dom Dom Dom Dom because it's very monosyllabic. So it's much more easy to sing a song and even make it up as you go along and accompany yourself on the little guitar or whatever just sort of strumming away. But Milarepa just sang these songs to which there was a sort of tune to which the meter such as it was adjusted so you could almost speak like this. For instance if it was in English you'd say something like "I think it is a lovely day, I think I'll go and have a walk" - well this is in that Tibetan sort of monosyllabic way and if you were a bit ingenious you could keep this up for a long time, especially if you were inspired. So this is the way in which Milarepa [10] used to sing but what does that also suggest, the fact that he sings instead of speaking in the ordinary way.

: Inspiration.

S: Inspiration. As in the case of the Buddha with the Udanas, the poetic medium or the poetic mode suggests inspiration. It suggests that the communication is coming from a higher level than normal. So he sings in reply, and he makes clear this whole question of his house and he says, "Faith is the firm foundation of my 'house'." So what 'house' is he talking about here? Maybe we should get that a bit clearer to begin with. What is this 'house'?



: His individuality.

S: Yes, you could say it's his individuality. He's building himself. Yeats says in one of his poems "Myself must I remake" so it's as though the house that Milarepa is building is in a manner of speaking - you mustn't take this too literally - his own new self. I say you mustn't take it too literally because when you've built a house well there it is, there it stands, it appears not to change, so the new self isn't a sort of fixed, unyielding sort of self that you create in the place of the old one, it's more like a constant mode of functioning. But yes we can speak of it as a new self that has been created. This is the house.

So it's as though within the person, let us say, there are two things, there's the raw material which is the old self and there's what we generally call the plan, the plan for the new self. In a sense there's also the architect, all of these things are you. So it's as though within you as you evolve there's a sort of division, there's the you that is the plan, the you that is the idea or the vision or sees the idea, sees the vision and the you that is the raw material. There's you as passive and there's you as active. The old you is passive as it were to the emerging new you which gradually transforms the old you, taking the old you as raw material into the new you which of course is Milarepa's house.

So Milarepa says "Faith is the firm foundation of this house". Faith is the foundation of this new self, this new individuality so in what sense is that true? What does one mean by saying that faith is the foundation?

Abhaya: In the sense that the architect in you sees the plan and you are vaguely aware of the raw materials and you feel a certain confidence in being able to bring that about. A growing confidence as you actually work with the materials.

[11]

S: There's also faith in the ideal. Faith in the sense of an emotional feeling for the new possibilities. You have a vision of yourself as you might be and you are very deeply moved by that and that is one's faith. You have the faith that you can become that.

Kulananda: The nexus between the reactive and the creative.

S: Yes. Well in the line of the positive nidanas, in dependence upon unsatisfactoriness arises faith. you see that your present self is unsatisfactory. You experience it perhaps even as painful, but you see the possibility of a new self being produced, being created and you have faith in that possibility. So in dependence upon unsatisfactoriness there arises faith.

So it's interesting that faith is the foundation because it also suggests that faith must be there all the time. It's not as though you have faith at a certain stage, you have faith early in your spiritual life, so to speak and you sort of go through a stage of faith and having gone through that, say you're finished with it and you just get on to more advanced things. In a sense you do but in a sense you don't. Just as with the foundation, you lay the foundation but the foundation is always there supporting the house. So in the same way your faith is there all the time supporting the whole edifice, the whole growing edifice of your spiritual life. Of course the comparison breaks down to a certain extent. You don't go on leaving the faith behind as you can in the case of the foundation, leaving it there supporting the house. The faith must go forward with you all the time in the sense that at every stage, at every level of your spiritual

life, your creation of your new self, you need, perhaps you need more and more, that emotional conviction, that emotional drive, otherwise you just slow down and eventually stop.

Kulananda: From within a reactive process how do you distinguish between faith and delusion?

S: Why faith and delusion?

Kulananda: An idea about potential in which you might be completely wrong so you might be completely deluded. You might just have got it all wrong really.

S: A particular potential or potential in the human sense? You might be deluded thinking you've got the potential to be an artist when you haven't, or deluded about the potential for individual development at all.

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Kulananda: I suppose it gets to be quite specific. If faith is the base from which you work.

S: It's not so much that faith is the base from which you work - it's more like the energy with which you work, the emotional energy, the emotional drive with which you work.

Kulananda: It stands to move you in particular directions. At that stage when things have got particularised - "the next step for me is" - faith is in a sense what determines that next step.

S: It doesn't determine the next step, judgement determines the next step. Faith determines the general process but faith will not be able to tell you very much about the specific details of the next step to be taken. There judgement must come in.

Clive: It's a bit like a hose-pipe with water. Actually you've just got to keep it coming and your judgement is the direction in which you point the hose. You can't do anything if the water doesn't keep flowing.

Chris: Are you saying you might have faith in the wrong thing?

S: Well you can't have faith in the wrong thing, not in principle, because you have faith in whatever is going to help you to develop but you may not be able to identify that so easily and that is where judgement comes in. Faith is not enough there.

Kovida: You assume you get the results back. Once you've done something and it is the right thing then you feel that you've taken the right step. If you find that what you've done hasn't helped you then your faith in that will fail because it hasn't worked.

Clive: Can you speak of having faith in something or can you just speak of having faith and then you decide to put it on to these things and put it on to that but your faith is never...

Kovida: It's not as simple as that. You do initially base your faith on something. you have faith in something but it may not be as clearly intellectually formalized as that. You may not be able to distinguish what you have faith in but you decide to do a certain action and then

you move in that direction.

S: It depends on your degree of emotional positivity to begin with because if you are reasonably emotionally positive there will be a sort of natural tendency to develop and to grow so you may not need to formulate your goal very very clearly because your natural movement is [13] in that direction. But if you haven't succeeded in getting the emotional positivity going, if it isn't actually flowing, then you may need to define a goal much more clearly, to give yourself as it were something to work towards.

Kovida: Faith in the structure that you've created, that you've decided to accept.

S: Some people seem to be able to make do or to manage with the minimum of sort of intellectual formulation - the faith followers as we say. The others are the doctrine followers. But in a way you can't have a reason for faith. In a way, in the sense that the reason cannot create the faith. It can only support it or give a certain direction or give a little additional clarity to it.

End of side 1, Side 2

Kovida: (incomplete due to end of tape)...you've already done it, your reasons will..

S: but here it's more than that because here faith suggests that first of all you've got some sort of ideal, some sort of vision because it is faith in a higher so to speak spiritual sense, but also the suggestion is that you've been able to respond emotionally to that ideal. You as it were appreciate it emotionally to such an extent that you are sort of motivated in a new sort of way. You are motivated to realize the ideal, but that suggests that to begin with you're sufficiently emotionally positive to be able to respond in that way to the ideal or to the vision when you see it. If you aren't sufficiently emotionally positive you may see the ideal or you may see the vision in a manner of speaking but it'll be in a more and more exclusively intellectual sort of way and you will not be sort of galvanized emotionally and faith therefore will not result.

So it's as though there are two factors involved, one is that you actually have the idea or the ideal or see the vision and, two, that you are sufficiently emotionally free, sufficiently emotionally positive, to be able to respond to it. So when you get the vision on the one hand and the emotional response to that vision on the other then you have got faith and then you are motivated. You need that all the time, all the way through the spiritual life you need some kind of vision or some kind of ideal ahead of you and you also need some part at least of your emotional energies motivated by that. In other words you need both - faith. You need that all the time. Therefore, as Milarepa says, Faith is the firm foundation.

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Kovida: In some ways it seems as if all that is predetermined anyway because if you are generating the idea then because it's part of you you're also generating the faith aspect.

S: You may not generate the idea. The idea or the ideal may come from completely outside you. You may not have thought of it but you suddenly are confronted by it either in some books that you read or something that you hear or it might even be in purely visual terms. The ideal is there but since you have the capacity for that emotional response faith arises.

Kovida: But I thought earlier on when we were discussing the building of the house, the

whole purpose of life it seemed at that point was that you were actually creating yourself and what you were creating was this idea, in the Platonic sense, which you had.

S: Well yes you do create yourself. There is also at the same time such a thing as the interaction of individuals. Other people have created themselves as say Milarepa here, he has created him-self. So he is a man, they are men. There is as it were a sort of common, in a manner of speaking, higher self which he has created which they are able to create. Not a common higher self in the metaphysical sense, but in the sense that they are able to evolve in the same kind of way into the same kind of individual. They are not aware of that. It's latent in them but by confronting them with it he confronts them with their own potential for individual development and in that sense, in that way, the idea or the ideal comes from outside them. It doesn't come from absolutely outside them because the potential of it is there. And also if they are sufficiently emotionally positive when they see that ideal introduced to them by some other person who's realized that to a greater extent than they can respond to it emotionally and that emotional response is what we call faith.

Kulananda: So in a way a lack of faith is psychological problem.

S: A lack of faith in the presence of the ideal is a psychological problem, yes. I would say a healthy person, an emotionally healthy person, an emotionally positive person confronted by the ideal must respond with faith. This is what I was just thinking a little while ago, that formerly when the majority of the population was engaged in agriculture those who came in contact with the dharma usually came in contact with it in a very positive and healthy state. I was thinking this in connection with a book I was reviewing the other week - "The life of Geshe Rabten" - he was brought up on a sort of farm and he said as a boy and as a youth all he was interested in, all he knew about, was horses, dogs and guns, and he spent the whole day out with his father's horses and followed [15] around by his own dogs. That was his job - to take the horses for grazing and bring them back in the evening and when he was quite old, that is to say when he was quite a big boy, he just managed to learn to spell and write a bit and that was the extent of his education. But he clearly grew up very healthy both physically and emotionally and when he saw monks for the first time and started hearing about their way of life, he developed great faith in that without understanding anything about the Dharma intellectually at all. I think this is quite natural.

This is what one finds in ancient Buddhist literature, that some of them led a quite ordinary life, probably as a peasant or farmer's son and it's quite healthy physically and emotionally. So as soon as he comes into contact with something definitely higher, whether in a concrete form of a monk actually walking around or he sees an image or he hears a teaching, he's able to respond. His emotional positivity becomes transformed by contact with that ideal into what we call faith. But in modern times life having become more complicated, people are not in an emotionally very positive state. They might even be in a quite negative emotional state, they might be emotionally blocked, they might be emotionally dried up, they might be emotionally exhausted, so when they come into contact with a spiritual ideal there's virtually no emotional response, so there's virtually no faith. They're not moved by what they see or what they hear and therefore there's very little motivating energy and so therefore they don't make very rapid progress.

So faith is the firm foundation. "Diligence forms the high walls". Diligence is probably virya - energy. Here this follows upon faith. You'll only work at something, you'll only work on

something and put energy into it if you've got faith, if the emotional interest is there, the emotional conviction is there.

Clive: Could you say that this emotional energy which is faith is the driving force of the Higher Evolution...

S: Yes one could say that because this faith links the goal, to speak in terms of a goal, the end of the Higher evolutionary process, with the end of the process of the lower evolution. What is the end result of the lower evolution? The healthy, happy human being, the emotionally positive human being. So the goal, the ideal, that represents the furthest conceivable point of the Higher evolutionary process. So what links the two? Faith. Because your emotional positivity as a healthy, happy, emotionally positive human being has come into contact, however remotely, with that ideal and it is galvanized by it and now moving towards it, carrying with you so to speak and also creating as it goes along the whole of the rest of your being. Eventually of course the whole of [16] your new being, your new self, your new individuality, your more enlightened individuality. So that's the link.

Clive: Is there any such thing as faith in the animal sort of sense? Is there more of a consciousness ... faith (?)?

S: Yes faith is only possible therefore when self consciousness has emerged and that self consciousness in the process of reflection has developed some awareness of something beyond, something ultimate, as an object. Not that it is in itself an object but one is aware of it as an object because one is still functioning within the subject-object framework. So faith spans that gap you can say all the time and that the minute faith disappears then there's no contact, there's no continuity between your emotional positivity or your emotional energy on the one hand and the goal on the other. If faith flags you come to a halt, except to the extent that you are just carried forward by the sheer momentum of your previous faith. You can't go on living on the memory of faith for very long. Everybody knows that. Your memory of faith might keep you going for a few days or weeks, even for a few months, but probably not longer than that at the most. You have to experience the faith here and now for it to provide a fresh impetus.

Any reason do you think why diligence forms the high walls particularly or is it just that Milarepa has to make a comparison of virya, or diligence with something or other in the house, some part of the house?

: It suggests a sort of outward going self-protective thing, keeping things at bay.

S: Maybe that the high walls are the most prominent part of the house and diligence also, virya also, like faith itself - you need it all the time.

: Diligence forms the high walls. It's not that diligence is the high walls.

S: No I think it does mean that. I think forms in that sense, if you take the expression as uniform throughout. The same with "Meditation makes the huge bricks" - meditation constitutes the bricks, not that meditation puts them together.

So why should meditation be the huge bricks? Any particular reason? Any particular

connection here?

: It's a basic sort of building constituent.

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S: A basic sort of building block as it were. Very sort of square and solid. This is how your meditation should be. It's probably not bricks, I imagine it's just great stones about four or five feet square, these great stones are solidly in position, they don't move. Just like people sitting and meditating, they don't move, they don't budge, just like that. They have to be solid. So this is why meditation makes the huge bricks or the huge stones.

Clive: Is there any connection between meditation, the bricks and the actual wall which is virya? Meditation creates virya.

S: Could be. Meditation generates energy. "And Wisdom is the great cornerstone". This is pretty obvious isn't it. Because Wisdom it is said in the Mahayana is the only paramita, it's the cornerstone of the Mahayana life. Dana is not a paramita unless it's conjoined with Wisdom etc. Virya is not a paramita unless it's joined with Wisdom and so on. So Wisdom is the cornerstone. Wisdom in the special sense that is to say of actual insight into the nature of reality, a clear vision of existence.

So "With these four things I built my castle". I don't know how much significance one can attach to the words of the English translation but they are building a house and Milarepa speaks of his castle, something much nobler, much grander. Castles are usually built on hilltops whereas houses are usually built down in the valley.

"And it will last as long as the Truth eternal!". What do you think he means by this? I'm not very sure what is the Tibetan original of Truth eternal. It has a rather Occidental ring, but one can get the general sense of it. That his castle will last forever. So what does one mean by that, why does he say that his castle will last forever? He is of course making a comparison with their house which will not last forever. But why does he say that his castle will last forever, bearing in mind what his castle is, his new self.

Clive: It's forever free of the relative...[?]

S: Yes one could say that.

: It's unconditioned.

S: It's unconditioned. Not that it is everlastingly persistent within time so much as it transcends time altogether, transcends space altogether.

: It can't be undermined by sort of decay.

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S: No. There's no question of decay on that level. The whole concept is meaningless.

Then he says, "Your worldly houses are delusions, Mere prisons for the demons, And so I would abandon and desert them." So your worldly houses are delusions. What does he mean

by that? In what sense are their worldly houses delusions? Does he mean just their houses of brick and stone or is he talking about something else? Is he speaking of houses symbolically?

: He's talking about all the psychological spiritual ( )?

S: Yes, of which an actual house may be the concrete embodiment. He speaks of your worldly houses as delusions as "mere prisons for the demons". In what sense is your house a prison?

Virabhadra: Once you've built up a reactive structure on that it actually limits your potential for (the ultimate?) because it exerts a reactive effect on you.

S: It prevents you from going further.

: Are the demons here sort of unskilful mental states?...

S: Yes, unskilful mental states.

: ... Whereas the house he's built is the Five Spiritual Faculties. We had mindfulness, we've virya...

S: Yes. So this is quite a thought in a way, that worldly houses are not only delusions but mere prisons for the demons. One can look at this in two ways. They confine the demons but they also allow them, the demons, to express themselves. The demons are the unskilful mental states which are responsible for the building of the 'house ', inverted commas. It's as though people set up situations of one degree of concreteness or another in order to give themselves an opportunity of expressing negative emotions. One can see people doing this can't one?

So this can apply to a house in the full literal sense or to a structure in the more provisional or even more metaphorical sense. A social structure, a psychological structure, a structure of personal relationships etc., etc. It has been said that there is the typical situation that repeats itself for the individual. Are you familiar with this idea? That there is a tendency for each individual to find himself again and again in the same situation. In other words there is a tendency for the individual or on the [19] part of the individual to set up for himself, over and over again, the same situation. You find it for instance in the case of marriage. Someone gets married, the marriage is not a success. Shortly afterwards the person marries again. Again the marriage is not a success for much the same sort of reasons that the first marriage wasn't. Nonetheless that person tries again. They marry a third time, even a fourth time. The same thing happens. This typical pattern. People set up patterns of rejection, they set up patterns of misunderstanding, patterns of failure or patterns of success. They repeat the same sort of pattern over and over again. They're not able to get beyond that. They build the same house again and again, just in a slightly different spot or in a slightly different way but it's basically the same house.

In the case of a house you can see what you've built but very often we don't see what we've built, we don't see what we've set up for ourselves.

Kulananda: You've spoken in the past about conditioning exhausting itself or a person's conditioning exhausting itself. How would that work out in this context with something that

just goes on forever?

S: I'm not quite sure what you're referring to but strictly speaking a person's conditioning doesn't exhaust itself in the sense of just dying away or fading away without any effort on one's own part. The only situation I can think of in which your conditioning would die away, assuming it to be a negative conditioning, is one in which you subjected yourself, consciously subjected yourself to very positive influences which over a period of time would gradually counteract the influence of those negative conditionings so that over that period of time the negative conditionings would naturally exhaust themselves. Because they were not being further reimpessed. That would have been counteracted by the positive conditioning.

Clive: Working in a Friends situation, co-ops especially you get the opportunity to see these reactive processes occurring in a short space of time in an intense situation over and over again...

S: I think one of the advantages of doing anything as it were practical or anything which becomes tangibly embodied in the objective world is that you can see more clearly where you have gone wrong or where you are going right. Because otherwise if things just remain within one's own mind in the form of subjective impressions, ideas and so on it's very difficult to be sure. Blake for instance attached great importance to this. He attached great importance to the expression of error. He said that error could only be cast out (the casting out of error was what he called 'The Last Judgement', the casting out of all errors) if it was given a concrete form and could be actually seen for what it was. Therefore he [20] regarded certain writers who expressed ideas with which he completely disagreed as very important and valuable because they'd actually given concrete expression to these ideas, and because those ideas had been given concrete expression, perhaps in a very powerful and effective way, it was more easy to cast them out. So one can carry the whole process a stage further than say writing books, writing poems and all that sort of thing by creating institutions and then one can fairly easily check by seeing the way these things operate. Because after all when one says these things operate one means people operating in a certain situation in a certain way. For instance it's very easy for people to have the idea of spiritual community and even to feel some sentiment of that sort when you're just sitting down all by yourself, maybe in a nice quiet solitary retreat place and just doing metta bhavana, but when you're actually in a concrete situation having to work with other people and do certain things with other people successfully well this brings into play a whole range of faculties. You've got to have the energy, you've got to have the thought, you've got to have the foresight, you've got to have the mindfulness, you've got to have the emotional positivity, you've got to have the tact, you've got to have the diplomacy etc., etc. So it's a situation in which you're much more seriously tested. It's different from the worldly situation because in the worldly situation the odds are all against you. People with whom you're trying to do things are basing themselves on what one would regard as quite negative principles, on delusion in fact. So there's no possibility of collaboration just as there's no possibility of Milarepa helping those people build their house.

But if you're working together with other people and you're all building Milarepa's castle together as it were, well that is a much more demanding situation if it is concretely embodied in a very practical sort of way. That's the real test. You get your chance to create your new society on a very tiny scale. If you can't even do it on that scale well do you think you're going to do it on a scale involving thousands and millions of people?



: There's been a tendency to think of institutions, especially within the Movement as being a bit of a necessary evil.

S: Well there are institutions and institutions. There are houses and houses. There are structures and structures. There can be a structure which reinforces negativity, there can be a structure that reinforces positivity. On a retreat you have a structure and that structure has been created in the light of experience to give a maximum of help and encouragement to the people participating in that retreat situation. So the word institution is not necessarily a dirty word any more than emotion is necessarily a dirty word. Well the question is is it a negative [21] emotion or a positive emotion. The same with institutions - is it not functioning in a helpful way or is it not functioning in a helpful way?

The majority of institutions with which we are acquainted are not very skilful, not very helpful but that is just because of the wrongness of the general basis of our society or at least it is wrongness to a very great extent. It doesn't invalidate the principle of the institution itself. There can be positive and helpful institutions. Institutions really means individuals functioning together in a particular kind of way. That's all an institution really means. So individuals can function together in a skilful way or in an unskilful way so that any other individual getting caught up so to speak in the functioning of all those individuals will be either influenced positively or negatively. But I don't think one can reject institutions altogether.

Anyway any further point about what we've done so far? I have a feeling there's quite a lot more that could be said about this house building.

Abhaya: That idea of actually expressing something and doing something practical so that you can see where you're going. I'm thinking of that in terms of individual expression through writing or artistic... Without being involved in co-ops and that sort of thing. Even more concrete but actually discovering one's own personal expression so that, yes you can see where you're going. That is one advantage of actually developing such techniques, would you say?

S: I think expression is very valuable because I think much of the time we don't realize how ill formed our thoughts are, how vague, how woolly, how unclear. Very often we're not even sure what we actually think or what we actually feel. It's as though we have to work out all that, as though we have to work out our thoughts and our feelings or decide what they are in the process of expressing them or we come to know what they are only in the process of expressing them because that forces us to clarify them.

So it's as though expression forces us to do something which in a way we ought to have done before we begin.

Abhaya: But it is like a basic form of making this house, the idea you started off with, actually creating yourself out of these strivings. That expression through whatever means is that creation of yourself.

S: If you objectify that in some sort of product then you can see better where you're actually going, where you are at, how far you've got, at least in certain respects. This is not a question of being sort of glibly articulate, it's very very much more than [22] that. It's a question of

really expressing, not just multiplying words without meaning or even words with meaning.

Clive: Would that expression be often with ( ) saying what we really feel and think?

S: I'd go further than that. It's as though without expression you don't even know what you think and feel because until the point of expression things are usually left so vague and so woolly with all sorts of ideas just drifting through the mind. You don't really know which is your idea, you don't know what you think.

Kovida: Could you express (that you don't exist)??

S: In a way you could say until you've expressed it you're not responsible for it as your idea. It will be just an idea which passes through your mind as a sort of possibility. But if you express it - 'this is what I think' and you have to clarify, well, you carry the whole thing a stage further.

Abhaya: So where would you put thinking in this? You could actually create yourself through thinking. You might not actually write it down or say it to anyone but in a sense isn't that a ...

S: Yes you could do that. It depends upon your powers of concentration. There are people who can concentrate without writing anything down, even compose paragraphs and even poems without writing anything down. They have a greater power of concentration. Some people can clarify their thoughts and engage in very long quite complex mental operations without putting pen to paper, but the majority of people can't do that and they have to start writing things down so that they just don't forget, so that they can trace each step of the process. But great thinkers apparently in some cases do possess or in some cases have possessed the capacity for building up whole chains of thoughts and working on them without writing anything down and even remembering their arguments in detail.

Chris: By expressing your thoughts you're opening yourself up to be first of all told you're wrong...

S: Yes because when you express yourself what you express becomes part of the objective world. It becomes public property. Anybody can look at it, anybody can criticize it, anybody can draw attention to its shortcomings, and that is very useful because any mistake that you might have committed may be corrected. Whereas if it all remained within the privacy of your own mind there is not that kind of possibility. So to express yourself is also to take a risk. And some people I think don't [23] express themselves or are reluctant to express themselves either by speaking or by writing or by giving a talk because they fear that they may thereby expose themselves to criticism and they may be too sensitive, too unduly sensitive to be able to stand criticism.

I want to go back a bit to what I said about the house building or the castle building being the expression not just of your thoughts and your feelings but of you. We touched upon this last weekend didn't we. This whole standing behind every person is a sort of psychological cum spiritual blueprint of which they are the expression and which they are trying to work out in some of the experiences and events and achievements of this life.

Kulananda: In what does this blueprint consist?

S: What is conveyed to one by this idea of a blueprint?

Kulananda: It's preconceived in the first place so that implies a conceiver.

S: In those terms one could say that the conceiver or the preconceiver was you in your past life creating, setting up a sort of situation for yourself in this life.

Kulananda: Creating a reality...

S: But one need not think of it in those terms, that is an explanation but it is as though if one studies one's own life, and maybe it is difficult to see this too early in one's life for obvious reasons, but one may see not just a constant repetition of one particular pattern or one particular theme but one may see the unfolding of a certain meaning. It's as though one's whole life in its different stages constitutes a working out of that meaning or that sort of total pattern and one can speak perhaps in this connection of a sort of Gestalt.

Kulananda: Doesn't it really require some kind of external agency or an external plan within which one is a function?

S: Not necessarily.

Kulananda: How can something have meaning in itself. Can't it only have meaning with reference to something else.

S: No, I don't mean the word 'meaning' to be taken too literally. It's as though - put it this way - something can exist in a subtle form and receive expression in a grosser medium or it can exist in a sort of germinal form and receive expression in a fuller and more detailed and more explicit [24] manner. In a sense everything was contained in the germ, everything was contained in the seed but it's fully unfolded say only in the whole plant and especially in the flower. So when I say meaning I'm using the term in perhaps the same way as when one says that the seed is the meaning of the plant. In that sort of way.

Kovida: That does raise the question of where the seed comes from.

S: Well it does. It's really quite important to say in explanation, well one explanation is that it comes from a previous life.

Kovida: But then it would always be reactive. If we're distinguishing between a reactive process and a creative process of higher evolution then you would think that something that has a reactive process could not evolve into a higher process.

S: Yes. Well there are two possibilities. One is that it is purely reactive and there is no creative element at all. Another possibility of course is that it is a mixture of reactive and creative in a sense because there is, as I've explained on various occasions, a section of the spiral or section of the path which is part of the round but at the same time part of the spiral. Do you remember that? Cosmologically the higher heavenly worlds or the dhyana states, these are part of the round, they are part of the reactive process, but they are at the same time part of the spiral process, but they are part of the spiral process this side of the Point of No Return. So one can have say a Gestalt, to use that term, coming from a previous life which is

so to speak reactive and creative. Meaning by creative in this context part of that part of the path where the round and the spiral overlap.

All right but there is another element. That is the element of the ideal or the vision. That you can say is purely transcendental. So in the process say of your working out your particular Gestalt which let us say is reactive and creative both, if in that process you as it were come in contact with the ideal or the vision and faith is generated, well then that particular pattern which you were working out becomes incorporated into a higher pattern which you can speak of as the mandala or the Pure Land, whichever 'myth', so to speak, you care to use, and it can be so incorporated because there is that 'creative', inverted commas, element in your Gestalt already to a certain extent. Had it been purely reactive there would have been no possibility of contact with that vision between you so to speak and the ideal and the vision.

Kovida: The point that it comes in contact with the Transcendental, does it still continue to be your vision or does it become yours and the Transcendental's which would make you (an [25] Arhant). Certainly the myth comes into it, that you've still got the thing you're working out which comes into contact with the Transcendental vision. So do you continue to work out your pattern...

S: Yes, you continue to work out your pattern and your pattern becomes more and more incorporated into let us say the pattern of which the vision, let us say, is the central point, but you also come to see more and more that your particular pattern, in a sense, is that particular pattern or it grows naturally into that or links up naturally with that more and more. One can't really distinguish this from that in a too literal almost mathematical sort of way.

Kovida: Because ( ) aspects on the creative path that you are trying to work out that are already Transcendental...

S: Yes or at least which were an anticipation or reflection one could say. At present I'm speaking as it were dualistically to keep things simple but if one did not want to speak dualistically or at least not speak in exclusively dualistic terms, well if one wanted to speak say in the terms of the awakening of faith, well one would speak of say a reflection of the transcendental in the mundane itself, especially in that as it were more creative part of the mundane, so you can't metaphysically completely separate the two. But as I said just to keep things simple I spoke in just straightforwardly dualistic terms.

End of tape Tape 2

S: Perhaps in a way what I'm getting at is not to think in terms of an exclusively linear model for the spiritual life in a rather literal sense: here am I, and I sort of go forward stage by stage - and that's the spiritual life. That is an aspect of it. This is not untrue. But one can look at it too exclusively in those terms. So you could say, for instance, that you might have the idea of spiritual community. It might be a quite true idea, but it may be quite vague and what I call germinal. But you get an opportunity of working it out in practice and really testing it and really experiencing it and maybe finding out how much you really do know about spiritual community, and to what extent you really are in touch with the ideal of spiritual community when, say, you set up a co-op. So, in the same sort of way you could say your life itself is that practical working out of something within you and enables you to see more and more clearly what is really there - whether it is delusion or whether it is the Will to Enlightenment or

whatever; whether it is something quite reactive or something more purely creative. You only find that out, so to speak, in the process of actually living your own life, so when you take a wide survey of your life, you begin to get some glimmering of what [26] you are like because you can see what you've done and what you've worked out. Your life reveals yourself to yourself.

Kulananda: : For most of us I should imagine it must just show a reactive process revealed.

S: Yes. Well as in the case of these people whose house-building Milarepa refused to join in.

Kulananda: But then the contact with the vision doesn't seem somehow to carry into the past. There doesn't seem to be historical ... It's a new phenomenon.

S: Yes, well, it's as though there is an eruption of another element, which involves a total re-arrangement: and the re-arrangement is more or less - what shall I say - catastrophic depending on the particular pattern that existed before.

Virabhadra: I get the feeling, looking back over my life that the point at which I made contact with the Friends ... in a way it all seems to follow naturally. Looking back you can see a steady progression. It's almost as if it was going to happen.

S: Yes, but there's also another way of looking at it. That is when maybe one is more fortunate: That when one makes the contact with the Friends it's a linking-up with or a continuation of, in a better way, on a grander scale, something that had already been started. But I think what very often happens is that one has, on the one hand a sort of - well - one's natural gestalt one can say, but that perhaps for the greater part of one's life, for one objective reason or another, one has been prevented or hindered in giving expression to that. So you've had to do something. You've had to give some sort of expression, but it is being distorted all the time due to external circumstances and factors, and that when you come in contact with the vision, you can see more clearly what has been happening and get rid of or avoid those distorting factors and with the help of the vision just link up the expression of one's - or a more adequate expression of - one's own gestalt - with the vision itself. Do you see what I mean?

Kulananda: One tends to want to just ignore the gestalt - just forget about it and there's nothing else. One wants to start afresh, but you can't.

S: In a sense you can start afresh, but again in a sense you can't, because you have to make that fresh start from where you are now, which is the result of past processes. But as I said, that very often one is prevented [27] from giving an adequate expression to one's gestalt, just due to objective factors, circumstances, and that when you come into contact with the ideal or vision, you recognize that, and you can see the way in which your life had been distorted and you can gradually start counteracting that distortion, and giving a truer expression to one's own gestalt, and thereby because one is giving a truer expression to one's own gestalt be enabled to link up with the ideal or vision through that.

Virabhadra: That could be a lot more painful, because you've got the whole thing that has been built up around you that you've got to get rid of.

S: Yes, there's a lot more that you've got to get rid of.

Kulananda: What is one's gestalt and what isn't one's gestalt? Everything is an expression - so what is a false expression and what is a distorted expression?

S: Well, a false, a distorted expression is an expression forced upon you or a deformation of your expression forced upon you by external circumstances. Let me give a concrete example. It seems really quite simple and straightforward. Supposing that when you are young you want to be an artist and supposing you succeed in being an artist and supposing as an artist you have an ideal which as an artist you're always pursuing, and then let's say you come in contact with the FWBO, which presents you with a certain vision and you say to yourself, "Yes, this is what I was looking for all the time; what I was searching for all the time through my art." So this just represents the next stage. "I don't even need to leave my art behind. I sort of take it up and carry it over into my new life as a Buddhist et cetera et cetera." You see what I mean? It is plain sailing as it were.

All right, well supposing you take another case - say a case of a person who wants to be an artist. It is natural for him to be an artist. That is the way in which he fulfils his particular gestalt. But supposing as a child he's been prevented from being an artist. He's compelled to do something else and the result of that is that his basic nature is there - his gestalt is trying to find expression or it finds expression in a distorted way, not successfully. So it may be he's been put into a bank or maybe he's had to go into the army or something like that, so he is being prevented from giving natural expression to his own particular gestalt. All right, supposing he comes into contact with, say, the Friends. Well, he's got to get rid of all the conditioning which was imposed upon him by his having been put in the bank and having had to go into the army. He's also got to unravel, as it were, the distortions of his natural creativity and artistic nature and gestalt brought about by being subject [28] to that process. Perhaps he's got to be an artist with the help of the FWBO and to fulfil that, work that up, because that is his means of contacting in a real way the ideals and the vision of the FWBO. So therefore that would be a much more painful process. He'd have to undo that distorting effect.

Kulananda: And what about someone with a negative gestalt?

S: I don't believe that anybody can have a negative gestalt. I think that the gestalt exists on a higher level than positivity and negativity in that sense.

Subhuti: So that, as it were negative lives, are the result of distortions in the gestalt.

S: Yes, I would tend to say that. But if I wanted to justify it in terms of Buddhist thought one could say that the gestalt represented the reflection of the Dharmakaya in you, the individual. One has to take this as it were more poetically otherwise you get into quite deep waters metaphysically - does that constitute a self et cetera et cetera? The Buddhist texts themselves have this difficulty - are open to these sort of questions.

But I'm only trying to underline the point that you are sort of trying to work out an ideal in your life or as your spiritual life. It's much more than a purely rational process. It is not that you just have a sort of purely rational idea about Enlightenment et cetera et cetera, and you just sort of are trying to put that into practice on a more or less purely rational basis. Much deeper forces and factors have to be involved to make it really meaningful and effective and

for you really to get anywhere. More creative forces have to be involved.

Subhuti: You're extending the use of the term 'gestalt' as the usual psychological meaning.

S: Yes, I'm using it very loosely, obviously. A gestalt is a sort of whole - I think I did talk about this before. I referred for instance to artistic experience - I referred, for instance to the example of Mozart. Mozart used to say, I believe, that before he composed a symphony he heard the symphony instantaneously; it was all there at once; it was just a whole. Well that whole is the gestalt of the symphony, which he then proceeds to write out as a series of notes played one after another, but he actually experiences the whole thing together, that is to say, he experiences the whole thing out of time. So it is as though we have our gestalt, or our gestalt is us, as we exist already completed, in a manner [29] of speaking, outside time, and our life consists in actually the rounding out of that or the living out of that in time.

Subhuti : But that's not just a metaphysical abstraction. It's something that you actually feel. It's a power motivating you through life.

S: Yes. That's why the symbol of the seed is useful because it is something that sprouts, something that grows. The gestalt is not a sort of metaphysical entity. It's not anything static or inert.

Subhuti : I still don't quite understand how one ... it's a crude question, but where does the gestalt come from? How do you come to contact it? How do you come to express it?

: You sort of build it up over time by everything that you do is constantly modifying it ...

S: Well, it is as though one is speaking to some extent in traditional Buddhist terms. It's as though the gestalt is the product of the interaction, if you like, between your self and a phenomenal series of lives - that is to say births and deaths and rebirths - interaction between that and the Dharmakaya, which produces as it were a reflection in you.

Kulananda: The interaction between the historical and the potential.

S: Mm - it's not exactly the potential because the Dharmakaya being outside time is completely actual - it is only potential within time.

Subhuti: It is actually acting upon you all the time.

S: It is actually acting upon you. So the gestalt is the result or the effect of the Dharmakaya acting upon you. That is to say acting upon your best part, your most positive part, your creative part in the sense of that part of the reactive process which also is part of the path though not of the irreversible path. But the action of the Dharmakaya is limited by the material itself: in some cases more limited, in other cases less limited.

: What's that ... the material on which it is working?

: What is the material?

S: Well that is you as a phenomenal being.

: Is it you historically?

[30]

S: You historically - though of course by historical or in historical you include past lives as well.

Kovida: But it does raise the question as to why the Dharmakaya should bother! (laughter)

S: Well, it doesn't bother. You might ask why should the moon bother to reflect itself in the water. If the water is there the moon ...

There is no question in a way of why, because one is dealing with metaphors. One is trying to explain something - through metaphors, similes, as symbol and so on or even myth - which perhaps can't be explained or communicated in any other way. But if one just wants to stick to the facts without any explanation, well what has one got? Well, one has got one's life as one is actually living it or has lived it for a certain length of time. If one looks at that life, one can see either one of two things usually. You either see a particular limited pattern repeated over and over again, or you see a pattern, which is not yet complete, being unfolded. Because you can see half the pattern you assume in a sense "somewhere", inverted commas, a whole pattern. That is the gestalt or that can be predicated as the gestalt. You see what I mean? That's all. That is fact.

Abhaya : But in a sense, it's only a vague sort of intuition because if you could see it ...

S: You mean the remainder of the pattern or the whole pattern?

Abhaya : Yes, the remainder of the pattern is just ( ?)

S: Well, there are varying degrees. One sometimes can see it quite clearly. In other cases one may not see it very clearly.

Kulananda: Is that again a matter of faith?

S: No. Faith here is being used in a quite different sense. This is not a matter of belief.

Kulananda: It is a matter of experience.

S: Well, it is a matter of experience and inference. It is just like, if you've got a carpet - say a Persian carpet - it's half unrolled ... you can see the certain part of the pattern. You can see also that - well it's still being unrolled - so you can extrapolate as it were from the pattern which you see to the pattern which you do not see. It's more like that, and of course, there can be varying degrees of clarity, depending on the nature of your life and your life experience.

Abhaya: But then it depends also on how creative you've been as to how much of the pattern ... if you can only see vague sort of [31] blotches then you can't work out what the rest of the pattern is.

S: Right, yes. Or, of course, to continue the metaphor, bearing in mind my 'distortion' - what I said about your gestalt or the expression of your gestalt being distorted - there may be



enormous stains on the carpet, which are obscuring the part of the pattern so far revealed. Or there may be burns. Or there may be holes. One could even say that.

Kulananda: This is what bothers me is that you have got the idea of the carpet as it exists without these burns and holes and stains, but in fact it has got burns and holes and stains.

S: Yes, but also one must realize the limitations of metaphor, yes? The whole thing is changing so that you could ... it's not a question of the pattern being only revealed by the whole life. The pattern is also revealed by every part of the life. Yes? So that, in a sense, even though the carpet has got all these stains and burns ... in a sense, if you think in terms of say one single carpet representing your whole life - but it isn't only that - every minute is represented also by the whole carpet. And so the carpets that you see after the carpet has really been unrolled - even though the one carpet has got so many stains and burns and holes in it - that is to say the carpet which represents the whole life - the carpet which represents each minute after a certain stage in the unrolling process has been reached - even that still represents the whole life - has got no burns and no holes and no stains in it. You see what I mean?

Clive: Could you say that with certain activities you might show the carpet more completely than others ...

S: Yes you could say that.

Clive : ...that you might have quite a perfect pattern in some activities that you do, and some activities it could be really ...

S: But again you can say once you've reached a certain point, every single thing you do, whatever it is, fully reveals the whole pattern.

Subhuti: Once you've reached a certain point ... which would be?

S: Yes, a certain point of creativity, you could say, a certain point of spiritual development.

Kovida : That's what you said earlier - that when you actually started to express something you couldn't see it until you had objectified it, but after that point what you were expressing was the whole thing, totally, at every moment.

: ... experiencing expression.

[32]

Kovida : Is that why you stress that people should write their autobiography, so that they can see that pattern?

S: Yes, also to inform other people because ...

: (?)

S: Yes, well ... sometimes it is quite interesting - well it's quite useful - to know what another person has gone through because, especially in the FWBO, sometimes before coming in

contact with the FWBO people have gone through all sorts of things, all sorts of very difficult, painful and traumatic experiences. And if you know that, well then you can understand certain things in their behaviour and maybe make allowances for those whereas otherwise you might have been quite intolerant and unsympathetic. But if you know, for instance, they've been in a mental hospital for three years, well, it helps you to understand their present behaviour perhaps a bit more and you can be a bit more sympathetic towards it. Or you know that they lost their parents when they were very young or something of that sort or they had three unsuccessful marriages et cetera. But from the point of view of the person himself - yes - it's not a bad thing to sort of just run through your whole life up to the point that you made contact with the Friends maybe, and see whether there was any sort of pattern, whether any sort of meaning emerged. (pause)

I think also, a relevant point here in connection with all that I've been saying, is that it's as though also that our lives don't represent just a series of chances. That there is ... one can I think quite meaningfully and validly speak in terms of a working out of a pattern of some kind. It's as though a pattern is almost a sort of law of nature. You know what happens when you make a musical sound over a tray of sand. Well, a sort of mandala-like pattern is produced. It's as though we - human beings being essentially let us say collections of vibrations - we create patterns as we move over the surface of things. We build houses, or whatever, and the pattern is according to the nature of the vibration, which of course sometimes can be disturbed or distorted or again the medium can be disturbed or distorted.

So, I think sometimes we speak as though things were entirely random or entirely free in a negative sense - which they are not. I mean, there is freedom, but there is a certain kind of determination as well or at least limitation and you get both of these in, so to speak, the pattern. So, I think it's probably useful to think of one's life as the working out of a kind of pattern, the pattern being the gestalt.

[33]

But the basis of this is the conclusions to which one comes as one actually sort of contemplates one's life: That it doesn't seem a random thing. One has freedom, but it isn't as though anything could have happened at any time. It is as though there is a perceivable pattern or at least a part of a pattern. So seeing part, you can imagine the rest, and the whole is the gestalt, which can be revealed not only throughout the whole of the life, but at every single instant in it more and more clearly, the more creative you become.

Anyway, all that arises out of this building of houses. So one could perhaps say that, to put it sort of dualistically, your natural tendency is to build a house, but you come into contact with someone like Milarepa who persuades you to build a castle instead, so that your house is gradually transformed into a castle. This is the sort of thing that happens. You sort of modify your house or enlarge it, change the structure, so that in the end you've got not the house that you started out constructing, which might have been more or less complete, but you've got a castle like that of Milarepa.

So there has been a switch over, as it were, from the reactive mode to the purely creative mode. It's not that you go just some other place and build a castle. You can't because you are the place. So you have to start with your present materials and modify your existing pattern in the light of the new one. But sometimes, you may have built your house in such an extreme way that you have to un-build it before you can start adapting it as a castle. But if your house

has been built on comparatively reasonable lines, well, you can expand it into a castle perhaps without too much trouble and difficulty. In some cases you might even have to raze the house almost to the foundations and start practically all over again.

Subhuti: That's almost what Milarepa had to do.

S: Mm, yes, Milarepa had to do it, it seems, in view of the rather terrible things he had done quite early in his life.

Kovida: The guru can actually see the pattern in the individual ...

S: Yes, right ...

Kovida: ... it comes to him and in a sense enables him to work that out.

S: Yes, tells him what he needs to do in order to reveal and to experience for himself that hidden part of himself. [34] Leaving aside the guru, I think one often finds that other people see more of you than you see of yourself, even your own potential, your own abilities.

Kovida : It's quite interesting just talking to people, just sometimes in the pub or something. It's amazing how much insight they have into other people. They can see quite clearly what they are doing, what they are doing wrong.

S: But it's not so easy for them to see with regard to their own selves. It is easier to see others.

Kovida : They don't seem to be able to apply their knowledge of that other person in any constructive way.

: Yet, there's a sort of funny contrast. I feel that, in a way, since, coming into contact with the Movement, I feel like I could do anything, sort of feel capable of doing anything, but on the other hand there seems to be something quite definite which I have to do. You sort of feel, a certain amount - you feel an immense amount of freedom - but in a way there's also a - it's also very definite.

Subhuti : Does this relate to what you've been saying about doing - it being important that you do what you want to do. You remember, it was some time recently, you were saying that it might take five or six years for an order member after ordination to really find out what he wanted to do. What was the think ...

S: Yes, I think I sort of talk about this in various ways and from various points of view. I think usually what I've got I've got in mind is that it is important, in fact vitally important, to establish contact with what you actually feel - with your own emotional energy - otherwise you'll never be able to get going, never be able to do anything. An abstract idea of what is right for you to do, or an abstract idea of what you ought to do is not enough to motivate you in any real way. So I think if one has lost contact with what one really wants to do, one has got to establish, re-establish contact with that even if for the time being what you want to do is something quite unskilful. But you've actually got to experience what you want to do - and I make this point because people, or many people, are in fact so alienated and so out of contact with what they really want to do. They've had to disown that for so long perhaps: deny

that for so long. I can't help thinking that in many ways or in many cases, if people get down below the distortions and deformations and so on, what they want to do is very often quite positive. (pause)

[35]

: ( ? ) very appreciative ( ? ) of education in not distorting people's gestalt. They don't ( ? ) work to do so that you can unbuild it.

S: Right, yes. I was quoting last weekend as saying ( ? ) Miss Florence Nightingale wrote - did you hear this - she wrote, when she wrote a book about hospital management that - I forget her exact words. I remembered them over the weekend. She said something like this, "The first thing that the hospital must make sure of is that it doesn't do any harm to the patient." That was the most important thing, but I adapted this and said, well, the most important thing about education is that it doesn't do any harm to the child. This is what you've got to make sure of first. So that if we do establish say, a Buddhist school, well this will be principle number one: At least you should do no harm to the child even if you don't succeed in teaching it anything. (laughter) If you just avoid doing any harm, you will have done quite a lot. (pause)

Kovida: Did you say that everyone actually has a gestalt or do you think that in evolutionary terms, it is only after a certain point that one actually develops a gestalt?

S: I think it is only human beings who have a gestalt. In a sense it is only human beings who reach the level of self-consciousness or are able to be creative and who therefore have anything which can reflect any higher principle.

: How does the gestalt arise? Is it sort of added to ...

S: Well, this is what I said. It is a sort of product if one can so speak of the interaction between the phenomenal individuality and that higher principle. One can even speak of it as a sort of reflection of that higher principle within the individual. This is metaphorical language, but there seems to be no other way of clarifying the matter - I won't say explaining the matter because this is not an explanation - but of clarifying the matter, or clarifying the idea.

Kulananda: Is there another word one could use for the phenomenon?

S: I expect there is. I haven't sort of just been able to find one. I think perhaps it is not advisable to use any one word. One can say gestalt, one can say pattern, one can say reflection, one can say seed. It's probably better to use all of them at different times in different contexts. Otherwise one might create the impression that you're making a sort of philosophical-cum-scientific statement, which you're not. You're making really a sort of poetic statement. It's a statement of a metaphorical nature, which has its own "truth", but which is not truth in an objective, verifiable sense. One is not giving a metaphysical explanation. I think [36] that is clear. You're not explaining anything. Perhaps one should just say that one is clarifying. One is clarifying an idea, clarifying a notion, or illuminating metaphorically.

Abhaya: I suppose one may look on communication as the interaction between these patterns, between the individual patterns when two people become aware - who are aware of one

another. People come together in a certain way because their patterns ...

S: Their patterns overlap.

Abhaya : ... inter-relate and overlap in a quite natural way.

S: Yes, and I think when you communicate with someone, when you get deeply into communication with them, you become more and more aware of the total pattern which is them. Maybe they haven't lived out the whole of the pattern. Maybe they don't see much of it themselves, but you see more and more of the pattern, which is them. In a way you can't separate them from the pattern except in thought, but you experience them in a certain way - you experience them in a way as a pattern. You see certain regularities of behaviour and of thinking. You see the same motif appearing in different ways and in different contexts, so far as they are concerned, in their lives.

Kovida: I suppose it is that which makes them them?

S: That is that which makes them them, whether they are talking or whether they are happy or whether they are sad, whether they are doing something skilful or unskilful - It's still them, even so. It's as though there is a sort of common pattern behind all those different expressions, maybe distorted in some cases and in others not distorted, but the same sort of pattern.

Kulananda: : It's why you can predict what people will do and what people will think.

S: Well, you can predict to the extent that you see the whole pattern. Sometimes people are unpredictable, which means you just are not able - well, it can mean that the pattern is very over-laid or some of it is just not perceivable - or you just haven't been able to understand the whole of it. It is there to be seen, but you haven't seen it.

Clive : Is that the difference between someone being an enigma? And that is that you can't understand certain actions that they do - not because the pattern isn't conceivable, but because you can't see the whole of it.

[37]

S: Right, sometimes that happens on quite a small scale, not in a very total way, but you just don't see the whole of what someone is thinking about and therefore you misunderstand their actions.

Kovida : I must say it seems to explain why individuality is more important. The likelihood of few people having the same pattern the various different types of pattern seems to be quite - I imagine the odds are quite high against it.

S: Yes, even if there is a certain limited number of elements in a pattern, they can be re-arranged. They can be ordered in so many different ways. There are so many possible permutations.

Kovida : Could that raise the question then if you are going to try and create a spiritual community, then what do you go for? Do you go for the basic blocks of the pattern, the basic elements of the pattern and try and create a structure that accommodates them? Because in

some ways ...

S: Well, it's as though each individual is so to speak a little pattern and those little patterns have to coincide in their more important parts or their more important elements in such a way that they reflect some more universal pattern, let us say. So we usually express this in more intellectual terms by saying they must have the same ideal, but this is putting it in quite abstract intellectual terms. It is not so much that their ideals must overlap, but they must overlap to some extent.

: Would you say that if each of the patterns were clearly definable, that is to say that each of the people were individuals then it wouldn't matter how different they were. They could still fit together in the same (pattern).

S: Hmm, yes, if there were certain elements which so to speak overlap.

: There would have to be those (common ideals?).

S: Or, each particular pattern would have to be a variation on a more universal common pattern. In other words it'd have to be some common element however you expressed it, whether abstractly or concretely.

Abhaya : This raises the point that as well as the individual gestalt there would seem to be, when you get spiritual community taking place, the unfolding of a wider, a greater pattern.

S: Yes, this is connected with the definition of, the usual definition of gestalt as a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts; and this does raise of course, so to speak, philosophical difficulties. But perhaps one [38] can just look at it in the terms of what I mentioned about Mozart experiencing the whole of the symphony before he experienced its parts consecutively.

Abhaya : So could you say then that the Movement, say take a spiritual movement like the Friends, is the unfolding of a particular gestalt which we're all working towards.

S: Yes, one could say that or one could express it in terms of a common myth, but on the other hand one has to be quite careful because it is not as though the individual is being subordinated to something outside himself.

Kulananda: : What about going beyond conditions altogether. My thoughts have ( ?) run in a completely different way - that in the end you go beyond the pattern. The pattern is conditioned. The pattern is something that one would leave behind as one grew. This is the way I have thought. Is this a greater unfoldment of the pattern?

S: Well, it depends what one uses the word pattern as a metaphor for. If one uses it as a metaphor for all one's unskilful activities, well of course, yes, one leaves it behind. But one can also use it as a metaphor for the creative activities. One doesn't leave them behind. They just become more and more creative. In other words, the pattern extends and extends in a way that perhaps one couldn't have imagined to begin with.

Clive : Could you say that there are two patterns, a creative and a positive and a negative ...

S: Well yes, I did say that a while ago, didn't I, when I spoke of the house and the castle, you see - the one sort of taking over from the other? You can apply that to the two patterns also.  
Subhuti: You did actually say that you can't have a negative gestalt. It's the working out of the gestalt that's negative: so the house is really a sort of distortion of the gestalt.

S: Yes, one could say that because in the case of a human being, however depraved a human being may be, however lacking in development, there is some (in traditional Buddhist terms) some reflection of the Dharmakaya.

(Break in recording, then discussion resumes.)

[39]

S: It's as though, if people who are building a house have their attention drawn to the possibility of building a castle, they will realize that it was actually the castle that they wanted to build all the time.

Subhuti: The castle more adequately expresses their gestalt.

S: Yes, yes. So one has to be quite careful not to think of the gestalt as something limited and fixed.

Clive: In the expression of this gestalt is it automatic that one will sort of ... If one is free to express it, get to a certain point and ... I was just thinking about Milarepa and he had done what was necessary for him to do and now he was interested out of compassion in trying to help others.

S: He was building a bigger castle! He was still working on his own castle, you could say. It was big enough for him to live in but no, he wanted to build a castle big enough for everybody to live in ...

: ... adding a new wing.

S: ... adding a new wing.

: This is quite a significant point, of course.

S: Yes. (pause) You could say adding thirty-seven new wings - a reference to thirty seven bodhipaksya-dharmah! (Laughter followed by pause)

But one of the things I've been thinking is that - well I did touch upon it already - that in thinking about individual development and spiritual life and all that, I think people tend to think very literalistically and what I call linearly. You see what I mean? It has to be made much more multi-dimensional and much less pinned down to specific definable ideas. It has to be in a way less graspable. It shouldn't be too graspable - one would be justified in becoming suspicious if it became too graspable. In a sense, it shouldn't be too clear.

Clive: You're doing your best! (laughter)

S: Well actually I was making it clearer, but maybe I've sort of been making it clear in what

sense it isn't so clear.

Kovida: But would it be clear to the individual? I mean, when he discovers his pattern will that be clear or will it still be vague for him?

[40]

S: I think it won't be vague. If by clear one means having a definite outline - not necessarily so. Because it's not a question of a gestalt being something that can be intellectually pinned down because the intellectual road is as it were linear, which the gestalt is not.

Kovida: I mean the idea of an outline actually confines it in something, but it gives you something ...

S: ... so it has a provisional value, but I mean you mustn't take it too literally.

Subhuti: This whole discussion is very exciting. It has a sense of wonder to it which seems to be quite an important element.

S: Mm well, Plato says, I believe, that philosophy begins with a sense of wonder. So perhaps that is so in the sense that philosophy should suggest - philosophy in the true sense - extra dimensions of things - not having everything sort of neatly docketed and labelled in an intellectual sense: that was philosophy more in the Aristotle sense perhaps.

Things shouldn't be too clear or too sharply defined "for the thinking mind". Or one could say, yes, let them be clearly defined for the thinking mind, but let the thinking mind not think that that is everything.

Kovida : Let it not overstep its own limits.

S: Yes, get things as clear as you can intellectually by all means - don't obfuscate or don't indulge in vague thinking, but even when your thinking is very clear as thinking, recognize that there are other dimensions, other ways of looking at things.

Clive : The tendency is to bring things down, to equal it down, to intellectual formulas.

S: Well, it's not even necessarily a question of down, but to reduce things to intellectual formulas represents a sort of attenuation of reality, an attenuation of one's own experience, a deliberate sort of self-limitation, because you're not just that.

Well, we're not getting on very fast, but I suppose it doesn't really matter, because we'll just have to continue some other time. Anyway, let's carry on. Someone like to read what the workers then said?

The workers said, "What you have sung is most enlightening. Please also tell us whether, in your way of life, you have anything like our farms, properties, relatives, companions, wives, and children?"

[41]

It seems to us that these things are worth more than you have suggested. Please tell us what



possessions you have that are so much better than ours? Why do you look upon our way of life as worthless?

S: Mm, the workers are simply asking Milarepa to elaborate or to amplify or to enlarge upon his original metaphor, you see? If you have a house, well what else do you have? You have a farm building attached, property, where there is land. You have relations living there: wives and children and so on. So if Milarepa claims to have a house or a castle which is better than theirs, well surely he should have these things also that they have but in a better and higher way. So let him, as it were, make that clear. Let him sort of justify his position by going into greater detail. That might be more convincing. So this is what he does ... yes, they are asking him really to elaborate the metaphor and I think that is quite important really: elaboration of the metaphor, the elaboration of the myth because that enables one to experience it in all its different aspects or at least in many of its different aspects. In that way it becomes more real, more vivid, more concrete, more apprehensible, more graspable. So would someone then like to read that song that he sings?

Milarepa answered:

The Alaya Consciousness is the good earth, The inner teaching is the seed that is sowed, Achievement in meditation is the sprout, And the Three Bodies of Buddha are the ripened crop. These are the four lasting mainstays of heavenly farming. Your worldly farming, delusive and deceiving, Is merely the slave-labour of the hungry; Without hesitation I discard it!

S: Mm, so let's go into this. 'The Alaya Consciousness is the good earth.' Do you know about the Alaya? I have spoken about it at least once, in the lecture on the Depth Psychology of the Yogacara, which most of you must have heard.

:Is it the store-consciousness - the Alayavijnana ... ?

[42]

S: Yes, the store-consciousness. You remember there are eight consciousnesses. Do you remember this? There are the five sense consciousnesses. Then there is the mind consciousness, the soiled-mind consciousness and the Alaya. And the Alaya is divided into the Relative Alaya and the Absolute Alaya. Here it seems that the Alaya that is meant is the Relative Alaya. This Alaya is a rather abstruse concept and the different schools of Buddhist thought are not altogether agreed. Perhaps it shouldn't be regarded as a metaphysical concept. It's more like a metaphor. It's ... yes, Alaya is a store It's the store consciousness. For instance if one takes the question of memory. I mean how is memory possible? If one looks at it in a common-sense sort of way, the fact that you are able to remember now something that happened yesterday or last year means that the thought of what happened yesterday or last year was somehow stored up in your mind. Just as you put away something in a store and can take it out whenever you have need of it - in the same way you put away these thoughts, these ideas in the store-house of your own consciousness and you can take them out, you can produce them again whenever you need them, and that is called memory. So the idea of the Alaya, the store-consciousness, is also applied to the whole process of rebirth. It is said that every action that you do, every willed action that you do, sooner or later produces consequences. Those consequences aren't always apparent. So what happens according to this explanation or this metaphor if you like, is that every time that you perform a willed action,

you create an impression on a certain level of your mind, that is to say the level of the store consciousness, and that impression is not just something passive - it's not just a passive imprint like that of a seal - it has a certain potentiality. It's like a seed. So one talks of depositing seeds in the Alaya - depositing seeds on the level of the eighth consciousness and these seeds remain there and they fructify when circumstances permit them. And when they fructify, then one experiences the results of one's previous willed actions. So you get the general idea of what the Alaya, or the Relative Alaya, is?

So therefore Milarepa says 'The Alaya Consciousness is the good earth, The inner teaching is the seed that is sowed.' You can sow all sorts of seed in the soil, so to speak, of the Alaya. You can sow what are called defiled seeds - seeds tainted with greed, hatred and delusion - or you can sow undefiled seeds, seeds which are not so tainted, and the inner teaching is that sort of seed. The inner teaching is an undefiled seed. It's sown in the soil, the earth of the Alaya. That is to say, you hear a teaching - inner teaching suggests not just a general doctrinal teaching, but something deeply applicable to your own individual spiritual needs. You hear this inner teaching. You are deeply receptive to it. It makes an impression on you - not just on you in the sense of a superficial level of your consciousness - you don't just hear the teaching with your ears, so [43] it isn't just a question of an impression on the level of sense consciousness. You don't simply understand it with your ordinary mind. It goes deeper than that. You don't even understand it with your defiled-mind consciousness - that is to say the seventh consciousness - that is the consciousness which is split into or distorted by subject-and-object experience. You don't even experience it on that level. You take it into yourself, so to speak, and receive it on a very much deeper level: the level of the Alaya, where you conserve it and where it remains, where it has a permanent influence upon your whole being. So 'The Alaya Consciousness is the good [earth], The inner teaching is the seed that is sowed, Achievement in meditation is the sprout' and it's the result of one's having been deeply impressed by the teaching on that level and retained traces of that influence on that level that you are able to keep up your practice of meditation and eventually to experience some result from it. So 'Achievement in meditation is the sprout.' Or rather perhaps one can look at it in this way: that it is because one has been deeply influenced by the inner teaching in the past that when one gets the opportunity one is able to practise meditation in the sense of at least sitting for meditation and that seed deposited in the form of the inner teaching is then able to sprout in the form of an actual meditation experience. So you see the general idea, as it were.

'And the Three Bodies of the Buddha are the ripened crop'. So what are these three bodies? You're familiar with these I take it?

\_\_\_\_\_ : The Trikaya.

S: The Trikaya - the Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, the Dharmakaya. These are of course transformations of one's ordinary body, speech and mind. Body, speech and mind are the product of reactivity. They are part of let's say, the reactive pattern. The three Kayas of the Buddha are the product of supreme creativity. They are part, so to speak, of the positive, the creative pattern, the transcendental pattern, the mandala - or they make up the mandala. The body, speech and mind are - or maybe not quite body, speech and mind themselves - but one speaks in terms of the three seeds, that is to say, bijas. The body, speech and mind, the three constituents of the unenlightened personality contain within themselves in seed form the three Kayas. These three seeds are represented by the three syllables om ah hum. Om which is usually located in the head or forehead, the white om, is

the seed of the Nirmanakaya. It represents the body. The red ah at the throat is the seed of the Sambhogakaya. It represents potentiality of speech. And the blue hum at the heart represents the potentiality for the Dharmakaya. So that is the seed of Dharmakaya. So one speaks initially of the teaching as the seed. It sprouts in the form of meditation, which is significant, and the fruit which you reap in the end is that of the [44] three Kayas. In other words, the result is that your body, speech and mind, your whole being, your whole unskilful being is transformed into something totally skilful, totally transcendental. The house is rebuilt as the castle.

One can also say that the fact that 'the Alaya consciousness is the good earth' means that the earth is always there. If the earth wasn't always there, there wouldn't be the possibility of any seed being sown in it. In the same way, the Alaya is always there ...

\_\_\_\_\_ : ... it's always good ...

S: Well, in a way, it is beyond good and evil, because it receives defiled seeds as well as undefiled seeds. It's up to you what kind of seed that you sow. The Alaya, one could say, is in itself neither skilled nor unskilled, but it represents the possibility of reaping the fruit of whatever seeds you do sow. It conserves those seeds. It stores up those seeds. This is what the Alaya represents. Like the earth ...

\_\_\_\_\_ : I meant good in the sense of fertile.

S: Yes, well, you can be fertile of evil as well as fertile of good. So like the earth, the Alaya is always there. It conserves whatever impressions it receives, whatever seeds are cast into it. It represents the possibility of continuity. It's the principle of sort of conservation of moral effort, it's sometimes called. That if you do put in a certain amount of effort, if you do work on yourself, the effect is cumulative. Perhaps we don't always realize that. It's not as though you do something and, well, the effect doesn't last. It does last, especially if you keep up the effort and the fact that it is possible for it to last is represented by the principle of the Alaya, the principle of continuity and conservation of moral effort or psychological energy or spiritual energy.

Chris : Does the Alaya work from life to life?

S: Yes it is brought in in that connection also, in fact I mentioned that some time ago.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Does this sort of seed analogy, the seed implanted in the earth and sort of building up, bringing up merits?

S: Yes, yes, because in the case of those seeds which are positive without being transcendental, well the result from them, the harvest reaped from them is in the form of merits: positive mundane experiences in some future life.

[45]

\_\_\_\_\_ : How does the concept of the Alaya differ from that of the gestalt?

S: Well, one could say that the Alaya is that principle which makes possible the unfolding of gestalt. One mustn't think metaphysically, not that there is a thing called the Alaya - that

would be to reify it and therefore make it a sort of self - but the Alaya is a concept which clarifies the fact of that possibility.

Clive: Can it be then that the Alaya can be negatively conditioned or positively conditioned?

S: Well one usually speaks of negative and positive conditions as taking place within the Alaya. It is the receptacle, the store - everything is within that.

Clive: That's what I mean, so if let's say, if then for instance the Jesuits conditioning a child, presumably getting through to that sort of level, and in some cases, and actually conditioning from that ...

S: No, it's not a question of conditioning in that way. It represents the fact that the results of any action affecting the individual and the results of any action which the individual has himself performed are conserved even in the absence of a situation which does not permit the results of those actions to accrue for the time being. It's a different thing.

First of all the Alaya is concerned with the conservation of one's own willed efforts. So that if you have done, of deliberate intent, anything, whether positive or negative, skilled or unskilled, that leaves an imprint on a certain level of your own being, here called the Alaya, which conserves that, even though your life situation does not permit the results of that willed action to emerge immediately, that action is conserved in seed form at the Alaya level and manifests in form of a result when conditions permit. So it is not concerned with the action of others upon you, except to the extent that you have deliberately made that your own action, as it were. You could say that the action of others upon you only goes as far as the level of the mind consciousness or the soiled-mind consciousness. The action of others on you which you do not accept and in which you do not co-operate does not go to the level of the Alaya. This is why you are not morally responsible for it.

Clive: So the Alaya is concerned with an action which you originate.

S: Yes, yes, action which you originate in the sense of a willed action, an action whether of body speech or mind which you deliberately perform - and it is that sort of action of course which, according to [46] Buddhist teaching, constitutes or results in what we call karma, or karma-vipaka, not any other.

\_\_\_\_\_ : In a sense for the fruit of those particular actions which would arise if the situations were actually present, if they're not within this life is it almost like then what you actually create in your next life is almost like those situations arising that haven't been fulfilled with what you've been acting ...

S: Well the Alaya is able to conserve these impressions or seeds from life to life. If one looks at it in Abhidharma terms, there are some seeds which can only be conserved for a certain length of time - if circumstances do not permit them to sprout within a certain length of time, they will die. But there are others which are much stronger, as it were, more vigorous, and which in a way are almost looking for circumstances within which they can develop, even maybe forcing their way through, because they are seeds, and they have a certain amount of life and vigour in them. And there are some seeds which are sufficiently vigorous that they as it were insist on finding an outlet for themselves. They don't just sort of passively wait for

circumstances to be favourable. There are others where a lot or as much depends on the circumstances as upon the seed itself.

Kovida: So is the Alaya a conditioning instrument?

S: No, it doesn't itself condition. It is a condition of conditioning. It is what makes conditioning in that way - and it's a strictly limited way - possible at all. So one cannot, one must not take it as a metaphysical principle. It's a sort of concept, which is postulated as an entity in order to sort of clarify further the sort of thing that is happening.

Clive: If the effect that others can have on you goes only as far as soiled-mind consciousness, then if you are acting within the bounds of your conditioning that has been imposed on you by others, then you're not acting on something that you've originated ...

S: Right. Yes.

Clive: ... so that if you continue to do that, it won't have an effect on your Alaya consciousness.

S: No, it won't.

Clive: It's purely superficial.

[47]

S: It's relatively superficial. Unless as I said you make that conditioning which has been imposed upon you your own. But so long as you are keeping up even a sort of mental resistance to it and not acquiescing in it, anything that you are forced to do as a result of that is not depositing seeds in the Alaya, and therefore not modifying you in any fundamental way. For instance, to give you a very extreme example: Supposing you were a prisoner and you were being tortured and you were forced to sign some sort of confession, but you did not really with your full volition, or with any volition, go along with that - you were simply forced to do it. That would not count karmically speaking as a willed action on your part. Or supposing that you were forced not only to sign a confession, but to sign an order, maybe an order ordering other people to be, maybe shot. If you were forced to do it and there was no acquiescence in that on your part, even if the people were shot as a result of that, there would be no seeds deposited by you in the Alaya in that case. If it was possible for seeds to be deposited in the Alaya, in a manner of speaking your Alaya, though again the Alaya is neither yours nor not yours, then of course there could be no talk really in any meaningful sense of human freedom, nor could there be any individual development in any meaningful sense.

Clive: One of the things to do then is to be in touch with the Alaya; to originate your own action and ...

S: One doesn't actually speak of being in touch with the Alaya. It is more that anything which is willed, a deliberately willed action of yours, whether expressed through speech and action or not so expressed, that affects you at a level of your being of which you may be quite unconscious, which is termed the Alaya, and is conserved there in the sense that remains a permanent influence upon you, or has a permanent effect on you, even if it is not immediately

evident. It will work itself out sooner or later as conditions permit. So this is Milarepa's farming, you see. He extends the analogy in this sort of way.

Subhuti: Could you just link that up with the Absolute Alaya? What you've been talking about is the Relative Alaya - how does that link with the Absolute Alaya?

S: It's as though - as I mentioned before - there is no great agreement between the different schools (that is the Yogacara schools) about the Alaya. In fact it's possibly one of the most obscure questions in the whole of Buddhist thought, maybe because people have tried to treat it metaphysically rather than metaphorically - but one could say that the Relative Alaya is within time, because it is a principle of conservation, of continuity, among other things, as between earlier and later lives, as between successive human existences, whereas the Absolute Alaya, [48] which is, one could say synonymous with the Dharmakaya is outside time altogether.

Again one must be careful not to distinguish too literally. One could say that the Relative Alaya is that aspect of the Absolute Alaya which can be regarded as underpinning, in this sort of way, the whole process of the higher evolution - underpinning in the sense of conserving and maintaining the continuity of moral and spiritual effort.

So

These are the four lasting  
mainstays of heavenly farming  
Your worldly farming, delusive  
and deceiving  
Is merely the slave-labour of the  
hungry;  
Without hesitation I discard it!

So this is Milarepa's verdict on worldly farming, perhaps worldly work generally: it's 'delusive and deceiving', is 'merely the slave-labour of the hungry'. So, would you agree with this: 'the slave-labour of the hungry'? What does he mean? Your motivation is that you're hungry. You want food or you want clothing. You only work to get these things. It is purely utilitarian. And it's 'slave-labour'. You sell yourself for the sake of these things. You sell your labour. You bind yourself. You're no better than a slave. This is what he is saying.

You're doing something in order to get a certain equivalent result, a reward. You are not working freely and creatively. No doubt we could say quite a lot about this, but perhaps it's often been said before and need not be repeated. (pause)

Incidentally this comparison of the spiritual life or spiritual development with the process of farming is found in the Pali texts in the Sutta Nipata. I think it's the Bharadvaja Sutta, as far as I remember, where the Buddha says much the same thing to a Brahmin farmer who challenges him. (pause)

All right, someone like to read the next verse?

The fine warehouse of Sunyata, The Supramundane Jewels, The service and action of the Ten

Virtues, And the great happiness of Non-outflow - These four jewels are the lasting properties of Heaven.

[49]

Your worldly jewels and possessions are deceiving and delusive; Like deceptive magic spells, they lead you astray. Without any hesitation, I discard them.

S: Mm, 'The fine warehouse of Sunyata'. 'The supramundane Jewels, the service and action of the ten virtues, And the great happiness of Non-outflow - These four jewels are the lasting properties of heaven.' So they started by asking about farms, then they asked about properties and he has replied about the farming, now he's speaking about property. So he says he has four jewels: four things which are precious to him. First of all there is the 'fine warehouse of Sunyata'. 'The fine warehouse of Sunyata'. I don't know whether 'warehouse' is quite the right term - anyway I don't know what the original Tibetan is, but if one is talking about farming, I don't know whether it's - it may be a warehouse - but it's more like a great storehouse which contains everything. So why, do you think, is Sunyata described as 'the fine warehouse'? What is Sunyata?

\_\_\_\_\_ : The Void.

S: It's the Voidness, but in what sense is it voidness? What is it void of?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Grasping.

\_\_\_\_\_ : The conditioned.

S: The conditioned. It is also void, if you take it in the higher sense still, of the very distinction between conditioned and unconditioned. Guenther rather interestingly translates Sunyata as openness, doesn't he? No, sorry, he translated it as nothingness. Who translates it as 'openness' - 'the open dimension of being'? Well, 'being' isn't very happy, I would say, isn't very good, not a very good translation. If you just said 'the open dimension' without adding 'of being', well that is better. Sunyata represents so to speak the principle of unrestrictedness; the principle that anything is possible; that everything goes; that there's no fixed or final limitation; one thing can change into another - can be transformed into another. Sunyata represents that principle. So Sunyata could be interpreted as the principle of unrestricted potentiality. Sunyata is what makes everything possible. Sunyata is the principle which says, as it were, that there is nothing which is not possible. In that sense you could say that everything is in Sunyata. In that sense you could say that Sunyata is the warehouse. Sunyata is what makes everything possible. (pause)

[50]

Or you could say that Sunyata is that principle in accordance with which there are no conditions which make anything for ever or under all circumstances impossible.

Kulananda: Could you talk about Sunyata in terms of it being purely present? In other words, things are the way they are now. The possibilities are open. It's just now. It's at the sort of front edge of existence.

S: Well, you could only talk about them in that way if you put it in this way, that anything is

possible whatever the present situation may be.

Kovida: An unrestricted or unimpeded transformation. I think you said you can transform anything ( ? ).

S: Yes, that is the general principle. One could say in a sense that there are in fact limitations. Perhaps you should restrict it by saying that any conditioned thing can be transformed, though not immediately transformed, into any other conditioned thing. Unless you introduce that sort of limitation there would be no such thing as irreversibility or stream entry. You see what I mean? So any conditioned thing can be transformed into any other conditioned thing. But that does not mean that any conditioned thing can be transformed immediately into any other conditioned thing. There may have to be an intermediate series of steps or stages. So the given situation, the given conditioned situation is not final. It can be succeeded by any other set of conditions whether immediately or not. So therefore I'm just trying to point out the appropriateness of the comparison of Sunyata with a fine warehouse.

Yes, anyway, if you've got Sunyata, you've got everything. If you've got the warehouse, you've got everything that you need because it's all there, so to speak, within it. And then the Supramundane Jewels - presumably these are the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Subhuti: (reading footnote) a symbolic term, which denotes the transcendental merits and virtues of Buddha.

S: No, I would say that this the Three Jewels themselves all of which have a supramundane aspect. The Buddha Dharmakaya is supramundane. That is to say lokuttara - transcendental. The Dharma as a transcendental principle is transcendental. The Dharmakaya is - well - the Dharma itself is transcendental. Those states which make up the transcendental attainments, which are the true Dharmas - they are transcendental. And of course you have got the transcendental persons - the stream entrant and so on up to the Bodhisattva, which make up [51] the Arya Sangha. So the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are in their highest sense all three transcendental.

Tape 3

"The service and action of the Ten Virtues."

The Ten Virtues are the Ten Paramitas. These are his jewels, these are what he values. The jewel here represents the whole idea of value. You know, no doubt, what the Ten Paramitas are, beginning with Dana-Paramita. "Service and action." Why this distinction between service and action? What is the nature of the distinction anyway?

: One's own practice and the expression of it and the realization of that expression.

Clive: One is receptive and the other is active.

S: One is receptive and the other is active. So presumably the Ten Paramitas are to be practised by oneself - and that is active. So what is the service. If the service is the more receptive, so to speak, well what does that represent?



Chris: You allow other people to practise.

S: You allow other people, or perhaps you even encourage other people to practise, or you support, you are supportive, in regard to other people's practice of the Ten Paramitas. You could look at it in that way. You serve, you are of service to the practice of the Paramitas even when not actually practising them yourself. In any case, that is one of Milarepa's jewels, one of his properties. And then: "The great happiness of Non-Outflow."

Non-Outflow is 'Anasrava'. The 'Asravas' are usually translated as biases, taints, drugs, intoxicants. They are the most negative forces impelling the individual, the defilements. There are three, sometimes four in early texts. There is the Asrava of the bias towards sensuous existence or the bias towards sensuous experience; the bias towards conditioned existence; the bias of ignorance and sometimes there is added the bias of false views. So the 'Arhant' is defined usually as the one who has completely destroyed these Asravas. With the destruction of these Asravas, therefore, one attains Nirvana. So all of those dharmas, all those states or experiences which make up the transcendental path and the goal, are called Anasrava dharmas. Dharmas are classified by the Sarvastivadins into two groups [among other classifications]; those dharmas which are connected with the Asravas and those which are not [52] connected with the Asravas. So here Milarepa says, "The great happiness of Non-Outflow". The great happiness, the bliss which is experienced through those states and experiences, those Dharmas, which are free from the Outflows, that is one of my four jewels, that is one of my properties. In other words, to put it very simply, the happiness which I experience by following the transcendental path and experiencing the transcendental goal, that is my property. So he is again extending the metaphor in the way that they ask him to.

"Your worldly jewels and possessions are deceiving and delusive; Like deceptive magic spells, they lead you astray. Without any hesitation, I discard them."

This idea of the magic spell, it's more like the illusion produced by the magic spell. The magician, by means of his magic spell, conjures up a mirage, an illusion, say, of an oasis in the desert and people move towards it. But when they get there they find there's nothing there. So ordinary worldly jewels and possessions are like that. You go after them but even when you get there you realize that there's really nothing there, there's nothing to them, there's no real satisfaction to be obtained. So, "Without any hesitation, I discard them", they're not real jewels, not real property.

All right. What about the next verse. Will someone read that, because they asked about relatives.

"The Father and Mother Buddha are my parents, The immaculate Dharma is my face, The assembly of Sangha are my cousins and nephews, And the guardians of Dharma are my friends. These four are my lasting, heavenly kinsmen. Your worldly kinsmen are deceitful and delusive; Without hesitation I throw all ephemeral associates away!"

S: So, "The Father and Mother Buddha are my parents." Who are these Father and Mother Buddhas?

: [First answer is unclear]

S: Yes, those are particular examples.

A Voice: Is this the Adibuddha?

S: No, that is different. No, this refers obviously to the 'Yab-Yum' symbolism of the 'Vajrayana' where Enlightenment is conceived of as a [53] total interpenetration of wisdom and compassion. And Compassion is personified as a male Buddha figure and Wisdom is personified as a female Buddha figure. And these are spoken of as the 'Yab' and the 'Yum', you know, of the father and the mother. So when he says that "The Father and Mother Buddha are my parents." he is saying that wisdom and compassion are my parents; that wisdom is my mother and compassion is my father. I am born from the union of wisdom and compassion.

There is a little bit more to it than that. The Bodhicitta, the Will to Enlightenment, is described as the product, so to speak, of the first junction in the individual - of wisdom, that is to say transcendental wisdom, and transcendental compassion. So, just as when the parents come together conception takes place, so even at the very instant that the spermatozoa fertilizes the ovum, in a sense a human being is there, because the potential for a fully developed human being is there. So, in the same way, the instant that wisdom and compassion, transcendental wisdom and transcendental compassion, come together in the individual in a single experience, the Bodhicitta is there. And to the extent that the Bodhicitta is there, the Bodhisattva is there, even the Buddha is there, only not yet developed.

So Milarepa says, "The Father and Mother Buddha are my parents." It is because the coming together within him of transcendental wisdom and transcendental compassion produced the Bodhicitta and because the Bodhicitta grew and developed until wisdom and compassion were fully developed and he gained Enlightenment, it is because of that, that he says, "The Father and Mother Buddhas are my parents." Because you, after all, grow up to be like your parents. If your father and mother are wisdom and compassion, well you too grow up to be wisdom and compassion. Of course here the father and mother are separate, but of course wisdom and compassion are not really separate and in you they are not really separate. You are the Father and Mother Buddha both. Iconographically, yes the Father and Mother can be separated, but within you as an actual experience they are not to be separated. So he is saying that - and he's not identifying himself with the physical body, he's identifying himself with his new spiritual personality, his new spiritual individuality, his transcendental individuality - he is saying that that is not born of any earthly parents as his physical body was; that is the product, so to speak, of the coming together, eventually the complete coming together, of wisdom and compassion. That is what has brought him, in the higher sense, into existence. So the Wisdom Mother and the Compassion Father, the Buddha Mother and the Buddha Father, these are his true parents. That is to say, his spiritual or transcendental parents. He is born from them.

[54]

"And the immaculate Dharma is my face."

What do you make of this? One almost suspects some mistake in the translation. But has it any meaning, can one get a meaning from it, "The immaculate Dharma is my face"?

Clive: This is the way in which he communicates to other beings, through the Dharma. This is

how they see him.

S: Right, yes. But he's not exactly describing his relations, is he, or his kinsmen. Unless you say, well he also counts among his kinsmen ... but yes, the Dharma is his face. This means that your face is that part of you, when you talk to people, which is nearest to others, isn't it. You talk face to face, so the Dharma is his medium of communication, not an end in itself.

Kulananda: He refers to the common appearance among kinsmen. Kinsmen have a common appearance and so what he has in common with others is the Dharma.

S: Right, yes. Yes, those are the sort of family features. In that case it should be rather, "The immaculate Dharma is my features". Features rather than face.

Clive: Maybe he's referring to the fact that he's inherited his face from his parents, his looks.

S: Right, his looks, yes.

"The assembly of Sangha are my cousins and nephews."

Well clearly they're all related. There's the same blood flowing in all their veins. There's the same transcendental experience. So there's a whole family of many branches, many ramifications, all sharing the same experience. They make up the Sangha in the highest sense.

"And the guardians of Dharma are my friends.  
These four are my lasting, heavenly kinsmen.  
Your worldly kinsmen are deceitful and delusive;  
Without hesitation I throw all ephemeral associates away."

S: He's saying it's the spiritual relationship which is important, which is valuable, and not the worldly one.

A Voice: What does the word "ephemeral" mean?

[55]

S: Not lasting. All right. Would someone like to read the next verse?

"The Blissful Passing is like my father, The Blissful Illumination in well-done work is [my background]. The Two-in-One is my glossy, lustrous skin The Experiences and Realization are my glorious clothing These four are my heavenly and lasting wives. Delusive and deceiving are your worldly companions, They are but temporary friends, inclined to quarrel; Without hesitation I throw them all away."

S: A note on the "Blissful Passing" says, "This may be otherwise rendered as "The Blissful Manifestation or Becoming, when one reaches a higher level of consciousness, even the contacts with outer manifestations becomes Blissful." So, "The Blissful Passing is like my father". Why do you think that is? Well first of all, maybe we could try to understand what is meant by this "Blissful Passing" or "Blissful Manifestation or Becoming". It links up a little bit with what we've been talking about already, about the house being transformed into the castle and the reactive pattern being modified by, incorporated into even, the creative one.

Virabhadra: It sounds a bit like in the Prajnaparamita, you hear the Bodhisattva coursing, sort of trundling along.

S: But it's a question of your experience, or what otherwise would have been your experience, being transformed by your present state. Everyone has had the experience that when you, say, wake up in the morning and you feel in a really happy positive state, everything seems different. You can enjoy everything that happens to you. You can enjoy all your ordinary experiences. So it's a bit like that, as the footnote says, when one reaches a higher level of consciousness, even the contact with outer manifestations, that means worldly events, can become blissful. So the "Blissful Passing" seems to refer to that kind of experience and that is like a father. So one can begin to see why it is described as like a father, because, presumably contact with a father - of course remember this is Tibet in the old days - is positive, is a happy experience. So when you're in a certain state of mind, everything that you contact, everything that you come into contact with, everything that you experience, is just like your own father. The assumption being that you regard your father as someone, as it were, reliable, a source of protection, a source of reassurance, a source of safety. So that is the sort of experience that you associate the notion of father with. So when you have that kind of experience, that is to say, "The Blissful Passing", it's as though nothing [56] is hostile, nothing that you come into contact with is hostile, everything is experienced as positive and friendly and reassuring, just like your own father. So that's your father. That experience Milarepa is saying, "The Blissful Passing", is like my father."

"The Blissful Illumination in well-done work is my background."

That is a bit more obscure perhaps, because there isn't exactly a relation or a companion, but perhaps it doesn't matter. "The Blissful Illumination in well-done work is my background. The Two-in-One is my glossy lustrous skin." What is the "Two-in-One"? I think this translates probably 'Yuganaddha'. It's the experience of wisdom and compassion together, or the voidness and bliss together. In other words, it's an experience of complete unification, a complete reconciliation and harmony of all opposites, "opposites" in inverted commas. Do you see what I mean? So this experience is extremely blissful. So when you're happy how do you look, what does your skin look like? When you're very happy it's as though your face seems to shine and you have a glossy lustrous skin. So Milarepa's glossy lustrous skin, metaphorically speaking, is his blissful experience of the Two-in-Oneness of existence. In other words, his experience of the complete integration of wisdom and compassion, or Sunyata, of the voidness and bliss, or the relative and absolute, whatever you like to call it, that's his glossy lustrous skin. And

"The Experiences and Realization are my glorious clothing."

There's a note there - "See story seven, notes nine and twelve." Let's refer to that - "Experience and Realization, these two words, 'Nams' and 'rTogs' are difficult to translate into adequate English. 'Nams' is the indirect, incomplete, imperfect, and half-opaque experience and understanding that the yogi attains in meditation; while 'rTogs' [Realization] is the direct, complete, clear and perfect experience. The former is similar to Enlightenment, while the latter is the real Enlightenment." In other words, they correspond more or less to Samatha and Vipassana. So Samatha and Vipassana, or higher meditative experience and insight "are my glorious clothing".

"These four are my heavenly and lasting wives.  
Delusive and deceiving are your worldly companions,  
They are but temporary friends, inclined to quarrel;  
Without hesitation, I throw them all away."

Do you think it's significant that Milarepa says what the translator renders as "The Experiences and Realization are my glorious clothing" and then, "These four are my heavenly and lasting wives." The Blissful Passing which is like his father, the Blissful Illumination, the Two-in-One experience, which is of course blissful, and the Experiences and Realization which are [57] his clothing - "These four are my heavenly and lasting wives." There's a bit of a mixture of metaphor here because one of the wives is compared to his father also, and another wife is compared to his work, and another to his skin, and another to his clothing, but they're all, as it were, wives. So do you see any sort of significance in this, that these particular things are compared with wives? What is compared with wives? What does one usually think a wife is? How does one usually look at a wife, or think of a wife?

A Voice: Well aren't they the closest things.

S: The closest, yes.

A Voice: Life companions.

S: Life companions, but a bit more, as it were, more psychologically than that. It's a sort of source of intense experience. It's as though Milarepa is saying, well I have my own experiences, my own experiences are my wives. I don't need to look to any wife outside myself for my intense experiences, or for my bliss, or whatever. I have it all within. There is quite a lot that could be said about this. Experiences, of course one is speaking here about spiritual experiences, can be sparked off, or enhanced, by contact with other individuals, by way of Kalyana Mitrata. But you've, as it were, got to have something to be sparked off first. The contact with the other person the other individual, can't do it all for you. So maybe in the early stages of one's spiritual life one does need some sparking off, being oneself already positive, by some other person who's even more positive than you are. But not on the level of, as it were, ordinary emotional dependence in a neurotic sort of way, relying upon somebody else, some outside source for something that you ought to be developing within yourself.

So Milarepa is saying, well I've got my own wives, my wives are all, as it were, within, in the form of my own more intense blissful transcendental experience. I don't have to look outside. So that is the aim, so to speak, that one should have all those things within, so that any contact with the others, other individuals, whether simply positive individuals, or Enlightened individuals, is an enhancement of what you already have. It doesn't give you anything which you are unable or unwilling to develop for yourself. All right, will someone read that fourth and last verse?

"Mind-Awareness is my new-born babe, Experience of Meditation is my infant,  
Understanding-and-Realization is my child, And the grown youth who can keep the Doctrine  
is my young companion.

[58]

These four are my lasting, heavenly sons Your worldly offspring are delusive and deceitful;

Without hesitation I throw them all away."

S: So Milarepa has not only got wives, he's got children. He said, "Mind-Awareness is my new-born babe." I am not sure how literally we should take this expression in English, "Mind-Awareness". Maybe it's just awareness, especially awareness at the mental level. So this is "my new-born babe". What does that suggest? That "Mind-Awareness" or mental awareness is the new-born babe?

Subhuti: It's the first fruit of one's development.

S: Right, yes it's the first step. One's development as an individual begins with awareness.

Clive: Something which you bring into being.

S: Something which you bring into being also. Not something that you are handed, as it were, from the process of the lower evolution. And then, "Experience of Meditation is my infant." It's as though that's the intermediate stage. And then, "Understanding-and-Realization is my child, and the grown youth who can keep the Doctrine is my young companion." It's as though he's imagining children of four different ages. There's the baby, the infant, the child and then the grown youth. They're all representing various stages in the development of the individual. So he has developed these stages within himself. He has given birth to these sons within himself and they're the only children that he has, or the family he has. He doesn't want to have offspring in the ordinary sense.

Virabhadra: A bit reminiscent of Socrates when he talks about him being the "Great Midwife", bringing ideas to fruition.

S: Yes, except that here Milarepa is midwife to his own ideas rather than to those of other people, and not just to ideas in the abstract intellectual sense but to actual spiritual experiences. Would someone like to read that last little bit?

"I wish sincerely that I and you, the good folk of Gung Tang, Through the Karma-affinity of this conversation, May meet once more in the Pure Land of Oujen."

The villagers, strongly moved with faith, then made obeisance and offerings to Milarepa. Later, they all became his sincere disciples."

[59]

A Voice: One thing that amazes me, is the fact that in the first song. Milarepa is quite sort of simple. He talks about faith, diligence, meditation and wisdom. The second song brings in things like the Alaya Consciousness, the inner teaching, the Three Bodies of Buddha and Sunyata. These are quite, maybe, deep and profound things. Yet the actual people ... firstly they're strongly moved with faith, which I imagine is just their response within - this is the context of the words. It's quite surprising that they have that sort of effect on the people themselves. They don't have very much knowledge of the Dharma or...

S: Well, one doesn't know that. One does get the impression, reading "The Hundred Thousand Songs", that knowledge of the Dharma was quite widespread at that time. People had heard quite a lot. They'd heard various teachers and preachers, but in many cases they just

heard without understanding at all deeply. They had a certain knowledge, but it didn't go very far, or they hadn't really thought about it. But when they met someone like Milarepa, it all came to life. One could look at it in that sort of way.

A Voice: Did the peasants often spend quite a bit of time in monasteries when they were young, or go there for a period of time?

S: No, that wasn't the case in Tibet. That was the practice in Thailand and it still is, but not in Tibet. Sometimes a monk would spend some time in a monastery, then leave the big monastery and go back to his village, but that would be to function as a sort of, almost like a lama priest there, performing ceremonies and so on.

Clive: Is it historically verifiable that you could actually get such a positive response, from the average working-type person, to the sort of thing that Milarepa was saying?

S: I think one has to recognize that the whole way of life in Tibet was so different. And that positive institutions can have a very positive effect on people, especially ordinary people. I've met, myself, so many Tibetans newly arrived from Tibet, and it was quite evident that they had a very different sort of faith, different sort of attitude to the Dharma, even than the Indians. It was interesting that the Indians, especially the Hindus, regarded themselves as very religious minded, but the Tibetans regarded the Indians as irreligious. They were quite shocked by their attitude towards the Dharma. I experienced, or had occasion to observe various examples of this. They took the Dharma very, very seriously, there's no doubt about that. So it does seem that where the society is based to a very great extent on, say religious values; or at least if these values are widely diffused, even if they're not always acted upon; and if people's way of life is quite simple and straightforward; and people [60] themselves are psychologically uncomplicated and reasonably positive; then the Dharma can have a quite tremendous impact quite quickly. One gets that impression reading the Pali Scriptures also, in the case of the Buddha.

So I wouldn't rule it out that things like that could actually happen. If people are reasonably receptive and haven't been too much messed up by the way in which they have been brought up, then their response to the Dharma, when they initially encounter it, can be very powerful and a lot can happen in quite a short time. You notice that things do start happening. "The villagers, strongly moved with faith, then made obeisance and offerings to Milarepa." Before, they were insisting that he should work and weren't very willing to stop and feed him, but now their attitude has completely changed. They had been convinced, apparently, that his type of house building and his whole way of life is superior to theirs. I think this also is important, that one should not only criticize people's existing way of life, but be in a position to offer something better, some higher alternative.

Abhaya: Was there someone around who recorded these songs, much in the same way as Ananda is supposed to have recorded the sutras?

S: This is not said. The whole question of the life of Milarepa, and the authorship of this sort of book, is quite obscure. I've not been able to find out very much about it, except that this work was written down by a yogi who lived a couple of hundred years later, whom some regard as being the equivalent of Milarepa himself. I forget his name, he isn't very well known. He compiled the traditions about Milarepa and his songs into this particular form. But

some western scholars I gather - I've not been able to find out very much about it - believe that he, in a way, composed the work on the basis of traditional material. But I can't say, I've not been able to find out much about that. But certainly, one gets the general impression of freshness and vividness and of something that actually happened, really quite apart from the high standard of the actual teachings themselves.

So looking back over what we've done this morning, we've only done one episode of this chapter. We haven't actually yet come to Rechungpa and Milarepa's meeting with him, but anyway this little episode, which is introductory, is sort of self-contained, so perhaps it doesn't really matter. So what have been the predominant themes? What's the overall impression from this little section?

Subhuti: In a way a transformation in the relationship between mundane and reactive processes and ways of life and a higher ideal.

[61]

S: Yes.

Subhuti: What he seems to do for them is to expand their vision because they're very much involved with houses, farms et cetera, and that's, as it were, the way in which they've worked out their (..?..)

S: Yes. He speaks in those terms, he speaks in terms of building. In other words he takes up, he uses, the existing language, their language, but he enlarges it. He takes what they are doing as a metaphor of what he is doing. But in order to make it clear that he's doing something really radically different, he enlarges upon it. Also the point is underlined that Milarepa, in his own way, is, or has been, as active as they are. He is as much a worker as they are; that the spiritual life means spiritual work. Perhaps one can also say that the activity of those villagers in building their house and Milarepa's activity in building his castle, his sort of transcendental castle, represent the two extremes - and that for a lot of people there has to be something in between. Do you see what I mean? Because Milarepa's activity is purely internal isn't it? He's only meditating and having experiences and realizing. No doubt it comes to that in the end, but the majority of people can't approach that immediately. They need something which, not so much in terms of skilfulness and unskilfulness, but in terms of relative degree of objectivity and tangibility, is sort of halfway between the villagers actually building a house literally, and Milarepa just absorbed in meditation. Do you see what I'm getting at? Perhaps one can make it clear by reference to the four Tantras or four grades or levels of Tantras.

It's said that on the first level of Tantric practice one is engaged only in ritual activity. It is all external. One is engaged in making offerings and things of that sort. Then the second level of Tantric practice it is half external and half internal. That is to say, it consists half of making offerings and other external ritual activities, and half of meditation. Then when you come on to the third level of Tantra it is only internal, it is only meditation. And the fourth is even more internal, it's expressed in terms of meditation. You see the general idea?

So it's as though the villagers are completely externalized in an unskilful way. Milarepa is completely internalised in a highly skilful way. But to begin with you need something in between the two. You need to be externalized in a skilful way, with some internal skilful practice, but the average individual can't be engaged immediately only in this internal "castle



building" through meditation and so on in the way that Milarepa was. Hence you need the possibility of participation in positive skilful external activities and structures, as well as the possibility of working upon oneself directly through meditation. Perhaps you also need things like yoga and so on. You need things like [62] retreats, co-ops, communities. Milarepa could do without those things, at least during the latter part of his career.

Any other point arising?

A Voice: In the last verse, the last two lines,

"Through the Karma-affinity of this conversation,  
May meet once more in the Pure Land of Oujen."

S: Oujen - the Land of Padmasambhava.

A Voice: I was wondering whether there could actually be a sort of Karmic-affinity?

S: There is a Karmic-affinity if there is something in your Karma which is common. Look first of all at the idea of affinity in general. What is affinity? What do we mean when we speak of affinity between people?

A Voice: A sharing of similar ideals.

S: In the literal sense affinity means blood relationship, but in a metaphorical sense what does affinity mean? It means a certain mutual sympathy and attraction. It's more than shared interests, I think. It's that you naturally and instinctively, from the beginning, get on well and easily with somebody. You then say you have an affinity with them or an affinity for them. So Karmic-affinity, what is that?

Clive: Patterns, similar patterns.

S: Similar patterns, or even an affinity which is continuing from previous existences. So Milarepa is, as he says,

"I wish sincerely that I and you, the good folk of Gung Tang,  
Through the Karma-affinity of this conversation,  
May meet once more in the Pure Land of Oujen."

That the conversation which they are having, the exchange which they are having, the communication which they are having on that occasion is itself a Karma-affinity. You see, they've come together, they've developed an affinity you could say, and that will continue into the future, and he's saying, as a result of this, may we come together in the future in the Pure Land of Oujen, that is to say, the Pure Land of Padmasambhava. In other words as a result of this, as the culmination of this process, as the culmination of this conversation, this communication, may we come together in a completely ideal state of affairs; i.e. he gives this particular concrete exemplification of it, an instance of it, the Pure Land of Padmasambhava.

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Virabhadra: Is he not saying that he hopes that they'll put into practice what he's been ... sort

of following through?

S: Well that is implied, that's implied, that they need to act upon. Because the Pure Land of Padmasambhava represents a very high level of experience indeed. So for it to be possible for them to meet him there they must have reached that sort of level. But they have the opportunity, an affinity between them has been set up by the fact of their meeting. They have met once, they can go on meeting, so to speak, on different levels until their meetings culminate on that highest level of all. You can say that the Pure Land generally, including the Pure Land of Padmasambhava, represents Enlightenment as, so to speak (don't take this literally), a "social experience". Do you see what I mean? It's a number of people's experience of their own, and one another's Enlightenment in mutuality. The Land we speak of, say, Pure Land, the Pure Field, or 'Ksetra', expresses that in objective rather than subjective terms. It can be expressed subjectively as the number of people attaining the same Enlightenment; it can be expressed objectively as the number of people living in the same Pure Land. You can't express it ultimately really, in either exclusively subjective or exclusively objective terms because it transcends that distinction itself.

So Milarepa is hoping that they'll all continue on the same path, that they will continue on the path which he has travelled to the very end. So if that happens, well, wherever they are, they'll be together in whatsoever sense, whether that is to be taken literally or metaphorically, or in any other way, they'll be together. And the Pure Land of Padmasambhava is a symbol of that togetherness of theirs at the very highest conceivable level. If they are travelling on the same path, yes, they'll arrive at the same goal, wherever or whatever that may be. He calls it, for his present purpose, the Pure Land of Padmasambhava, Uddiyana or Oujen.

Subhuti: Is that in fact Padmaloka?

S: No. Uddiyana was, geographically speaking, somewhere in North Western India according to most scholars, and Tibetans call that Uddiyana or Oujen. Padmasambhava is often called Oujen Padmasambhava, the Padmasambhava of Oujen. There is also his Pure Land in the sense of, again from a different version, the copper-coloured island, but that is different, that is where he's supposed to be living even now, preaching to the Rakshasas. It's the same kind of idea as you get with Sukhavati, the idea of this Pure Buddha Ksetra, the Pure Land, the assemblage of all the - well it's not just favourable conditions, it goes beyond that - it's the depth ... it's as I said, Enlightenment conceived of as a social experience. That's probably the best way of expressing it. It's [64] the point of convergence of all individual aspirations where they transcend their individuality.

Subhuti: To go back to the idea of a gestalt. Would somebody's projection of their own femininity on to somebody outside them,... could you work that out in terms of the language of gestalt?

S: I would say that gestalt exists at a higher level than the level on which that problem arises. This whole question depends on the ordinary distinction of masculine and feminine. From a Buddhist point of view this holds good only up to a certain level within the cosmos. What exactly were you thinking of?

Subhuti: Well, as if there is a pattern of wholeness of both aspects of masculinity and femininity conjoined which you are, as it were, trying to work out, although albeit in a

distorted way.

S: I wouldn't say that there was a sort of masculine gestalt or a feminine gestalt, but that what we call or what we ( ) as the masculine and the feminine are elements within the gestalt of the individual as such. We tend to, as it were, work them out separately, if it can be called a working out. But in order to work out the gestalt of the individual, let's call it, they need to be brought together.

Clive: Could you say, practically, when they are together, can the gestalt be manifested?

S: Well, yes you can say that it's only when all the different elements are brought together, including those, that the gestalt can be manifested. One also, of course, has to remember in the terms of traditional Buddhism, that the male form is considered to be a more highly evolved form than the female form. So that if one associates masculine qualities with the male and feminine qualities with the female, one has to remember that from the traditional point of view, there is a hierarchy between them, they are not considered as simply correspondent. Because, again according to traditional Buddhist teaching, it is for Karmic reasons that one is born either as a male or as a female. Also, of course, there is the point that in the course of so many lives, one might have lived at one time as a female, another as a male, but if one follows the general trend of Buddhist teaching, the assumption is that the more developed you become over a series of lives, the greater the possibility of your being born as a male rather than as a female. Because, according to Buddhist tradition, life as a male human being offers you at least the possibility of greater spiritual freedom that does life as a female human being; the female being more associated with, not to say restricted by, the whole biological process, culture, tradition and so on.

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Clive: Is there anything which says that there is a sort of male aspect in your personality which, if it is the higher of the two, is the one that breaks the ground all the time? It's the sort of point of the arrow.

S: Yes, one could say that. It's as though that to make a start you need those more masculine qualities. One can say that to some extent the association of masculine qualities with men and feminine qualities with women is arbitrary to some extent. But again, in certain respects it isn't, because it's as though at least - I was going to say at the beginnings of the spiritual life, but you could say this holds good all the way through - you definitely need a forward driving energy, a willingness to break fresh ground, a sort of adventurousness, which as psychological characteristics seem to be common to men rather than to women.

So to come back to the question of masculine and feminine, or male and female, in relation to the gestalt, if one were to say that there is a sort of gestalt for the individual as such, regardless of whether the individual is male or female, then one might say that the fact that the male is psychologically, say, more adventurous or more outward-going, more inclined to break fresh ground, it is when the individual is born as a male rather than as a female, that the gestalt is more likely to begin to find expression in it's totality, the gestalt of the individual as such. Behind a female there may be the same gestalt in the sense that a woman has the same potential for development as a man. But it's more of an abstract potential in her case because the particular way in which she is organized, or her energies are organized, means that there is less possibility, or less scope let us say, for the gestalt actually to manifest, even though in her

case also it is there. It is less easy for it to manifest. This seems to be borne out by the facts.

Well, one could say that the gestalt itself, to the extent that it is something which has a natural or inherent tendency to manifest or embody itself, which means to organize matter, for want of a better term, in accordance with itself, is masculine rather than feminine. The matter which is organized, as it were, being feminine rather than masculine.

Perhaps we should close there and have a bite to eat. I expect everyone is feeling quite hungry.

Tape 4

S: All right then start reading round. Would someone like to read that prose part right through?

"After this Milarepa went to the upper part of Goat Hill (Ra La) where he found Silk Cave (Zhaoo Pug). Now, there was at Goat Hill a youth, who in his early [66] infancy had lost his father. He was a fine, intelligent boy, whom his mother and uncle jointly supported. Having an excellent memory, he could recite a great many stories and sermons from the Buddhist Sutras. Thus he always received many gifts from the people. One day, while herding oxen on his donkey in the upper part of the valley, he came upon the cave where Milarepa was meditating. Thinking that he heard someone singing he got off the donkey, left the oxen, and approached the cave. As soon as he saw Milarepa, an ineffable experience of Samadhi arose within him, and for a moment he stood transfixed in ecstasy. (Afterwards he became a heart son of Milarepa - the renowned Rechung Dorje Dragpa)."

S: So any particular points arising from that paragraph? What do you think was the point of his reciting these stories and sermons or discourses from the Buddhist Sutras and why did the people give him many gifts?

Kovida: Was that the only sort of access that people had to sutras?

S: Probably. The probability was that they were mostly illiterate, they couldn't read or write themselves but probably he could. It's said he was a fine intelligent boy. So very likely he had learned to read or perhaps he'd just heard the stories from wandering monks and had a very good memory. But whichever way it was he remembered these stories and these teachings whether he'd read them or whether he'd heard them from others and he was in the habit of reciting them so that other people could hear. They appreciated that and in this way he always received many gifts from the people. At the same time he was leading quite an ordinary life apparently, herding oxen on his donkey in the upper part of the valley and it was on one such occasion that he came upon the cave where Milarepa was meditating. "Thinking that he heard someone singing, he got off the donkey, left the oxen, and approached the cave". He was curious probably to find out who it was, what they were singing, maybe he thought there'd be something more for him to learn by heart.

"As soon as he saw Milarepa, an ineffable experience of Samadhi arose within him, and for a moment he stood transfixed in ecstasy". Why do you think it was when he saw Milarepa, not when he heard Milarepa? Any particular reason for that? When he heard Milarepa singing he presumably was just curious but when he actually saw Milarepa he had a quite different

experience. What does that suggest? It's as though the voice could have been almost anyone's. It was just a voice. There wasn't anything perhaps that is distinctive about that. But when he saw Milarepa that was much more distinctive. It was as if it were just Milarepa, but why do you think he had that ineffable experience of samadhi?

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Andy : Milarepa presumably communicated just by his appearance something that he was experiencing.

S: And the next paragraph of course suggests that there was a previous karmic connection between them. Go on and we'll see about that.

"Awakened thus from Karma, an immutable faith toward the Jetsun arose within the boy. He offered Milarepa all the gifts that he had acquired for his services. Then he stayed with him to learn the Dharma, completely forgetting his mother and uncle. Because of this, he naturally received no income, and his mother and uncle thought, "what has happened? (Where is he?) Have people stopped paying him?" With misgivings they began asking the patrons whether they had duly paid Rechungpa. Everybody said that he had been paid. It then dawned upon the uncle and mother (where the boy must be, and) that all the gifts must have been offered to Milarepa. They tried in every way to stop Rechungpa from continuing in this course, but to no avail. The young lad remained with Milarepa and learned the Dharma from him. Before long, the Experience and Realization of meditation grew within him. By virtue of mastering the art of Heat Yoga he was able to wear merely a single piece of cotton clothing, and thus earned the name of Rechungpa."

S: So the paragraph begins, "Awakened thus from karma". This is a bit ambiguous. One can say that his faith in Milarepa on that occasion was awakened as a result of some previous karmic connection or that the experience itself awakened him from his existing karma in the sense of his existing conditionality. One can take it in either way. The English translation, maybe the Tibetan original, is a bit ambiguous, but whichever way it was an immutable faith towards the Jetsun arose within the boy and as the expression of that he offered Milarepa all the gifts that he had acquired for his services. Then he stayed with him to learn the Dharma, completely forgetting his mother and uncle.

So what sort of impression do you get from this?

Campbell: He couldn't have been very attached to his mother and uncle.

S: Maybe he was, maybe he wasn't. It's not impossible that he was quite strongly attached to them but that the faith which he'd developed towards Milarepa, which is after all described as an immutable faith, was so strong that he was even able to overcome his attachment to his mother and uncle. Sometimes people say, if one gives up something that people themselves are very attached to, 'well you couldn't have been very much attached to it, you couldn't have been very interested in it', but that isn't necessarily that case at all. You might have been very attached to it, you might have been very much into that particular thing [68] but what has happened is that an even stronger, an even more powerful interest has arisen which has more than balanced the original interest. But I think that the main thing that one sees from this is that how wholehearted the Tibetan Buddhists are, certainly this boy was, because firstly he made the contact, he had a very strong, in fact ineffable, experience and then an immutable

faith arose in him towards Milarepa and he offered Milarepa all the gifts that he'd acquired and he stayed with him to learn the Dharma completely forgetting his mother and uncle. We're not told how long this took but one gets the impression that it didn't take very long, it was pretty instantaneous.

So this is quite characteristic of the Tibetans. What do you think is meant by an immutable faith? The literal meaning is clear but what is implied by it? What is an immutable faith?

Subhuti: One which couldn't be lost or diminished.

S: Yes, couldn't be lost, couldn't be diminished, couldn't be changed, which could only increase. So this is quite important because normally people's faith is quite fleeting. As we shall see perhaps later on Rechungpa's spiritual life had many ups and downs but he always had this faith in Milarepa and it was out of this faith that he offered Milarepa all the gifts that he required for his services. He didn't keep anything back and then he stayed with him to learn the Dharma, completely forgetting his mother and uncle. How literally do you think this is to be taken? Do you think he literally forgot them, perhaps he did, but even if he didn't literally forget them what does it signify? He just had no attachment, no serious thought about them, felt no inclination to go and see them.

So "Because of this he naturally received no income and his mother and uncle thought..." He received no income because he was not going around and reciting what he knew by heart. His mother and uncle knew this so they thought "What has happened, where is he? Have people stopped paying him?" With misgivings they began to ask the patrons (that is to say the lay supporters) whether they had duly paid Rechungpa. Everybody said that he'd been paid. It then dawned upon the uncle and mother where the boy must be (because they knew Milarepa was in the neighbourhood) and that all the gifts must have been offered to Milarepa. Perhaps they didn't like that, perhaps formerly some part of the gifts made its way to them. "They tried in every way to stop Rechungpa from continuing in this course but to no avail. The young lad remained with Milarepa and learned the Dharma from him. Before long the Experience and Realization of meditation grew within him. By virtue of mastering the art of Heat Yoga he was able to wear merely a single piece of cotton clothing, and thus earned the name of Rechungpa". Re of course is the [69] cotton cloth, a Repa is one wearing the cotton cloth as a sign of proficiency in the Heat Yoga. Chung means small or little. So it is the 'little cloth wearer'. The note tells us that he was so called because he was the youngest of the disciples.

The Heat Yoga is a form of yogic practice which does actually produce a sensation of even physical heat in the body. There is an actual increase in the bodily temperature which can be perceived by other people and this is considered as a sign of success in that particular practice. Of course also there is another significance which is the burning up of all mental impurities in the fire of yoga so to speak.

Subhuti: It's almost as if Rechungpa's got a sort of natural response to... He responds to what's best in what he comes across. First of all there's the sutras, but then Milarepa seemed stronger.

S: Yes, it's as though in the case of the Sutras, the stories and the discourses from the sutras, it's as though there it's so to speak at second hand. It's just out of the book. Either the book that he's read or the books that he's heard read aloud. But in the case of Milarepa there is the

direct contact with the spiritually developed personality, so that affects him still more strongly. But one can see the way in which he is going right from the beginning. In say the modern context in the West or in England this would be - you get drawn first of all to reading books about Buddhism and then you come into contact with an actual Buddhist spiritual movement and you get far more strongly attracted by that than you did originally by the books that you just read. It's somewhat similar to that. You go from a relatively second hand to a relatively first hand direct contact.

Sona: Could you (I don't know whether you did it on the last study but) place Milarepa and his spiritual career. For instance how long was it since he had left Marpa and been practising?

S: That isn't altogether clear. He's staying in a cave, he's meditating and he's already had a few words with the lay people in the local village and then this is the next thing that happens. Exactly at what stage, in which year it is it's difficult to tell. Perhaps a chronology is worked out somewhere, I don't know. But one may take it that Milarepa if not so to speak fully enlightened at this stage was very very far advanced on the path and much more experienced and enlightened than Rechungpa was. Maybe one can't say more than that. Maybe even one doesn't need to say more than that. These chapters aren't arranged in chronological order, they're arranged in categories -meetings with non-human disciples, meetings with human disciples and we're now on to the human disciples.

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Subhuti: It seems to say quite a lot about the state that Rechungpa must have been in to have responded so naturally.

S: Well in the first place there is the karmic factor though one can't really say anything much about that, certainly not dogmatically. But there's no doubt that Milarepa was leading a very simple life. It reminds me of the sort of life that Geshe Rabten was leading according to that autobiography which I reviewed - it hasn't come out yet! But anyway when it comes out you'll see that he led a very simple life in Eastern Tibet which was not all that many years ago. It was in the early 20s, he was a youngster there responsible just for looking after the horses. All he was interested in was horses and dogs and guns. He led a quite healthy outdoor sort of life. He did learn to read when he was in his teens and was quite attracted by the sight of the monks and he made up his mind that he wanted to be a monk just by seeing them. He wanted to go to a monastic university, but his life was completely uncomplicated. He lived at home with his father, his mother having died. I think he had brothers, but he was just out in the open air all day on his horse with his dogs looking after his father's horses (his father was a sort of farmer) and from time to time he saw monks and he got the impression that they were leading a far better life than anybody else. He didn't know anything about doctrine or teaching except in a very very general sort of way, and when he was 17, 18, he started feeling that he'd like to be a monk and by the time he was 19 he'd made his mind up and by the time he was 20 he was on his way, walking several hundred miles to Lhasa, the journey took him three months, to join one of the big monastic universities there.

So it's as though Milarepa, like Geshe Rabten hundreds of years later, grew up in very simple surroundings. Life was very uncomplicated. He was quite a healthy sort of person as far as one knows. His emotional reactions were quite clear, straightforward, unsophisticated. He had a good natural intelligence, a good memory, so when he came in contact with something highly positive it wasn't difficult for him to respond. There were no complications. He had no

emotional problems, no psychological problems or anything of that sort. We are not told how old he was, perhaps he wasn't more than 16 or 17 at the most. Occasionally one does come across youngsters of this sort even in the West, even in England. I think you certainly do in the 'States more so than in this country. So if one can come across this sort of person even in the present day and age, well how much more likely was it in medieval Tibet where life was very simple and very strenuous, very uncomplicated. People grew up quite robust and healthy in every respect.

You also notice that one might say Rechung was the Saddhanusarin, a faith follower, rather than a doctrine follower. He was healthy, he was [71] emotionally positive. He had that encounter with Milarepa, he made a profound impression on him and he straightaway studied the Dharma, forgot about his mother and uncle and got more and more into meditation. Whereas a doctrine follower presumably would have got much more into the study and understanding of the doctrine especially the philosophical aspect of it.

All right read the next paragraph then.

"Meanwhile, Rechungpa's mother and uncle became very angry. They sent him a pot on which a curse had been placed. As a result, Rechungpa contracted leprosy. Hoping to be cured, he confined himself (in the hermitage) for meditation."

S: I don't know whether leprosy can really be caused in this way. Perhaps we shouldn't be too dogmatic about that. But Rechungpa's mother and uncle became very angry. Why do you think they became so angry?

Clive: Was he a source of income for them?

S: Possibly it was just because he was a source of income but do you think there might have been any other factors?

: Attachment.

S: Their own attachment. Also maybe a sort of jealousy of Milarepa. After all they'd brought this boy up, especially the uncle. He wasn't his own son. He was his sister's son presumably, the father had died. They'd brought him up, they'd looked after him, he was doing quite well, he was earning some money and suddenly he meets this yogi who is living in the cave and he forgets all about them. He just goes off and stays with the yogi, doesn't earn any more money, apparently forgets them completely. So perhaps they felt very hurt, perhaps they felt very rejected, felt that Rechung didn't care for them any more, as in a sense he didn't.

So they became very angry. "They sent him a pot on which a curse had been placed. As a result Rechungpa contracted leprosy". Now whether or not one can actually bring about leprosy in this way, the important point is that they wanted to harm him. They believed that they could harm him in this way, so that is what they tried to do. So what does this tell you about their attachment or their love for Rechungpa?

: It quickly turns to its opposite

S: It quickly turns to its opposite.



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Sona: They're not only concerned with his welfare but their own welfare.

S: It is rather extreme isn't it. You can understand their being a bit upset, you can understand them even being angry with him or disappointed, but they go so far as to actually try to inflict harm on him. His own mother and his uncle. They sent him a pot on which a curse had been placed. A curse is a very serious thing, especially among primitive peoples. So it means that when love or the so-called love turns into hate the consequences can be very terrible indeed.

So do you think this is what generally happens or often happens?

Clive: The crime of passion.

S: The crime of passion. What happens in this so-called crime of passion then, whether it's of mothers and uncles or anybody else. It does seem extraordinary that at one time you should be very attached to somebody and supposedly love them but then something happens and it isn't just that you lose that attachment or lose that love but it's converted into its opposite and you actually try to harm, injure, even kill that person. So what does that suggest when it reaches that extreme. What has happened? Does it tell one anything about the nature of the love itself, the so-called love.

Sona: It's not the affection you feel towards someone else as another individual. It's wanting something from that person and when that gets frustrated and you don't get it.

S: It's more than just wanting some thing. It's wanting it in a very extreme, even in a very special way. So what sort of wanting is it? What is it that you want in a way?

Clive: Yourself.

S: In a way yourself but how?

Clive: Well I suppose the standard FWBO areas, by trying to get in contact with the elements of yourself that you can't realize within yourself so you project them out and get into contact with them out.

S: But are those projected parts so important then? Presumably you were getting along without them quite well before that particular person came along, so perhaps it goes even deeper than that.

: It's craving.

[73]

S: Craving, but what is craving? What is that neurotic craving? One can talk quite glibly in terms of projection, but what does actually happen, what actually takes place? Projection can be positive as well as negative. So what happens when someone that you've been attached to changes or goes away or tries to go away and your reaction is of wanting to destroy that person. Rechung's mother and uncle wanted to destroy him. So what is the mental state behind this crime of passion?

: Revenge.

S: Revenge, but what do you want to take revenge for? What harm has the other person done you?

: If you're involved with somebody in this sort of way you've sort of grabbed hold of it as it were to reinforce your own personality so in a way you're not really complete without that. So when you lose that then it's as if your own personality is threatened so you feel vulnerable and want to sort of strike out. Is it to do with laying your self responsibility to something and then when they act sort of out of line, they sort of leave you in a position where you're stuck, because you've off-loaded so much of you on to them that when they act sort of out of...

S: It's as though it's not that you've just projected some part of yourself. It's almost - if such a thing is possible - as though you've projected the whole of yourself, that you don't exist any more. It's as though you exist only in them. If they go away you go away. In other words if they go away, if you don't experience them, you no longer experience yourself, you aren't around any more. So their going away is experienced as a sort of threat to your very existence. It strikes at the root of your existence, and therefore your reaction is a violent one, a convulsive one. You feel that they have threatened you, that they are trying to kill you by going away and therefore you retaliate by trying to kill them. It's sort of a paradoxical situation because if you succeed in killing them well they really will go away! That's what you discover afterwards if you go to that extreme. Your intention, your irrational intention so to speak in killing them was to stop them going away, but if you succeed in killing them of course then you wake up to the dreadful realization that you have, your action has resulted in them going away for good.

So you are no better off than you were but of course when you're in that sort of state you're not rational so you can't give any weight to such considerations. So it does seem that when this sort of thing happens when the crime of passion is committed in one way or another, one is retaliating for what one feels is a threat to or an attack upon one's very existence, because one's very existence in some obscure psychological way has become bound up with that of the other person and with the [74] other person's being in contact with one in a particular kind of way so that you can hardly conceive of yourself as existing apart from that.

So it's as though Rechungpa's mother and uncle, they really not only lived for Rechungpa in a very unhealthy way, they've also lived in him. It was as though when he went away the whole meaning and purpose of their lives was lost and they felt so angry, more than angry, so threatened, that they had to retaliate by trying to do him a serious injury, even kill him, certainly injure him.

Campbell: It seems particularly bad because usually in a crime of passion it's on the spur of the moment, instantaneous, heated with passion. This is quite cold and calculated.

S: Yes. It's even worse. Not all crimes of passion are committed on the spur of the moment as you can discover if you read the newspapers. Even a few days ago there were a few crimes of passion reported recently. Of course if there is a murder and if there is a trial for murder, one of the things that is taken into consideration is whether it was in fact committed on the spur of the moment or whether preparations were made. If preparations were made which suggests foresight and planning then of course the case goes much more heavily against the accused. If

he goes and buys a revolver and then practises shooting and then after a few weeks shoots his wife's lover, well that is considered as being a premeditated crime.

Sona: The psychological process is still the same.

S: It is really. Some people's minds after all work differently. Some people are quick and hasty, others are more slow in the way that they do things. There isn't any real difference of principle. Some people might not react on the spur of the moment. It doesn't affect them like that. They may think it over and become more and more angry, the more they think about it, and then take action. They might be too numbed at the actual moment of the occurrence actually to be able to do anything.

Sona: I suppose also from a way of releasing a lot of pent up aggression and anger in other areas. That doesn't apply.

Andy: In general with premeditated crime it's experienced from a worse mental state than... You spend more time thinking about.

: They're both irrational but one is like an irrational thing that just sort of happens; one is when presumably you spent time thinking about [75] it before. So presumably in that time you could have got some form of objectivity and got it into proportion a bit.

S: You could but you don't want to. The end result is very likely the same, that you kill somebody.

: I used to think it in terms of the Wheel of Life. You've got the hot sort of realms and also a little bit lower you've got the sort of cold hell which is somehow a little bit -you can't talk in terms of it being less noble... It's malice, it's quite sort of cold and plotting.

S: But malice is usually considered to be gratuitous hatred, that is to say hatred which is without any reason. you wish to harm others but they haven't done you any harm at all. It's just a gratuitous expression of your hateful mental state, but in the case of the crime of passion there can't be any question of malice because the reason has been given.

: I was thinking there's a typically English type of murder in the sort of Dr Crippen, sitting there for years building it up whereas, thinking in terms of the European, Mediterranean.

S: You could argue about it in the other way because you could say that well the person who is as it were hot tempered and commits the crime of passion on the spur of the moment is really in a lower condition because they've no self control whatever. At least the other person you could say has got a measure of self control. Whereas the impulsive person has none at all, just flies off the handle immediately.

Sona: What's interesting with regard to society is how society considers the hot tempered person not to be so evil as the plotter, but in fact they're both equally as dangerous. Because if someone can fly off the handle you don't know what he's going to do.

S: You could also say that if you are not the impulsive type that flies off the handle, if you postpone your revenge, well the chances are that something will happen, some factor will

intervene which will make it difficult or impossible for you to carry out your intentions. But in the case of the hot tempered impulsive person the possibility of that doesn't arise.

Subhuti: Is that a post-Freudian judgement you had or is it traditional in British jurisprudence?

Kovida: It's traditional in France.

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S: I'm not sure about that but the usual situation is if for instance you discover your wife in the very act of committing adultery well it's generally considered that at that moment you're in such an irrational state, you can't really be held responsible for your action, and that if you do commit murder at that moment well in a sense it's not really your fault. The provocation was so extreme that it is excusable if not forgivable. In some cultures the husband had the right to kill his wife's lover under those circumstances. Almost a duty.

Sona: It's strange how people are more frightened of the plotter taking his time, premeditating the crime, than the irrational hot tempered.

S: Perhaps the cold blooded plotter in the long run is more dangerous.

: He's more likely to succeed. Well laid plans.

Sona; He's not only likely to succeed in killing the person that has upset him but he could actually succeed in doing other things because he operates in a sort of cold, calculating way which could upset the whole group.

Kovida: But why would he want to hurt other people if he was involved with one person?

S: Well it's a case of the general character structure being sort of looser in one case and more rigid in the other. So that there are certain situations where the more as it were hot tempered, volatile person gets on better and other situations in which the slower more cold blooded type of person gets on better.

So their particular character type or particular mental attitude will show itself in this sort of situation also. Which overall is really objectively better is very difficult to say. But probably the more cold blooded person is more likely to achieve his objective given sufficient time.

Anyway the crucial point here is the way in which the attachment or more than attachment, this neurotic identification of oneself with another person, the investment of one's being almost in another person can result, if it's frustrated in very violent actions.

So "As a result Rechungpa contracted leprosy." Most primitive peoples believe in the power of thought so to speak, that you can influence others by your thought for better or for worse, either directly or indirectly through some material object. Be that as it may Rechungpa contracted leprosy and he, and no doubt others, believed that it was due to the curse which his mother and uncle had placed on that pot which [77] they had sent him. So "Hoping to be cured, he confined himself in the hermitage for meditation". It's as though he felt well the leprosy has been caused by the unskilful mental state of his mother and uncle so perhaps

having a mental origin it can be cured by mental means.

There was an instance of this recently. I had a letter from Vangisa in which he said that he'd been suffering from glandular fever for the last three years and I gather that it's pretty debilitating, and he was getting rather fed up with this and he tried all sorts of treatment and nothing had done him much good, so he decided in the end to fall back on traditional remedies and he says he decided to recite the mantra of the Tara of Healing, I think he said. I think he must have meant the Long-life Tara, and he said after two or three days it started to go away and he was feeling much better already and that was only a week ago. So we'll have to see whether this holds up but it would be interesting because no doubt there are quite a few things that are, so to speak, psychosomatic in origin and can be tackled in this sort of way.

Subhuti: I noticed he got markedly better when he left work.

S: Ah, well that perhaps is psychosomatic too. Perhaps it's very often not just the work that you do but your mental attitude towards it or the mental state that it puts you into.

(End of Side)

S: ...one of the things that makes the difference is the fact that when you treat yourself in this way, say by reciting the mantra you are doing something, that is to say you are active. Whereas if you just swallow a pill you're completely passive and you're not doing anything. I think maybe the fact that you are doing something has a positive effect on the system, perhaps it mobilizes certain resources within the system. Because usually people do feel more positive, more alive, more healthy even when they are active than when they are simply being passive. So perhaps it's a more and healthy mental state and a more positive and healthy approach when you say to yourself well I'm doing this to cure myself, I'm reciting the mantra, this is going to cure me. I'm doing it myself, rather than just swallowing somebody's medicine, where you are, at least as regards your conscious attitude, completely passive, just having things done to you.

Anyway we'll just have to wait and see what further news we get from Vangisa and not draw any hasty conclusions. I don't like to suggest that he might have had a relapse by this time but let's just see. Perhaps he's completely cured. [78] Anyway Rechungpa hopes to cure himself by meditation. All right carry on then.

"One day, five Indian yogis arrived, to whom Rechungpa offered some roasted barley which had been sent by his mother and uncle. While the Indians were eating they exclaimed, "What a deadly disease! What a deadly disease!" They knew that Rechungpa had caught leprosy. Rechungpa then asked them whether there was any cure. One of the yogis said, "You are indeed a pitiful person deserving of sympathy, and I feel for you. I have a Guru called Wala Tsandra who may be able to relieve you. As he will not be coming to Tibet, you will have to go to India." And so Rechungpa asked the Jetsun for permission to go. Milarepa agreed and sang as a parting gift:"

S: So "One day five Indian yogis arrived, to whom Rechungpa offered some roasted barley which had been sent by his mother and uncle. While the Indians were eating they exclaimed, "What a deadly disease! What a deadly disease!" They knew that Rechungpa had caught leprosy. What does this tell you about the yogis?

: If they ate the barley wouldn't there be a chance that they'd catch leprosy as well. They did know it.

S: The curse presumably had been placed on Rechungpa. It is after all a mental thing. They intended to harm Rechungpa through this pot on which the curse had been placed. So it wasn't as though they put some bacteria in. At the same time the yogis it seems knew that there was something wrong. So what does that suggest about the yogis?

Subhuti: Psychic powers.

S: A sort of psychic power. Maybe one shouldn't even say psychic power but a sort of psychic sensitivity. They were aware that the roasted barley which they'd been given was contaminated in some way, was dangerous. They felt some impure, one could only say, vibration and it was a vibration of disease and they knew perhaps that this had been sent to Rechungpa. They knew perhaps that it had been meant for him. But at the same time the fact that they could pick up on this suggests that it has a sort of quasi-objective existence, otherwise they couldn't have known at all. It is rather like for instance you can say if you're with other people and there's something unpleasant going on between say two of those other people. Maybe one gets very angry towards the other and is thinking very angry thoughts about the other, well you as a third party can sometimes pick up on that even though it isn't actually directed to you. So it's as though something like that happened. They ate this roasted barley. It might even have come in that same pot that the [79] mother and uncle had sent. Though the curse wasn't meant for them they had picked up something because of their acute psychic sensitivity. So do you think that sort of thing is possible? Do you become sensitive in this sort of way if for instance you practise yoga or yoga in the sense of raja-yoga meditation. Do you become more psychically sensitive to other people's vibrations, thoughts? Well of course you do, at least at a certain stage.

But what about food? How does it affect food? Where does food come in?

Subhuti: You certainly do notice who's been cooking and how they're feeling.

S: But is that due to inference or is it due to direct perception. Supposing you see that the food hasn't been well cooked or the table hasn't been nicely laid, well you can guess either that the person has done it in a hurry or hasn't done it properly but could you detect directly.

Subhuti: I don't see why if you're subtle enough you wouldn't perceive that on a much subtler level.

S: One can certainly infer when someone has not done something, say the cooking, very freely, but direct perception of that is another matter but it does seem to be possible.

Andy: So presumably ( ) has an effect on you. Whether you perceive it it still has an effect on you.

S: Because one mustn't be precious about these things. If one is leading an ordinary life the chances are that one would feel these sort of things very slightly if at all because there are so many other more powerful influences affecting you. You can't just blame it on to the food if you're in a not very wholesome mental state. But on the other hand if you are say meditating

regularly and you're quite careful about your way of life, you could be affected if food had been prepared by someone who was in a very negative state. This is why in India there is a sort of spiritual tradition that if you're doing intensive meditation you should eat food either prepared by your own hand or by a fellow disciple of the same teacher, assuming that he also is practising in the same sort of way as you are.

Sona: I was listening to a radio play about the devil and there was one interesting phrase in that. Someone said 'the birds still don't sing in Belsen' - I don't know whether that's true or not but the point that they [80] were making is that when there is a lot of people and negative mental states concentrated in one area it does leave a sort of objective vibration.

S: I've certainly felt this when I saw the Coliseum in Rome. Not only saw it but I was looking around the arena and I certainly felt something very strong and very unpleasant there, and it wasn't just my own sort of conscious mental associations. It was something which I directly perceived. Quite difficult to say what it was like, difficult to describe it but one could certainly, if one had not known, have believed that people had been executed and tortured in that particular place.

Sona: I had a similar experience walking in a forest in Holland last year. Suddenly I felt very uncomfortable. It was after a retreat as well and later I found out that that whole area of Holland had been used for exterminating a lot of not Jews but resistance fighters and so on by the Nazis. It was much quieter there.

S: But the point here is that even granting that wholesome or unwholesome mental states can be transmitted to or picked up by other people, whether that can be done via material things, especially via food. Because you could say well it works the other way around because if you eat say food that has been blessed or which has been offered, well this could have the opposite kind of effect. This is also a very widespread belief. Indians - Hindus especially - call this sort of food 'Prasad', this food which has been offered in puja to a god or teacher and so on and one partakes of that or of the leavings of that afterwards. This is considered to be spiritually beneficial. Again it's all very marginal but no doubt there is some kind of marginal effect.

Virabhadra: Do you think there's any significance in the tradition of monks taking alms from this point of view. Generally you take food from anyone and everyone. Presumably people who ...().

S: Well the traditional view here is that if one is going for alms in this sort of way the fact that you are going for alms at all and the fact that you are leading that sort of life in any case, it has such a powerful effect that any negativity which you might get in that way is counteracted. There's also the point of view that normally you would be given food only by devoted people who actually wanted to give, not by people who didn't give willingly. If they didn't want to give they just wouldn't give. That would be that, so normally what would happen would be that you would be given food by people who really wanted to give you. Even though in a sense their mental state was quite worldly but at least there was something else there as well quite strong. I remember this as being my own experience going for alms in India in my early days that usually the people who gave you were very [81] pleased indeed to do so, especially those who were Buddhists, and were really quite overjoyed to be able to do so.

So the problem, if there is a problem, would be unlikely to arise under those sort of circumstances. Of course, to pursue the matter in a slightly different way, in Indian households food is never prepared by women who are experiencing their periods. This is absolutely out. It's quite unthinkable for a woman to prepare food when she's in that sort of condition. Maybe there is a bit of, as it were, magical belief about this - a menstruating woman and all that - but there is this other aspect that the woman at that time is very often in an abnormal mental state and an abnormal emotional state (it might not be very positive sometimes), and that therefore it is considered not good that she prepares food. So what happens in an Indian household, of course there are usually a number of women living and doing the cooking, is that when a woman knows that she is in that state she just lets the other women know and they automatically just take over her work from her.

It also has the advantage that she rests during that period. No woman will normally work or do anything during that period. The other women all accept that, they just automatically take over her work, whether it's washing, cleaning, cooking, anything, and she just stays quietly. The men usually just don't know. They don't even bother to enquire who has cooked. The women sort these things out amongst themselves. But they are very careful that a woman doesn't in fact even handle food. In very strict households doesn't even look at food that is to be eaten by other people when she's in that state. But it's an extension to some extent of this particular principle.

So they would say that western nuclear families where the woman regardless of her mental state, whether she's in a negative emotional state due to menstruation or any other reason, has to cook, is terribly unhealthy. They would think this deplorable. 'No wonder people have emotional and psychological problems' they would say. It's not surprising if they permit things of that sort of happen which as I've said are unthinkable in the Hindu family.

It's interesting that amongst European writers Strindberg seems to have been very conscious of this. He deals with it or mentions it in a number of his writings, especially his plays and he seems a bit obsessed by the theme of the cook who hates the family by whom she is employed and hates them to such an extent that they can't get any nourishment out of the food that she cooks for them. So she's producing what appear to be really good nourishing meals but her hatred has extracted all the nourishment from the food. The family get the food but it isn't nourishing them. [82] So food is in a way a strange thing. Because sometimes you do feel, even if someone sort of offers you food very willingly and happily, you could say that it does you good, it does you more good than if it's just doled out to you by someone who doesn't really want to give you anything, doesn't really feel like feeding you.

: School dinners!

S: School dinners. I don't know whether people feel this in any way. It's difficult to say. It depends on the sort of mental state you're in to begin with, how hungry you are. It may not just matter, you may not just care if you're sufficiently hungry.

: I remember Chintamani telling me once when I was cooking that he didn't think I was taking enough care over it and he was saying that in monasteries it's normally only someone who's developed, the most spiritually sort of mature people who do the cooking. They don't get novices.



S: That's not completely correct. This is based upon something I once said, especially in Zen monasteries, the head cook is an old experienced meditating monk, not necessarily everybody who is concerned with cooking but they do consider the kitchen so important and the right preparation of food so important that they have an old, experienced monk in charge of that usually. Not that he necessarily does all the cooking himself but he directly supervises them. But it's probably very difficult in practice to distinguish between your direct perception of something wrong with or in the food - very difficult to distinguish that from - your conscious awareness of the fact that someone's not bothered very much about the preparation. It's not easy to separate these two strands. Perhaps they aren't really separable even though they are quite distinct.

I think perhaps this is something that people have to watch in communities, especially large communities, that the preparation of food doesn't become something routine and impersonal, that you should do without bothering about it very much or caring very much or knowing exactly who's going to be eating the food. Someone was mentioning at Sukhavati that they didn't always know who has prepared the food, they don't always know who has cooked that particular day, so probably that isn't a very good thing.

Anyway this has all come out of the pot on which a curse has been placed, the result of which apparently Rechungpa contracted leprosy and the visiting Indian yogis, they are able to pick up on that, even to know that [83] Rechungpa had caught leprosy. What is leprosy? Is anything known about the etiology (origin) of leprosy?

Virabhadra: It's caused by a bacteria a bit like TB. It's a very slow growing bacteria and you usually get it from ( ) contact.

S: It's quite difficult to pick up apparently. I've been told in India that there are people living and working in leprosy camps or asylums for years and years in close physical contact with the lepers and not pick it up. They do in some cases after many years but it's almost one might say a difficult thing to catch even under favourable circumstances. But what is a bacteria? What are bacterium? We've got bacteria swarming in us all the time. How is it that some bring about consequences that we identify as disease and others apparently not. Can it be related to mental state in any way? Does this hold any scientific water or is it just a relic of medieval superstition?

Virabhadra: It seems quite logical in that a lot of people do have various bugs knocking around in them which don't seem to cause disease in that person but they can give it to somebody else and it will cause disease in them. Presumably this...

S: But this could be due to a difference in their physical state of being. But then again you could say is it possible completely to separate the physical state from the mental.

: You find it with things like going down with colds. I used to notice at Sukhavati that when I was living there I was quite positive, quite energetic I didn't seem to go down with colds as often as ...seemed a bit more ... it's almost like you set up sort of compatible ... the situation where it can get you, the right conditions for it.

Virabhadra: According to (Grodek) people often make use of germs or whatever in order to fulfil some sort of psychological purpose. If it was in some way advantageous to you to get

leprosy or a cold wasn't really... It doesn't just work like that.

Kovida: If it's so difficult to catch leprosy why was it such a problem in the past?

Virabhadra: In very crowded communities with poor hygiene it is..

S: But how does anybody get it in the first place? (Laughter)

Virabhadra: I don't know how the first person caught it. The population has a reservoir of bacteria in dust and people's skin ... where it came [84] from originally. Society's getting more modern and conditions of hygiene improve and so everything just sort of dies out through general cleanliness and...

S: Like ringworm dies out and things like that. But it's as though the sum total of disease remains constant. It's as though diseases change their forms and become more subtle. Is that correct? Are there not say stress diseases which develop? Can they be called diseases in that sense?

Virabhadra: Life expectancy has changed. Presumably people are dying less than they would have.

S: But formerly perhaps they were sometimes or very often dying for reasons that had nothing to do with disease in the narrower sense, maybe from malnutrition and overwork, over exertion, because they were living under very depressive conditions.

Virabhadra: There's no doubt that our social environment has a very large part to play, especially with infectious diseases. Most of the disappearance in western society is probably related more to social factors rather than active measures. Clean water is very important.

S: Well in the last century it was possible for the Prince Consort to die of typhoid. It was discovered that the water supply of Windsor Castle was polluted and that would hardly be possible anywhere in Britain now. And that's only a hundred and fifty years ago.

Anyway we're on the cyclical level here rather than on the physical level. So they knew, the yogis knew that Rechungpa had caught leprosy. "Rechungpa then asked them whether there was any cure. One of the yogis said, 'You are indeed a pitiful person deserving of sympathy, and I feel for you. I have a Guru called Wala Tsandra who may be able to relieve you. As he will not be coming to Tibet, you will have to go to India". It's quite interesting here that there's this possibility of a disease being healed by say non-physical means. The suggestion is that this lama Wala Tsandra has got some kind of healing powers. It has been suggested by some scholars or by some writers that spiritual healing as you might call it doesn't play such an important part in Buddhism as it does say in Christianity. In the case of Christianity you've got the healing miracles of Christ, but in the case of the Buddha, so far as one recollects, there were no healing miracles. But a book has recently been published on the medicine or healing Buddhas, yes, and it does seem that there is or there has been a whole tradition of spiritual healing in Buddhism, both in the Hinayana and the Mahayana, even in the absence of any healing miracles on the part of the Buddha.

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So this reference to Wala Tsandra seems to confirm that, that these yogis knew that their guru was in a position to cure diseases through meditation. Not by just saying 'disease be gone!' sort of thing but by teaching a meditation which relieved the disease or cured the person of the disease.

Sona: Is leprosy curable by drugs?

S: Formerly it was incurable wasn't it. You have to catch it fairly early perhaps.

Virabhadra: I think it's always curable. The problem is once you start getting complications like legs dropping off you can't really do anything about that.

S: You can't reverse the process but you can just arrest it.

Virabhadra: It is possible to cure.

S: But it is still quite widespread in India.

Virabhadra: It's very widespread in Africa again mainly for economic, political reasons. The means are available but for one reason or another they are not...().

S: We're going to come now to Jetsun Milarepa's song. Perhaps this is the point where we stop and have our coffee.

[Coffee Break]

...bacteria come in the evolutionary scheme. They're pretty primitive organisms so they must have been in existence presumably before there were human beings so at what stage did they become associated with the human organism and how come that some of them had that kind of effect on the human organism which we identify as disease, because we are swarming with bacteria which aren't harmful in any way. We get so used to certain things we now no longer wonder why they're there so I wonder well why should there be such a thing as disease? Why should bacteria have that sort of effect, especially when all bacteria don't have it, and under what circumstances. How has this come about? Is it normal or is it highly abnormal? Has it anything to do with mental factors or not? I don't think it's been properly investigated.

Subhuti: Aren't there some modern theories that bacteria and viruses are actually part of the process of evolution and one of the ways in which the genes mutate.

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Virabhadra: You mean that there is a sort of vehicle of natural selection.

Subhuti: Yes. They can function abnormally but they can also make the organism function in new ways.

S: You mean under certain circumstances an unhealthy organism would have a better chance of survival than a healthy one.

Subhuti: Well at least a deviant organism yes.

S: Anyway let's not speculate any more and go back to the song.

"I pray my Guru to whom I owe immense gratitude,  
I pray you to protect and bless my son, Rechungpa."

S: So who is Milarepa's Guru?

: Marpa.

S: It's Marpa. So one has the sort of impression of a lineage in the true sense, that is to say there's Milarepa and Marpa on the one hand, Milarepa praying so to speak to Marpa and Milarepa and Rechungpa on the other, and Milarepa not himself blessing Rechungpa but praying that the guru will bless Rechungpa. What does this suggest?

: Communication through Enlightenment.

S: In more general terms or more simple terms even.

Kovida: Milarepa still sees himself as under and in touch with his guru.

Sona: He is a vehicle.

S: Milarepa sees himself as a vehicle. He sees it as his job as it were not to obstruct anything that might pass through him from Marpa, his teacher, to Milarepa, his disciple. In other words one has to be cautious using this language of transmission as I've pointed out recently in a seminar, part of which is going to appear in the next Newsletter. It's not there's some thing is transmitted but at the same time one can speak of a sort of spark just going from one generation to another and one has just to be careful that one doesn't give that spark any particular form which is just dependant on the accidents of one's own personality. So this is perhaps what Milarepa is suggesting and what he's indicating. He doesn't say to Rechungpa well I bless you my son, off you go. He says I pray to my guru to bless my son Rechungpa. It's as though he's trying [87] to make himself completely transparent to the guru's influence so that it may pass through him to Rechungpa. But one might say well what is Marpa doing? He's doing the same thing with his guru so to speak, that is to say with Naropa. He doesn't bless Milarepa himself. He prays that Naropa's blessings may come to Milarepa. So what does this in turn suggest? Presumably you can't go back and back indefinitely. You have to come to a stop somewhere. So what does that suggest?

Even supposing that you come back to the Buddha. What does that mean? You might even say if you're already fully enlightened well why should you even go back to and still have the Buddha if Naropa's enlightened you might as well stop at him. If Marpa's enlightened you might as well stop at him. If Milarepa's enlightened you might as well stop at him.

Virabhadra: Is it drawing attention to the distinction between the Buddha in the sense of somebody who found things out for himself and somebody who's attained enlightenment through following the teaching?

S: It could be, but I don't think that's mainly what he's getting at.

Sona: It seems to me to suggest that enlightenment's non-personal.

S: It's non-personal in the sense of non-egoistic. It's not as though anything can come really from Milarepa or can come from Marpa. It isn't that it can't come from Milarepa and it can come from Marpa through Milarepa - it's not that and it's not that it can't come from Marpa but it can come from Naropa through Marpa or it isn't that it can come from in the last case it's from the Buddha - no, it can't even come from the Buddha because by Milarepa or Marpa or Naropa or the Buddha as enlightened beings one doesn't mean anything of the nature of a sort of enlightened ego.

Sona: You do actually get quite a different impression, reading this Tibetan work, say from the Buddha when he actually announces that I am a Buddha, I am perfectly enlightened. He doesn't sort of say ... he's not sort of praying to anyone else to bless someone. It's as though he's saying that he does embody enlightenment.

S: But actually it's in a way the same thing because, as I said, there's no point if Milarepa has got in a manner of speaking the same enlightenment as Marpa well why should he refer back to Marpa and ask for his blessing on Rechungpa. But the point that is really being made is I think that enlightenment is not anybody's personal possession. This is the point that Milarepa is really making in referring back to Marpa. Not [88] that it is Marpa's personal possession whereas it isn't Milarepa's or not that it is the Buddha's personal possession and not anybody else's, not that. So it doesn't matter whether you refer back to somebody else or you don't. The important thing is that you must realize or that you must communicate, that it isn't a personal possession, even when the Buddha, Sakyamuni, says I am the Enlightened one, he doesn't mean that he is the enlightened one in the sense that he possesses something called enlightenment which other people don't possess.

Subhuti: It seems as if the necessity for the Buddha is to emphasize that it could be attained by a human being whereas by this time it was more important to emphasize its suprapersonal nature.

S: So it's as though one has to steer a middle way. There has to be some glimmer as it were of what enlightenment is like communicated, but at the same time it can't be claimed as a personal possession in the ordinary sense. So Milarepa within the context of the Kagyapa tradition gets over that so to speak by referring back to his guru and saying of himself, or suggesting that he is just a channel, a medium for the transmission of the guru's blessing.

"Son, you should renounce the world,  
And work hard at the Dharma.  
To the Guru, Patron Buddha, and the Three Precious Ones,  
You should pray with sincere heart and not just words.  
Bear this in mind when you travel in India."

S: You notice he says my son Rechungpa and again at the beginning 'Son'. The meaning of that or the sense in which the term is used is obvious but do you think there's any danger in this? Using this sort of terminology? Father and son or mother and son come to that?

: Well if he tends to identify too closely with that relationship it might inhibit your own development. If you're like the son you just stay the son and can't really become a guru in

your own right.

S: But the son does grow up and become an adult and even though he is a responsible adult with children of his own he's still a son in relation to his father in some sense. Even though it is more a matter of ancient history. But do you think any negative associations might attach to this for some people, speaking about the modern western context.

Subhuti: It depends what the relationship with their fathers was like.

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S: Yes, obviously. If you are fleeing from home and you go along to a Centre, the last thing you want to hear is 'Hello my son!' (Laughter) It's as though you've just come home again.

Virabhadra: When you said that there was the Christian connotation. The priest is the father and all that sort of stuff.

S: And the Pope is the Holy Father. So perhaps one should be a little careful about using this sort of terminology.

[End of Tape 4 - Tape 5]

S: I've even know western Buddhist monks who liked to be addressed as Father this or Father that. There was an American usually known as Father Sumangala, even though it was many years ago even at that time I didn't feel too happy about that. It seemed to smack to me of Roman Catholicism. But it's interesting in the Buddhist tradition one doesn't address monks as father. I don't recollect that this is known at all.

: Why is that?

S: Well I wonder why it is.

Andy: Is it ...it's dependant on how developed you are. Whether you're someone's father. If you fix it too rigidly that can ...

S: You could imagine for instance that lay people, especially say in Theravada countries would address bhikkhus as father because the laity occupy a quite subordinate position as regards to the monks, but actually they don't, they don't address the monks as father. To the best of my knowledge this is quite unknown.

Virabhadra: It reminds of a bit I came across in the Karaniya Metta Sutta referring to how one should behave and there's a bit which said that you should be greeted into actual families as if you can imagine families adopting a monk as a tame monk.

S: It does sometimes happen. I have known that to happen.

: I can imagine it sort of being brought into this part of the family. That sort of tendency is being.

S: Perhaps it was a deliberate avoidance of a sort of family terminology for what should be

essentially spiritual relationships.

Kovida: Isn't the word 'Bhante' used?

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S: Yes, but it doesn't mean father. It only means reverend, venerable.

Kovida: Isn't it a similar thing. You talk about priest being father. Isn't it a term of reverence rather than actual... the connotation that he is your father.

S: Yes. Everybody knows that the priest is not literally your father but at the same time you are looking on the priest as though he was a father in another kind of sense. You could say that's all right, but the danger is that instead of transposing the meaning of the term father to a higher level it'll just duplicate in one way or another the old level or the meaning that the term had on the old level and that you would expect the same sort of support and consolation and all that sort of thing from the priest whom you call father as from your own father, instead of looking for something higher say.

Sona: Do you think it's peculiar to Buddhism that religious teachers/monks aren't referred to as father, or is it peculiar to Christianity that they are.

S: One could even say that, because Hindus don't use this terminology either, again to the best of my recollection. It certainly isn't common.

Subhuti: In Islam?

S: Not to the best of my knowledge. Again I'm not sure because I'm not all that familiar with Islam but I don't recollect. It might be interesting to look into this.

Subhuti: The Jews did didn't they? Abba.

S: Abba is father because yes, Christ was addressed as Abba in the New Testament. But how common it was I don't know. Abbot means father. The Abbot is the father of the monks. Though it is as though the Buddhist tradition wants to keep the relationship free from biological or even cultural connotations, though, yes, here Milarepa does say 'son'. This is relatively unusual. Perhaps it is more distinctive of Tibetan Buddhism than of Buddhism generally.

But even here though he says 'son' one doesn't find as far as I remember that Rechungpa in turn says father. Also in the Pali texts the laity address the nuns not as mother but as sister (vagini).

Subhuti: Don't the Tibetans call them Aunty?

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S: Annila, yes which does mean Auntie. But the Tibetans on the whole seem to have a more let us say positive attitude towards family relationships or blood ties than perhaps the Indians, or a more favourable view of them. As when they emphasize very much

that you must regard all you meet as having been your mother in some previous existence.

Virabhadra: Is there a difference between the general tone of family life in Tibet and India say?

S: Very broadly speaking I would say that Indian family life is probably much more constricting because Tibetans, don't forget, have small families. They seem always to have had small families. One or two or at the most three children and some Tibetan couples seem to have no children without taking any steps to limit their families but whether because of sterility or whatnot I don't know. But traditionally Tibetan families have been very small. I think now under the Chinese the population is increasing quite rapidly, despite the number of Tibetans who've been killed.

Sona: Do Tibetans practise polyandry to a larger extent?

S: Polyandry was certainly known but I think not very widely practised, not for ethical reasons. Not that it wasn't practised widely for ethical reasons but simply by economical, financial reasons. Very often a number of brothers did marry one wife so as not to have to divide the property. I think it's more likely that disease limited the population.

: I just wondered whether there was another sort of dimension, a sort of psychological atmosphere in the family.

S: I think because since the family was smaller I get the impression, though this is only an impression that Tibetan family life was much more free, much less stuffy and much less constrictive and restrictive than Indian family life. In India you used to have a whole swarm of relations, a whole swarm of children and a lot of noise and very little space. I can well imagine the ancient Indian ascetics just shaking the dust of the family home off their feet and just going forth from all that.

If you wanted any sort of life of your own that's what you had to do because family life was so confined. you were surrounded by people all the time, surrounded by children all the time, surrounded by women all the time, and that's why even now a lot of Indian men just go off with their men friends and enjoy their social life outside the home. They get away from it all or the majority make do with that but a few, the minority feel that they have to get away from it for good - permanently. But the price, [92] so to speak, that they have to pay is that they have to be celibate, as the tradition requires, for obvious reasons. Anyway that's by the by. So Milarepa says 'Son, you should renounce the world, and work hard at the Dharma.' This whole business of renouncing the world. I don't know what the original Tibetan expression is. Perhaps it's the equivalent of Going Forth, but the English idiom renouncing the world or giving up the world is quite ambiguous don't you think? I mean in what sense does one give up the world, in what sense can one give up the world? What does one mean by that expression?

: You don't take it on its own terms. Imbued with a higher purpose.

Subhuti: It's more the distinction between renouncing samsara rather than renounce the world.

S: I found when I came back from India that many English Buddhists, especially those



inclined more to the Theravada, even those who weren't - even the people inclined to Zen, thought and spoke very much in terms of giving up the world and that if you were a monk you were supposed to have given up the world, and they seemed to understand by that having nothing to do with anything which they considered worldly. You were literally quite separate and apart. Yes there is a certain sense in which this is true but they seemed to take it very literally, as in fact some people do in the east, especially in the Theravada countries.

: My impression is more to do with recreating the world.

S: A new world, a better world. For instance a woman reporter came to interview me and one of the things she asked was 'Are you allowed to speak to people?' as though that was one of the things that you were supposed to have given up, that was all part of the world that you'd given up. That you had no contact with people, you had nothing to do with them in any way.

So I think personally the idiom is a rather unfortunate one and one can perhaps speak of a Going Forth but giving up the world, it seems to have the wrong sort of connotation.

Kovida: Couldn't it mean renouncing the values of the world. It says 'you should renounce the world and work hard at the dharma' as if you're replacing one set of values by another.

S: It's a question of defining what one means by the world. Does one mean a set of attitudes or does one mean specific things, specific activities. No doubt there are certain specific things that one needs to [93] give up or certain specific activities, but that isn't giving up the world. Giving up the world is quite a sweeping statement. The world means everything! So does one really mean say giving up eating, giving up drinking, well literally one should. So the world is meant at least to some extent as some kind of metaphorical symbol.

But of course one shouldn't go to the other extreme and say you don't have to give up anything, literally. If you give up in your mind it's all right. That's the opposite extreme. I used to find people of that sort too. You have to give up literally if you are a monk. For them it was OK to give up in their minds and of course which meant that they were superior to you, some of them thought, because they were able to do it just mentally whereas you, being less developed spiritually, had to do it literally. That was why they followed Zen whereas you apparently were ( ) Theravada. So 'Son, you should renounce the world and work hard at the Dharma'. Again I'm not sure what the exact Tibetan idiom is here, but work hard at the Dharma is quite a good expression in this case. It's not just practising the dharma which is a bit anaemic, but work hard at the dharma, just like working hard at your Swedish or working hard at your grammar or working hard at your anatomy or even your candle making. It's something concrete and tangible. And of course at the same time what you're working hard at is yourself, you're working on yourself at the same time that you're working at the Dharma. That's where of course it differs from a mundane subject.

So what does one really mean by working hard at the dharma? What does it really boil down to? Milarepa gives his version but in more general terms working hard at the dharma. Does it mean learning texts by heart or..

: Trying all the time.

S: But trying to do what?

: Improve the pursuit of it.

S: But working hard at the Dharma. It suggests something objective doesn't it, outside yourself. A subject almost. Is that so?

Subhuti: It may be in part. You may work on yourself, you do work on yourself through something objective. Doing your meditation, communicating etc.

S: So it really means trying to see what is the precise significance of this phrase working at something. How does one work at the Dharma? In [94] what sense or to what extent is the Dharma a thing, as it were, that you're working at?

: Sort of as a goal. The Dharma taken to be Nirvana.

S: But does one speak in terms of working at Nirvana? Not really.

Subhuti: I was thinking more in terms of the say esoteric refuge. The Dharma being your particular practice or set of practices which comes to mean your whole lifestyle.

S: Because Dharma is rather broad after all isn't it. Do you ever really work at the Dharma? Perhaps you don't. Perhaps you just work at certain very specific things. They are the Dharma for you. Maybe this is what Milarepa is getting at. He says 'To the Guru, Patron Buddha, and the Three Precious Ones, you should pray with sincere heart and not just words.' So the guru, the Yidam or the patron Buddha as it's translated here, can be a bodhisattva, and the dakini are the three esoteric refuges.

Why do you think the third esoteric refuge isn't mentioned? Any reason for this? The Three Precious Ones presumably are the three exoteric refuges. Is there any reason for the dakini not being mentioned or is that to be understood? Well in view of what happens to Rechung later on in his life, one could perhaps surmise that Milarepa felt that he might misunderstand if that was mentioned at that particular point. One could explain it biographically in that sort of way, as a possible explanation.

But in any case to work hard at the Dharma, if one thinks in terms of the esoteric rather than the exoteric refuges it means working hard at one's relationship with one's guru, working hard at the particular practice, that is to say visualization, mantra recitation practice that you have, relating to a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva, and cultivating your relationship with a fellow practitioner of the Dharma. As well as of course cultivating a positive attitude towards the Three Jewels in the more general, more exoteric sense.

Subhuti: The language of this, the sort of working hard at the Dharma is objective. Do you think that usually needs to be balanced by a more subjective approach, such as the one that you've been outlining in terms of personal myth and the Gestalt. That you need to see things not just in terms of making an effort at something but also in terms of some kind of inner unfoldment.

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S: I'd say that in a way was almost objective. It's more than inner unfoldment in the ordinary psychological sense, because the myth is experienced as something outside oneself, at least to

a great extent.

Subhuti: Except it sort of works in on you. You don't work at the myth, the myth in a way works itself out through you. Whereas the language of working at the Dharma...

S: In the case of the myth something more is involved than the conscious, active, willing self, which is of course involved when you are working at something whether the dharma or something else. The myth seems to belong more to the greater mandala. You could say that there was a sort of series of concentric circles. In the middle you've got the mandala of usefulness in the ordinary, practical everyday sense, and then a somewhat wider and bigger one, the mandala of working on yourself and working at the Dharma. When you work on yourself or when you work at the Dharma the model is still so to speak a utilitarian model. The model still derives or the language derives from the mandala of usefulness, the smaller mandala; but then, outside that wider circle, the circle of working on yourself, your practice or working at the Dharma you've got the still wider circle or mandala of myth. Outside that of course one might say the purely spiritual, form-less model and outside that the transcendental.

So the mythical is more removed from the utilitarian, whereas working on yourself and working at the Dharma seems to come in between the utilitarian and the mythical let's say. In other words through the mythical material you contact a 'self', inverted commas, in a manner of speaking which is a larger self than the one which is involved in working on yourself or working at the Dharma. Although of course at the same time when you contact or you recount part of, or realize that you are part of this myth, in another sense, in a wider and deeper sense, you are working on yourself, you are working at the Dharma, but it's in a rather different sort of way. It's not on the old so to speak utilitarian model. You are working without working.

Sona: Can I just ask one question. You said about working on your relationship with the Guru and working on your relationship with your meditation.

S: And the dakini, yes.

Sona: With regard to the Guru does this particularly mean opening yourself up and working on your relationship first of all, say with your kalyana mitras in a quite sort of practical, utilitarian way, and then on a sort of higher level, opening yourself up to...

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S: I think here it means, in practical terms, working on your relationship with, which essentially means your openness to or receptivity to, anybody who is more experienced spiritually than you are yourself, and especially with someone whom you regard as guru in the more specific sense. But the general principle is anybody whom you feel is more experienced than you are. In the same way with regard to the dakini, it's being open and, not receptive, that is not the word here, but say really communicative, horizontally communicative, with those of approximately the same level of development who do spark you off, and with whom you can have a spiritually stimulating exchange. It's not that you necessarily or consciously limit yourself to just one particular spiritual partner in that sense, though there may be one person to whom you are much closer than anybody else, but that you are open to that sort of mutually stimulating relationship with regard to anybody who is roughly on the same spiritual level as you are yourself.

Sona: So in a more specific sense with regard to Order members it would mean certainly keeping up a very good communication with you mainly (?) in informing you what..

S: At least that. Conveyance of information is in fact the lowest form of communication. At least that. At least it gives one a start. Even if one says I'm going away for a month off to Greece or whatever, well at least there's the beginning of communication. Just to give information.

Sona: You get the example here as well with Rechungpa asking Milarepa if he can go.

S: Yes indeed. 'So to the Guru, Patron Buddha, and the Three Precious Ones, you should pray with sincere heart and not just words.' Maybe the word pray isn't very fortunate. It's not that one is to ask them for anything, it's more an attitude of, well not only openness and receptivity, but of very positive thoughts and feelings directed towards the esoteric and the exoteric refuges. It's not a matter of just words. It's a question of inner feeling.

It's very easy to pray or whatever with just words and to be relatively devoid of feeling. That you could say is a form of silavrata-paramarsa, that is to say dependence on rules and vows in a purely external manner.

This brings us to the question of chanting for instance. Chanting could be included in praying, chanting things like the Vandana or the puja. It's quite important not just to repeat the words obviously, but also to repeat with a certain amount of feeling. Not that you can produce the feeling to order, but the feeling in a sense ought to be there naturally when you repeat the words. And sometimes one can tell from the mode or the [97] style of chanting whether that positive feeling is there or not. I remember on the study retreat that we had at Nash in Sussex, near Brighton, this question came up very strongly because it seems to me that some of the people there on that study retreat - it wasn't all Order members but the culprits were Order members - seemed to me to be chanting the words of the puja and vandana, refuges and precepts and whatever, but in a mental, even an emotional state which was totally inappropriate and inconsistent. I expressed it by saying that I got the impression that a lot of black energy was being pumped into the puja, and this is what the puja was being chanted or repeated with. This was the sort of energy behind it and that was my quite sort of strong impression, and there were a couple of people I think on that occasion - one in particular - of whom this was very, very true.

So it's as though they were not in a sort of mental or emotional state appropriate really for chanting, much less still for leading. I think one has to watch that, otherwise the impression produced can be quite horrible and can be picked up by new people and mitras. So it's quite important that when an Order member leads a puja or leads anything that he is in or at least can put himself in an appropriate positive frame of mind. Otherwise something is sure to come across and if the majority of people are in that sort of state well, you've got a pretty awful situation.

Sona: What seems a bit different though is actually putting feeling into something, it's difficult to explain but... If you're doing the metta bhavana for instance it's relatively easy to develop a positive feeling because you can visualize someone as being uplifted, being happy and so on, but it's a bit more difficult with the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Maybe it's possible to visualize an actual Buddha, not a Buddha or Bodhisattva or developing beings being more uplifting and doing greater works for the world...

S: I think in the case of the puja, especially the Sevenfold Puja, it's a question of asking oneself well what am I actually saying. It's a question of being aware of what you're saying. I think the great danger and the great temptation is just to reel it off mechanically without even thinking of what you're saying, because the material is so familiar and you've said it maybe so many times before, but you've got actually to pay attention to the meaning. I think that is the first thing, not that you're just reciting it away without thinking and you've got to put some kind of emotion into it. No, you just have to sort of ask yourself 'what am I actually saying, what do these words mean?'. If you can repeat the words with a genuine awareness of their meaning the chances are that there'll be some feeling there.

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Sona: It seems to me more important as well to actually develop a feeling that there are beings that you're doing it towards. Because if you just think about the words - I entreat the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas - then you start intellectualising, 'what does this really mean'...

S: I suppose I was taking it for granted that one felt that anyway but perhaps one doesn't. Again it perhaps ties up with what I said about paying attention to the meaning of the words. It's really included in that.

Sona: I'm just wondering whether in throwing out God and divine beings and things you're sort of throwing out the other beings, spiritual beings, and you get sort of left with a situation where you're a little bit worried about actually thinking the Buddhas are external to yourself because you think that you're just reproducing God again.

S: It might seem like that but actually you can't because they just don't possess the same attributes.

: It helps when the person who's doing the chanting has a lot of (enthusiasm?) Sometimes you get the impression it's just an Order member leading, doing a job of work.

S: One little mitra mentioned to me the other day that he was of the impression that some order members tried to get through the puja in record time and he told me one of them has a record of I think it was 24 minutes flat! So one has to be rather careful not to produce that kind of impression, that it's just having to be done and you just sort of speed through it as quickly as you possibly can and that's that.

Clive: What about newcomers doing puja for the first few times? I was always told that initially it's almost like you can't really have feeling for the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It's almost like you should do it or it should entail doing it mechanically and the feeling will begin to...

S: I think it varies very much with people. Some people have a strong feeling straight off but others seem to have virtually no feeling at all even if they've heard it or done it dozens and dozens of times. So the main point here being though that you don't want to sort of force anybody to do anything without the appropriate feeling so that if newcomers don't feel like joining in well don't insist let them just sit at the back and listen or let them join in when they feel like it. But I think in the case of those who do get involved with the FWBO sooner or later it would be natural if some feeling did percolate through. But for one reason or another it may not come, at least in connection with the puja immediately. It could be for quite

subjective reasons of one kind or another, but nonetheless we do find that some people take to it [99] immediately and feel very strongly, even just going into the shrine room or just seeing the Buddha image, even before they've actually done any puja. Not a small number of people of this kind, maybe more like Rechung himself, maybe more of the faith follower type whose emotional and devotional response is almost instantaneous. Relatively uncomplicated, emotionally positive people free from psychological problems.

Sona: I think one of the problems is that we haven't got a Buddhist word - or I can't think of one - of the equivalent of praying. It does imply that you can't sort of get in touch with something, not just in yourself, you're not just opening up yourself which we tend to perhaps overemphasize ... seeing the Buddha as your own potential.

S: I think that can be overdone.

Campbell: Wouldn't invocation be a sort of...

S: Invocation is good, or sometimes expressing, in the case of visualization, evocation. Invocation is more like calling upon, evocation is like calling up, or even calling down.

Virabhadra: Are there any Pali or Sanskrit words with an equivalent meaning to prayer, just sort of spiritual practice in general?

S: Well there are terms like (prathana) but that is much more like the English word 'pray'. The Tibetans have got some words. They've got (Mo Lam) which means something like 'the path of speech'.

Campbell: Could you explain a bit more the difference between invocation and evocation?

S: Invocation is partly from a root which means simply to call, as when you use the word 'vocal', when you vocalize, so to invoke is to call upon. It's as though you feel that somebody is there even though you can't see it and if you call upon them then they will respond, then they will reply, but they are there. When you evoke it's though they are not there but you are calling them up so that they may be there. So evocation - for instance Conze or Snellgrove use the word evocation in connection with the visualization of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Sadhanas they call evocation because it's as though the Bodhisattva, the Buddha is not there, he's got to be called up because you've actually got to see him in your meditation so you have to call him up, and where do you call him up from? From the depths so to speak of your own mind, so you evoke him. You call upon him so that he may emerge from the depths, not [100] just from the depths of your own mind in the purely subjective sense, but just from the depths. You evoke.

Campbell: So when would you actually use invocation?

S: Invocation is more like when you are addressing what one could also call perhaps prayers, when you pray to some extent you invoke, you call upon. Though pray of course has the connotation or even the denotation of asking, of requesting. Invoking doesn't have that. That maybe is the advantage. There's no suggestion of asking for anything. You're just calling upon. You are asking whoever you're calling upon to show that they are there, to let you know that they are there. Invoking is also a calling upon their influence, a calling upon their power.

It's not just something static that you're calling upon. If you call upon it and if it responds then in a sense also you will have called on, in the sense that you can call on the bank for money. It's not just a presence that you call on but a power. When the presence responds to your invocation a power is present, a power is available to you. I'm using the word power in a broad general literal sense.

Sona: That's interesting because the process in part of the puja is to invoke these Buddhas and then you actually give something to the Buddha rather than your wanting something from the Buddha. That comes at the beginning of the puja. You actually can feel that the energy is starting to move in that direction.

S: You evoke traditionally from the void, call up not just from within your own mind but from the void, from the purely transcendental dimension because they are a form of that. And then you invoke them, now that they are there. In a way the two go together, the evoking and the invoking. You can invoke without having evoked if they are already there so to speak.

So it's not only calling upon them but calling upon their power.

Subhuti: In a sense the puja becomes almost a magic seance.

S: Hmm yes. Well in the case of the Tantric puja magical ceremonies are the model for the puja and even for the meditations. That's not quite so with regard to the Theravada and the Mahayana pujas. There the model is as it were social because the Buddha is envisaged as the honoured guest who appears in the world and is received as such. So it's somewhat different. It's not a magical one except to the extent that there's something magical about this visitor, this stranger, this unexpected person who suddenly appears. There are certain magical overtones perhaps, but they're only overtones.

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Campbell: Is there any point in evoking Bodhisattvas and seeing them as objectively existing...

S: Well if you can actually see them you have evoked them, if you can actually see them, can actually visualize them, that is what has happened. It may not be a genuine evoking from the void, sort of metaphysical dimension but even if you really visualize those particular forms in your own mind, at least you'd evoked them from your own mind. At least that and you can then invoke them. It's as though evoking is a more static process or gives you a more static end result. Invoking is more dynamic, you not only call upon but you draw upon. Your calling upon is a drawing upon. Your evoking is strictly your production. It is called that, the (uttapandi) the production of the form. Invoking in a way suggests that the process is carried a stage further. You not only have evoked but you establish some contact...

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...suggests a certain tapping of energy almost.

Campbell: If you evoke you set up the form to which the energy can pass through.

S: Yes, one could say that. The energy is the energy of the void if one can use that expression

and the particular figure that you evoke and invoke determines the particular nature, the particular form that that energy takes. It may be an energy of love and compassion or it may be an energy of wisdom or it may be an energy of purification or whatever. But I think it's important in connection with the puja that one realizes that one is not just in contact with an idea in one's own mind in the ordinary sense. Perhaps it's quite difficult to get that sort of realization.

Sona: This seems to be to me one of the ingredients that's been missing actually, the touch of magic. Seeing the puja more as a magical ceremony immediately has a new meaning.

S: It's easier to give a meaning or explain symbolism in the purely rational sort of way but that usually doesn't help all that much. It just keeps the rational mind satisfied and stops it making too many objections but it doesn't do anything very positive for the puja itself. You can give the explanation, well when you offer the candle it means lighting the light of wisdom etc., etc., well all that's true. It gives the rational mind something to bite on and as I've said keeps it quiet like a dummy that you give the rational mind, but that sort of explanation doesn't fulfil a very positive or creative role, or play a very positive or creative part, does it? It's not enough in itself.

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Sona: But magic is not very rational is it. You can't cling on to it with your mind.

S: It's not enough just to give rational explanations. There has to be some other element there.

Campbell: Could you say you could approach the puja more like playing a piece of music?

S: No I think probably not, unless you're playing the piece of music for somebody. Because when you play a piece of music it's usually for your own subjective enjoyment or pleasure. You could say with regard to the puja that well I'm doing this for the sake of my own spiritual development but it doesn't work quite like that. It's as though for it to be able to function in that way you've got to do it as it were for or to the Buddha. Then it has a beneficial effect on your spiritual development. You say 'well this is a sort of exercise that I'm doing - it's just like using the dumbbells to get my emotions well developed and to develop the emotional muscles as it were. This is why I'm reciting the puja'. It just doesn't work like that.

It's as though there has got to be an objective reference, an objective orientation.

Sona: If you see music more as a sort of chanting of magic spells or the playing of magic notes in certain harmonies and in such a way that it turns a key to open the box.

S: The box of course being you! Well you can see the lid just sort of moving slightly and that maybe intrigues you or encourages you. Anyway so Milarepa says 'Bear this in mind when you travel in India'.

So why do you think Milarepa says 'bear this in mind when you travel in India'? That's to say bear in mind that you should renounce the world, that you should work hard at the dharma and that you should pray with sincere heart and not just words to the esoteric and exoteric refuges. Why does he say 'bear this in mind when you travel in India'?



Subhuti: Lots of temptations.

S: Lots of temptations, lots of distractions.

: Leaving his guru.

S: Leaving his guru, leaving his native country.

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Sona: When you go away from your home place everything becomes a little exciting and you often feel that you're much happier and things have changed for you but normally if you stay in that new situation long enough it just becomes like the old situation. It's particularly tempting...

S: And when there's a lot of external changes taking place you are seeing a lot of new things, things which may be interesting, it's very easy to forget things which are so to speak relatively internal, relatively spiritual.

All right read the next verse.

"By taking the food of Perseverance in Samadhi,  
By wearing the clothes of Ah Tung,  
And by riding the horse of the magic Prana-Mind,  
Thus, my son, should you travel in India."

S: So presumably just three things are necessary when you travel to India or anywhere else - food, clothing and a horse. That's all you need. Presumably Milarepa's got those things but he's also saying 'by taking the food of Perseverance in Samadhi', not just samadhi but perseverance in samadhi because just one meal isn't enough. You have to keep on eating. You have to eat every day. So in the same way one good meditation isn't enough. You have to keep on meditating. There has to be perseverance in samadhi. And 'By wearing the clothes of Ah Tung'. According to the note at the back the Ah Tung means the small seed syllable Ah, which is visualized at the navel centre in the heat yoga practice. So if you attain success in the heat yoga practice you don't need clothes. Even in the cold climate of Tibet a thin cotton garment will be sufficient for you. You become a Repa. 'And by riding the horse of the magic Prana-Mind'. Why do you think the Prana-Mind is compared to a horse and what is meant by riding it anyway?

: Prana's the sort of breath, the life-force isn't it?

S: It's in a way more than that. Let's read this note. There's a note.

Subhuti: "See story 3, note 2".

S: "Prana mind: According to Tantric teaching, mind and Prana manifest as two aspects of a unity. Mind is that which is aware. Prana is the active energy which gives support to the awareness. He who masters the mind automatically masters the Prana, and vice-versa. The aim of any system of meditation is to control or master the Prana-Mind." [Page 36]

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So it's not a particular kind of Prana called Prana-Mind but Prana and Mind together. The Prana and the Mind which form an inseparable unity. So the vehicle or the steed that really enables the yogi to go, which enables him to function as a yogi, so to speak, is the unification of energy and awareness. The awareness has got to be perfectly pure and bright and the energy has got to be freely flowing and positive and flowing in the right direction, and that energy provides the support, the body if you like, for the awareness.

So in Tantric Buddhism it isn't just a question of clarifying the mind. It's also a question of sorting out the energies. It's the energies that find expression in the body. It's the mind that finds expression in the mind. So it's in this sense in a way, or with reference to something like this, that I said some time ago - I think it was quite off the cuff in a seminar - that work is the great Tantric Guru. Because it enables one or it's one of the things that enables one to bring one's energies into harmony with one's awareness. Because it's quite easy to have an awareness of things or to understand things in a way, but to bring your energies practically into harmony with that is quite another matter. But that is an important aspect of spiritual life. Not only to see clearly but to function smoothly.

So one is represented by mind, the aspect of clear seeing, and the other is represented by Prana, the aspect of smooth, which means effortless, energy-full functioning. One can't neglect either. One might think that Prana was the steed, but no it is the Prana and mind together are the steed.

'Thus, my son, should you travel in India.' Milarepa is almost saying that if you can do these things you don't need to travel in India.

: It does seem quite strange that he does go when Milarepa's had this tremendous effect upon him.

S: But he wants to cure the leprosy. Apparently this famous teacher, Wala Tsandra, has got a special method for curing that. Well maybe he could have cured it, staying with Milarepa, but he doesn't think so. He believes what the yogis say and Milarepa is apparently quite happy to let him, to think that he has to go to India. It could be that there's still a certain turbulence in Rechungpa's energies. Perhaps - and one must be very careful how one takes this but perhaps - he needs to go off to India not because he does actually have to see that guru and get that special meditation to cure his leprosy but there's a certain energy imbalance in him that can be cured only in that particular way.

He has this tendency to go off from Milarepa even though he is so devoted to him. It's as though Milarepa is transposing the whole thing [105] to a different level. It's not a question of food, it's a question of perseverance in samadhi, it's not a question of clothing, it's a question of the heat yoga, it's not a question of riding a horse, it's a question of prana and mind. In the same way it's not really a question of travelling to India. If you're able to do these other things well what spiritual value, what spiritual significance does travelling in India have? It's just restless wandering, just roaming.

But perhaps Rechung needs, one doesn't want to provide material for rationalizations but perhaps Rechungpa needs, in a manner of speaking to do that for a while.

Subhuti: Can you say why he might need to do that?

S: Well he may have a feeling, an urge to travel, his particular emotional or energy turbulence or restlessness may take that form and he may want to do that, he may want to indulge that, and he just may not listen to Milarepa. If Milarepa was to say that it's not a wise thing to do, it may be very strong. So all right Milarepa doesn't say anything about it, he just lets him indulge that. So it does seem as though he seized that opportunity rather readily in that once asked for permission to be off he doesn't say according to this account 'I'd really like to go, what a pity it means I have to leave Milarepa. He doesn't seem to have that sort of conflict at all.

: He doesn't ask Milarepa whether he thinks it would be a good idea. He's asking if he can go.

S: He had enough feeling for Milarepa to ask if he could go, but not to wonder whether he should go at all. I'm not so sure about this sort of restless energy, whether it necessarily is to be indulged with travel and all that sort of thing, which is a pretty new development anyway. Sometimes, talking to some of our friends as though they've got an itch to sort of travel all over the world, all round the world, and they have to do that first apparently before they can really get on with any spiritual practice, but it's only been possible in the last couple of decades. I almost get the impression that people begin to feel well they couldn't say go out to Sheffield and Leeds to set up a Centre - it's got to be in some very distant part of the world. They can only do it there.

: (unclear)

S: But again that's quite subjective isn't it because people living in India that we might think very exciting, they think Sheffield (Laughter drowning out speech). [106]  
But also it reflects this purely subjective attitude. 'Well what effect is it going to have on me? Am I going to like that place', not 'are there people there who could get interested in the dharma and get involved with the Friends'. That apparently is not asked at all. The question is often 'would I like it, would it be a nice place for me to stay in, are there enough trees there, is it attractive, is it a pretty place?' Those are the sort of questions that are asked. Purely subjective questions so I think there's still quite a hangover as it were from the psychological approach to the dharma or spiritual life which was prevalent some years ago. It's quite one-sided. The question always seems to be what will I get out of this, how will it suit me, although it's put across politely in terms of how this will affect my spiritual development, but actually it boils down to, 'is it the sort of place that I would like, would it suit me?'

Virabhadra: Don't you think that might be reasonable to a certain extent. I remember when we talked before I ever went to India about the possibility of me going to work there and it struck me as being quite a good idea. I was a bit worried about it for those sort of reasons, thinking how would I get on and would I really like it sort of thing, but having been there and really felt that I would really like to be there...

S: I'm sure if people went and gave Leeds or Sheffield a chance they might find that they quite liked it, to the extent that that was relevant.

Virabhadra: You do feel more enthusiastic about going and working somewhere if you feel confident that you will like it and you will get on.

S: Ah, but it depends what one means or with reference to what one feels satisfied. Very often

one gets the impression that people are looking for a sort of nice environment, and that that is almost the first consideration, and not the actual work and the people with whom or for whom they will be working. It's almost like a newly married couple wanting to have a nice place to live. It's almost like that.

In other words what I'm really complaining about is a certain lack of Bodhisattva spirit. This is what it boils down to.

Sona: I've been quite amazed when I've asked several people about how they feel about going to Sweden and they immediately say 'Oh it's much too cold there, I'd much rather go and set up a Centre in Greece or Italy.'

S: But if one is going say to start a Centre or something of that sort, the primary consideration should be the people. Are the people going to be receptive. What's the point of going to say Greece and you find people are not receptive and neglecting [107] Sheffield where perhaps they will be very receptive! You get a little suspicious when you find people want to go off to Greece but don't think they could take the trouble to learn Greek. People wanting to go off maybe to Peru but think they'd get by with English anyway and so on. So one just sort of wonders how serious they are or whether starting up a Centre is just a pretext for an extended holiday.

Perhaps the nicer places, so to speak, should be left for people's old age, and the young, vigorous, enthusiastic, healthy people should be sent to all the difficult places, nasty places where it's not easy, things are not attractive, which is dirty and derelict. But I think one has to watch this. Otherwise very subtly an element of real self interest can creep in and even become quite dominant, but one is thinking in terms of a holiday for oneself rather than in terms of preaching the dharma or extending the sphere of influence of the Friends.

But the chances are if you go with the intention of really committing yourself to that situation and doing what you can for people, well you'll certainly enjoy living there wherever you are. But if you just go in a self indulgent sort of way the chances are you'll get fed up quite quickly even if you go and find yourself a beautiful South Sea island with everything laid on. It does come back to the same sort of point that arose in connection with the puja. The need to be more of objective reference, that is to say we need to be more object oriented. We're somewhat too subject oriented, thinking in terms of, admittedly in the interests of our own spiritual development, but thinking a bit too subjectively in terms of how will it effect me, what will be good for me, which very speedily becomes well what would be nice for me, what will be pleasant for me, what would I enjoy?

You get people talking about going and starting up a Centre somewhere so the question's asked are the houses nice and are the theatres good and does it look attractive, is it a pleasant sort of place. Those seem to be the first considerations.

Campbell: You'd have to be quite well developed to be able to ignore these sort of things.

S: Well you have to be quite well developed to have a Centre anyway! After all in a modern western country it's very unlikely that you'll get absolutely hellish conditions which you could get in some parts of the east or in some parts of Africa. Things are going to be pretty easy anywhere you go in England, even in Sheffield. Wherever you go you're going to have

running water, you're going to have electricity, you're going to have public transport, you're going to have a decent roof over your head. What more do you need? It's going to be reasonably quiet [108] compared with places like India. You're going to have enough to eat. It's never going to be absolutely scorching hot, nor are there going to be blizzards or floods.

So anywhere in England is dead easy. Anyway carry on to the next verse.

"You should always keep the non-defiled mind clean;  
You should always remember the silver bright mirror of  
the Tantric Precept, and observe it without vexation.  
Bear this in mind, my son, as you travel in India."

S: Doesn't this seem paradoxical? You should always keep the non-defiled mind clean? If it's non-defiled well it's non-defiled. Perhaps the question should be is anything arising? Is it really a paradox do you think? You could take it quite literally, it is undefiled as yet so you must keep it that way, but do you start off in fact with a non-defiled mind in the ordinary sense? Well you don't, do you?

: You're never innocent.

S: It's as though the surface mind should be kept clean or kept as clean as the mind essentially is in its depths. That it should be pure all the way through. It is the general Mahayana Vajrayana view that the mind in its depths is pure. It's only sullied on the surface, there's only dust on the surface of the mind. That may or may not be a helpful analogy, but the surface must be kept clean. So the surface is also undefiled just as the depths are undefiled.

: Would that be a reference as well to the gravitational pull. Keep up sort of effort all the time...

S: Well yes and no because also the point in that case would be that there is a level of the mind where the gravitational pull is not felt and that one should so exert oneself that eventually no gravitational pull at all is felt and that the mind will be quite pure, quite clean. That's the only time when the mind will be quite clean - when no gravitational pull is felt any more.

Campbell: So is this telling him to keep his mind clean and to keep his awareness that he's...

S: Yes in a general way, but there's not only the question of mind, there's also the question of energy, so there's not only got to be that awareness, but the practice and functioning in accordance with that awareness. So it isn't enough just to remind yourself that the mind is pure in its depths. One has got to make an actual effort to keep it clean [109] on the surface at the same time. So long as one continues to be under the influence of the gravitational pull. If one is, dust is settling and gives it half a chance moment by moment, and moment by moment you have to wipe it away. I think probably one needs to remember that if one isn't making progress at any given moment, the chances are that one is slipping back. You don't actually stay just where you are. You either go forward or you move back. Maybe by a very small amount but you don't stay absolutely static.

Sona: I once likened the spiritual path to going up an escalator that's going down. As soon as

you stop you're back.

S: Yes with the downward movement of the escalator being the gravitational pull. But when you reach the point of No Return, that's when...

Sona: You go on one that's going up.

S: You go on one that is going up. Going up quite slowly, so that if you walk a bit more quickly you get to the top more quickly.

: That's what I wondered - whether Rechungpa had actually entered the stream and, going back to one of the earlier paragraphs it says 'Awakened thus from karma an immutable faith...'

S: If the faith is literally immutable well it must be a transcendental faith and he must have entered the stream, but Milarepa's presumably not satisfied, to explain it in purely Hinayana terms anyway, not satisfied that Rechungpa has to wait another seven lives for enlightenment but he wants him to gain enlightenment in this life itself. So he continues to work quite hard on him and doesn't let him off lightly.

So 'You should always remember the silver-bright mirror of the Tantric Precept'. Why is the precept called a mirror?

Subhuti: It reflects your own actions.

S: Yes, it gives you a sort of model and therefore it goes on 'and observe it without vexation'. You can just see quite objectively in the mirror of the precept or in the light of the precept or by the standard of the precept, just where you are. Do you think this can be misunderstood or misinterpreted? Because it's not just conformity to an external standard is it? Sometimes it's like looking into a mirror to see whether there's a spot on your face. If there is a spot well then by looking at yourself in the mirror you see the spot there and you can do something about it, so you, as it were, look at yourself in the mirror of the precepts, you measure yourself against the precepts. [110] But it isn't a question of external, almost mechanical conformity. It isn't that if you draw up a long enough list of do's and don'ts and stick to that then spiritual progress will be assured. It's a sort of rough and ready guide and no more than that.

Subhuti: So the analogy of the mirror is good because you actually look in the mirror and then you take the action that's appropriate. Is it referring to anything specific when it talks of the Tantric Precept or is that...

S: Well it's Tantric Precept in the singular so I don't think there is anything specific. There are various Tantric precepts in the plural. I'm not sure in what sense precept is meant here. It could be in the sense of vow. That would be more appropriate, which is the samaya, the undertaking, the oath if you like. This is something that you undertake to do or to observe in consequence of a certain Tantric initiation. It is something that is not as it were imposed upon you but you see quite clearly and definitely that a certain mode of behaviour is inseparable from, or necessitated by, the initiation that you've received to as it were support it or effectuate it.

So you take that vow at the same time that you receive the initiation. One follows naturally

from the other. You see that the one can't exist without the other. That the practice that you've been initiated into requires the observance of certain things. So you take the pledge as it's sometimes called, to observe those things because you want to practise whatever it is you've been initiated into.

So 'Bear this in mind, my son, as you travel in India.' Right read the next verse.

"If you are followed and captured by bandits,  
You should remind yourself how worthless  
are the Eight Worldly Claims.  
Conceal your powers and merits.  
With a humble and merry mind travel in India."

S: So in those days travel was quite dangerous - well it's becoming quite dangerous even now. 'If you are followed and captured by bandits, you should remind yourself how worthless are the Eight Worldly Claims'. These are the pairs of opposites like suffering and pleasure, gain and loss, fame and blame and what is the other pair?

Kovida: There is a note.

[111]

S: It doesn't say what they are though. It says Story 1 Note 13. Ah gain and loss, defamation and eulogy, praise and ridicule, sorrow and joy. The second and third pairs are somewhat similar. The different pairs of things that affect the mind in different ways. People get very elated if they experience one and very depressed if they experience the other.

So Milarepa says 'If you are followed and captured by bandits, you should remind yourself how worthless are the Eight Worldly Claims'. You should remind yourself, you just shouldn't allow yourself to be effected by these changing conditions, by these pairs of opposites. You shouldn't be perturbed whether you gain something or lose it, whether you suffer or whether you don't suffer. So if you fall into the hands of bandits just reflect in this way.

'Conceal your powers and merits. With a humble and merry mind travel in India.' Don't show off your learning, don't show off any psychic powers you may have, don't try to impress people with how good you are or how highly developed you are spiritually. Just travel in India with a humble and merry mind. I'm not quite sure how literal this translation is. It might be better to translate 'with a lowly and contented mind' or something like that. Not humble in the Uriah Heep sense of course and not merry in the Father Christmassy sense.

After all if Rechungpa was captured by bandits and became upset well it would show that he wasn't really very firmly established in his practice.

All right that last verse.

"My son, with my sincere prayer and blessing,  
May you recover from your illness and enjoy long life."

S: We don't know what Milarepa really thought. Milarepa might have thought that well this foolish young man is going off to this guru. He could just as easily have stayed here and I

would have shown him how to cure his illness, but never mind, let him go. So he gives his sincere prayer and blessing and wishes that he may recover from his illness and enjoy long life. On the other hand it may be that there was some special technique that this other guru had that Milarepa didn't have. We don't know that, but I'm rather mistrustful of special techniques. I rather tend to think that if one kind of meditation could have cured his illness well any kind of meditation could have done. Because the effect is the same in the long run.

Kovida It does beg the question initially as to whether his mother and his uncle could actually have influence on him, that they were actually on the path as well to such an extent that they had given him leprosy.

[112]

S: But then of course they might say perhaps he'd committed some karma in the past which exposed him to that sort of influence. The traditional answer would be along those sort of lines. But the facts are that he had leprosy and that he was cured. Whether he had leprosy because of his mother and his uncle's curse, whether he was cured because of the meditation we don't know. We only know that once he didn't have leprosy and then he had it and then he had leprosy and then he didn't have it. In the meantime his mother and uncle have cursed him and he had practised this special kind of meditation. What the causal relationships were we don't really know.

Then conclusion of this section.

"Milarepa then resumed his meditation in the cave. Rechungpa closed the cave's mouth with clay, and set out for India with the yogis. [Upon arriving] there he met Lama Wala Tsandra, who [consented to give] him the complete teachings of the Wrathful Thunderbolt Holder with Eagle Wings. By practising this for some time Rechungpa was cured."

S: So Milarepa then resumed his meditation in the cave. Well nothing else to do. Rechungpa's gone away. Might as well get on with some meditation. So 'Rechungpa closed the cave's mouth with clay', just so that Milarepa wouldn't be disturbed, 'and set out for India with the yogis. Upon arriving there he met Lama Wala Tsandra, who consented to give him the complete teachings of the Wrathful Thunderbolt Holder with Eagle Wings.' It seems to have been a really special kind of meditation! (Laughter)... had such wonderful (unclear due to laughter). 'By practising this for some time Rechungpa was cured.' The leprosy mysteriously disappeared.

Any query about that or about anything we've done this morning. Any main point that emerges? The main point that emerges I think is in connection with this travel. This is the main theme apart from the leprosy, that Rechung goes off, he goes to India and Milarepa is reminding him how important it is to maintain the inner contact, inner connection. Not to forget his spiritual practice. Not to be lost in his external experiences.

Kovida: Quite often in Milarepa's life something important happens say and it's done through contact with India, like the texts that he...

[End of Tape] Tape 6]

S: Indian teachings were still coming from India. Indian teachers were still coming from



India: it's as though new things were continually being [113] produced in India, new teachings were coming up, so there was this tendency all the time on the part of Tibetan Buddhists to go back to India, to go back to the source, maybe to get teachings which weren't as yet available in Tibet. This was going on all the time. But you can take 'India' in a sort of symbolic sense because Milarepa says in one verse: "By taking the food of perseverance in samadhi, by wearing the clothes of Ah Tung, by riding the horse of the magic Prana-mind, thus my son, should you travel in India".

So just as food is equated with Samadhi, clothes with Ah Tung and riding a horse with control of the magic Prana-mind, so travelling in India could be equated with, as it were, moving in some higher sphere, some higher dimension though Milarepa doesn't explicitly say so. But there is that suggestion (Pause).

One could say that travelling in those days had a quite different significance. Well first of all Rechung had a definite objective - at least he was going to get a particular teaching, to cure his leprosy. He wasn't just wandering aimlessly. And, of course, he was having to go, well apparently on horseback, maybe part of the way on foot. He wouldn't be going very quickly, he would be experiencing things as he went along in a way that people nowadays very often don't do. And travel nowadays is much more superficial, much more, one might say even more alienated.

All right then. Someone like to read this prose passage?

"When he returned to Tibet and reached Happy Valley, he inquired of the whereabouts of the Jetsun from a native of that valley, who said, 'Some time ago, I heard that there was a yogi called Mila, but I have heard nothing about him recently.' Hearing this, Rechungpa became very disturbed. He thought, 'Is my Guru dead?' And in great distress he proceeded to Silk Cave. He saw that the clay wall with which he had blocked the entrance was still there. Thinking, 'I wonder if the Jetsun is dead inside', he tore down the wall and entered. Seeing Milarepa seated upright in meditation, he felt extremely happy and relieved. He asked the Jetsun about his health and welfare. In answer Milarepa rose from his meditation and sang."

S: We are not told how long Rechungpa was away. It might have been, well it must at least have been months. It could have been a year or two. But anyway, he returns to Tibet and he reaches Happy Valley and he inquires "of the whereabouts of the Jetsun from a native of that valley who said, 'Some time ago I heard that there was a yogi called Mila, but I have heard nothing about him recently.'"

[114]

At the beginning of the chapter one finds Milarepa making quite an impression on the local people and they all become his sincere disciples but it seems by this time they've almost forgotten about him. There's just a sort of vague recollection that there was 'some time ago a yogi called Mila but I've heard nothing about him recently'. This suggests that people very quickly and very easily lose interest. This is what you actually find; you find it certainly in India, where a yogi or holy man of some kind creates a great sensation on his first arrival, people are very impressed, but after a while people seem to forget. They don't know what he is doing, they don't know where he is, they don't know whether he's there or whether he's gone away. They're quite vague about it. So something of this sort seems to have happened in this case. So, 'Hearing this, Rechungpa became very disturbed. He thought, 'Is my Guru

dead?' And in great distress he proceeded to Silk Cave. He saw that the clay wall with which he had blocked the entrance was still there', which was surprising: it suggested Milarepa hadn't moved out the whole time, "Thinking, 'I wonder if the Jetsun is dead inside'", because it could easily have happened that, well, he just died -lack of food or whatever. "...he tore down the wall and entered, Seeing Milarepa seated upright in meditation, he felt extremely happy and relieved". Apparently Milarepa had simply been meditating the whole time. "So he asked the Jetsun about his health and welfare. In answer Milarepa arose from meditation and sang."

I suppose the question does arise as to what extent that sort of thing is possible but probably it's very difficult to decide how long a yogi can go without food and exercise just sitting there meditating in his cave. (Pause)

In 'The Thousand Petalled Lotus' I mentioned the yogini, the female yogi, who lived in the little room in the floor of the cave in South India. Well she came up once a day, but only for not more than an hour. The rest of the time she was down there. It isn't quite the same thing but it does go to show that people are very often capable of more than one would have expected. So, if a yogi stays in his cave, as Milarepa is supposed to have done, without food, this suggests that he's in a sort of cataleptic state of some kind. What would you call that? Suspended animation?

\_\_\_\_: Yes, that's right.

S: There have been examples in quite recent times of hatha yogis being buried for, I think, anything up to a month.

\_\_\_\_: Really.

[115]

S: Oh yes, in modern India, yes. There are some yoga institutes that have carried out tests of this sort. So if for a month, well presumably one could do it for three months or even for a year. But I think probably one has to be careful not necessarily to associate this with a high state of meditation. Because after all, animals hibernate, don't they? And it's as though it is possible for the human being also to set up some sort of process of that kind which results in a virtual suspension of the metabolic process. So that the body is using a minimum of energy and using up existing fats, or whatever, just as hibernating animals do. So it could be in the case of some hatha yogis that they've mastered this technique. It is said that those who attain a very high level of meditation and remain there, in their case the body automatically sort of lapses into this state. So it would seem that something like that happened in the case of Milarepa .

Virabhadra: In your autobiography you mentioned that character who just lived on cigarettes, is it?

S: Yes right, Kanya Kumari. Perhaps he had mastered a technique of that sort but he certainly wasn't a spiritual person in any sense - as I said just like an animal. Well, that was the only explanation that I could think of, if what they said about him was true as I've no reason to disbelieve. Anyway, be that as it may, Milarepa may have been meditating a long time in that cave. Rechungpa came and unsealed it and found Milarepa still alive, so naturally he is very

pleased, asked him how he was, and in reply Milarepa sang this song. So would someone like to read that song right through? Or at least to the last little section?

"I bow down at the feet of Marpa, the Gracious One.  
Because I have left my kinsmen, I am happy;  
Because I have abandoned attachment to my country, I am happy;  
Since I disregard this place, I am happy;  
As I do not wear the lofty garb of priesthood, I am happy;  
Because I cling not to house and family, I am happy;  
I need not this or that, so I am happy;  
Because I possess the great wealth of Dharma, I am happy;  
Because I worry not about property, I am happy;  
Because I have no fear of losing anything, I am happy;  
Since I never dread exhaustion, I am happy;  
Having fully realized Mind-Essence, I am happy;  
As I need not force myself to please my patrons, I am happy;  
Having no fatigue or weariness, I am happy;  
As I need prepare for nothing, I am happy;  
Since all I do complies with Dharma, I am happy;  
Never desiring to move, I am happy; [116]  
As the thought of death brings me no fear, I am happy;  
Bandits, thieves and robbers ne'er molest me,  
So at all times I am happy!  
Having won the best conditions for Dharma practice, I am happy;  
Having ceased from evil deeds and left off sinning, I am happy  
Treading the Paths of Merit, I am happy;  
Divorced from hate and injury, I am happy;  
Having lost all pride and jealousy, I am happy;  
Understanding the wrongness of the Eight Worldly Winds, I am happy;  
Absorbed in quiet, and evenmindedness, I am happy;  
Using the mind to watch the mind, I am happy;  
Without hope or fear, I am ever happy;  
In the sphere of non-clinging illumination, I am happy;  
The Non-distinguishing wisdom of Dharmadhatu itself is happy  
Poised in the natural realm of imminence I am happy  
In letting the Six Groups of Consciousness go by to return to their original nature, I am  
happy;  
The five Radiant Gates of Sense all make me happy;  
To stop a mind that comes and goes is happy;  
Oh, I have so much of happiness and joy!  
This is a song of gaiety I sing,  
This is a song of gratitude to my Guru and the three Precious Ones -  
I want no other happiness."

S: Right, so there's quite a lot there. So Rechung has asked Milarepa about his health and welfare, so he's replying to that question. In essence he's saying he's happy (Laughter). I would have thought, having been shut up in that little cave, even if it was only for a few months, he'd be pretty glad to get out, but apparently it isn't so (Laughter). So he's telling

Rechung he's happy and he's also explaining why he's happy. For various reasons, not all of them being things that would make most people happy. But anyway let's go through them.

He says, "Because I have left my kinsmen I am happy". I wonder why he mentions that first? (Pause). I suppose that's the first thing from the point of view of the ordinary person, yes? You're attached to your family. Not just your wife and children but the whole family, the whole family group, the tribe almost. Milarepa says, "Because I have left my kinsmen, I am happy." But why should he not be happy staying with his kinsmen? What would the reason for that be?

Subhuti The sort of thing that's illustrated by Rechungpa's state.

S: Yes. Perhaps you could say that he's indirectly referring to that, perhaps it's a sort of hint to Rechungpa. Well look at all the trouble [117] that you had staying with your family, your own mother and your uncle. Look what they did to you. Look how you suffered. Look how you had to go to India and be separated from me for such a long time. It was all because of your kinsmen. But "I have left my kinsmen", I have nothing to do with them, nothing to do with my mother and sister and all the rest of them. Or my aunt and uncle - because his aunt and uncle gave him a lot of trouble. So "I am happy". I think this is one of the things that one notices very often about family life, the amount of internal conflict there is. The number of tensions and the tussles that are going on, usually or very often under the surface, depending on the cultural level.

Subhuti: Often you can be quite surprised if you visit people in a family situation. You think they've just had some terrible row - that you've just come in on the aftermath (Laughter) but you realize it's there all the time. It's just the atmosphere they always live in.

S: So "Because I have left my kinsmen I am happy." But even though the experience of quite a lot of people as regards family life, is not a very happy one, they don't find it easy to leave. That's also paradoxical perhaps.

Sona: I was quite amazed, in Germany recently, two people said to me they were having a lot of trouble with their fathers. And I was quite amazed. I said 'Why don't you just stop going to see them?' (Laughter) which seemed to me like the obvious thing to do. But they were sort of quite bound to going back to their families. Very strongly attached to them.

S: Like you find people going home for Christmas even though they're not in the least looking forward to it and don't want to go, would rather not go, but don't dare not to go. It would create such a lot of trouble if they did. And they can't imagine themselves as sort of keeping out of that or staying clear of that: they can't imagine that. That they should just not go and get away with it. It's as if to say, 'Well if I don't go, I shall really catch it', but they you've got to be around to catch it. If you are not around well then how can you catch it. What can they do to you? Don't let them know where you are, don't send your address. Simple, but they don't see it like that. It's as though mother and father have got eyes and ears all over the place. They will know what you are up to. They will get to you. They will write to you. They will 'phone you, not that they really love you perhaps, but that they just don't want you to get away. That's the impression one sometimes gets.

Sona: Why is that so? I don't quite understand why there is such a strong attachment in such a

negative way.

[118]

S: Well I don't think the attachment is necessarily positive. When people have got these quite blind, sort of selfish desires it's natural that they should come into conflict. (Pause) It's like if two people are very attached to each other, one wants to do something, because that person is attached to the other he or she wants that they do it together. But the second person wants to do something else. But because he or she is attached to the other person, wants that they should do that with him or her. So in that way there is conflict. One says 'Let's both go for a walk', the other says, 'Well no, let's both go to the cinema'. But what they can't do is that one goes to the cinema and the other goes for a walk - do whichever you please. No, that can't be considered. You see both of them going either to the cinema or for a walk. This is the sort of thing that happens. So one has to give in, or else there's a long argument, even a conflict. So they very often end up not doing either. Or they do one and the person who doesn't get his or her own way ends up feeling resentful. Probably he's the one or she's the one that is more dependent and so gives in but feels bad about it, feels resentment nonetheless, and that's stored up for the future. (Pause) I mean no doubt there are some reasonably happy families but even in the best of them there seem to be tensions, suppressed conflicts. I think that's... one can't be surprised. The situation is inherently such.

So "Because I have left my kinsmen I am happy; Because I have abandoned attachment to my country I am happy." He is going, as it were, a little further, or quite a bit further. I mean it's not enough to leave your kinsmen. One has to abandon attachment to the country itself, to the whole familiar way of life that you've been brought up in. This is one of the reasons why not just travelling in foreign countries, but living there for a while, is very valuable spiritually. It's not so valuable, obviously, if you just go, technically speaking, to a foreign country, but you're carrying your familiar environment with you all the time; your own language, your own customs, your own food. Not to speak of just people from your own country. You really need to go to a country which is completely strange, completely unfamiliar, where they don't speak your language, where you don't see people from your own country and where everything is quite different, and stay there for some time. That's the real test. (Pause)

"Since I disregard this place I am happy". He's not even attached to that particular valley, not even attached to that particular cave. It's not that he doesn't appreciate them - he appreciates them very much, he enjoys the beauty of the place, but he doesn't cling, he isn't attached. I think probably people nowadays have to be a bit careful of this. I was talking to somebody about this recently. He said he wasn't very attached to people and I said I thought he had to be careful about that, because detachment has got meaning only when there is feeling. I mean it's easy [119] enough not to be attached to people if you've got no feeling for them. So I think nowadays people have got a lot of mobility - it's very easy for them to move from place to place. It's very easy to say 'Oh, I'm not attached to my house, I can move any time'. That may be true but it's as though you haven't developed any feeling for your own country or your own locality, or your own house - that's why it's easy to move on. It's because you're alienated really, not because you're non-attached. So I think we have to look at this quite carefully, because the Tibetan after all, the old fashioned Tibetan at least, had stayed in one place all his life. He had very deep roots there, he hadn't seen any other place. He had a strong feeling for his own family, for his animals, for the whole local scene. He'd never seen anything else perhaps. So in his case one can speak meaningfully in terms of becoming detached. But if for instance, since the age of two you've been dragged around from place to place by your parents

and been sent off to school somewhere. You've holidayed in different parts of the continent at least, maybe different parts of the world, you've never settled anywhere for very long, never put down any roots, never had any strong feeling for place, well all this talk of detachment is pretty meaningless in your case. Do you see the difference? I'm told the average American family shifts, moves home, every five years. Well that's hardly time to put down any real roots, or to have any feeling for the place where you live.

Virabhadra: Do you think in that situation it would be good for people to put down roots and develop feelings for places?

S: Well it might be, it might be. But the point I'm making is that you can't really speak in terms of detachment from a place or from people unless there is feeling there in the first place. Otherwise you are merely indifferent, you are merely alienated, which is quite a different kind of thing. And it's so easy for us to give expression to that by moving rapidly from place to place. We know that when we travel by air. We go so quickly from place to place, we have no time to experience anything. You just experience one airport and one hotel after another and all furnished in pretty much the same sort of style. And you can ring up home any time you like anywhere in the world, practically. Have you really gone away? Well in a way you haven't gone away because you were never there (Laughter) in the first place! You've really nowhere to go away from.

I think one can speak in terms of attachment if maybe you've lived or your family has lived in the same place for a long time, and you really have got roots there, you really do have a feeling for the place, a feeling for the people. Then I think it's meaningful to speak in terms of detachment and of going forth, and of widening one's horizons. [120] It's not a question of a violent uprooting but more of widening one's horizons.

Sona: I think it also takes longer than just one lifetime, almost, to have roots in one place. Because I lived in the same place for about eighteen years - I couldn't say when I left there I felt any roots at all. I think if your family has lived in a place and you've got relations...(Pause)

S: I think I've mentioned before that my friend, Doctor Mehta, in Bombay, who was God, he sometimes did say some quite sensible things and one of the things he said when he was not God (Laughter) and when he was just Doctor Mehta, was, he said, 'Nowadays people, especially holy men and swamis, they talk so much about detachment but,' he said, 'according to me that's all wrong'. He said, 'One shouldn't try to detach, one should try to attach. One should try to attach to the right things, not just think in terms of detaching from the wrong things.' So I thought that psychologically that was quite sound. Don't think so much in terms of detachment from your native place and detachment from your own home. Well, think of attaching yourself to the whole world, attaching yourself to the whole human race, that is more positive (Pause) I mean, it's easy to be detached if you haven't got any feelings. So one must be careful not to make a virtue out of one's actual weaknesses: 'Well I'm very detached', but the truth is you just don't care about anybody (Pause). In fact for some people one feels, well, it would be quite a step forward if they were to become attached to a place or attached to a person (Pause) Then he says, "As I do not wear the lofty garb of priesthood, I am happy". What is he referring to here by "the lofty garb of priesthood"?

\_\_\_\_\_: To the ecclesiastical.

S: In a way. He's referring basically to the yellow robe. He's not been ordained as a bhikkhu. He probably wasn't even a samanera. It would seem that by Milarepa's time, in Tibet, being a bhikkhu, being a monk, had become almost a sort of profession, as it is in quite a few parts of the Buddhist world today. And that status and position and prestige and honour went along with it. So Milarepa was free from that. It seems he didn't want to be 'ordained', inverted commas, because it would have put him, in effect, in a false sort of position. It had apparently at that time, in many respects, a social or socio-ecclesiastical, rather than a spiritual significance and he therefore wanted nothing to do with it. Because the question of rivalry and the question of position in relation to others would arise and he didn't want anything to do with that. Therefore he's happy. He's not concerned about his socio-ecclesiastical position, his socio-religious position. One has seen something of this with some of the visitors we've had at Sukhavati. (Pause) I've been writing about a few instances in my memoirs just recently, which you'll be amused to read about in due course. The one particular [121] instance I haven't come to yet but I shall be mentioning it - I might have mentioned it before - was soon after my ordination as a bhikkhu, I went down to Calcutta and happened to encounter the chief monk at the Maha Bodhi Society's headquarters. I happened to be wearing an old robe (Laughter) and he was most upset and said, 'Haven't you got anything better than that to wear?' So I said, 'No, this is the only robe I've got.' So he said, 'Well we can't have you wearing that. What on earth will people think of us!' (Laughter). So it wasn't in accordance with my ideas of what a bhikkhu was supposed to be like, but he was quite upset, and on the spot he gave me a brand new bright yellow robe to wear. (Laughter) He didn't want people in Calcutta, especially Bengali Hindus, to think that bhikkhus were a shabby poor lot. I afterwards came to believe that, among bhikkhus, to be a poor bhikkhu was a real disgrace! (Laughter). Yes, this really surprised me, that people would say, 'He's a poor bhikkhu, he's not much, he hasn't got any money, or any property. He's a poor bhikkhu.' Right, but what does bhikkhu mean anyway?(Laughter) I thought bhikkhu meant beggar, but apparently not at all. (Laughter) So this is the sort of thing, clearly, that Milarepa wasn't happy about, didn't want anything to do with (Pause).

So "Because I cling not to house and family, I am happy". Well, this more or less expounds, expands what was said earlier on. He's not attached to his actual house, the actual property or to the family. "I am happy". "I need not this or that, so I am happy". What do you think he means by saying, 'I need not this or that'?

Subhuti: Contented. No sort of neurotic needs.

S: Yes, 'this or that' suggests a sort of, almost a deliberate seeking for something to distract oneself. It doesn't matter what it is - it can be this or it can be that but there must be something that you want, something that you need, something that you're attached to. Any little thing will do. You need to have a need. Are you familiar with this state of mind? You need to have a need. But why do you think one has that? Why does one need to have a need? (Pause) What is your experience when you have a need, when you feel a need of something very strongly, that you really want it? What's your experience then?

\_\_\_\_\_: Inner emptiness. You've got an inner emptiness that you're trying to fill up.

S: Yes, yes. When you have a strong need at least you experience yourself to some extent. So it's as though - if you have no need if you're not satisfied in any... you're sort of empty and dull and bored. So you go looking around for something you can need, so that you can [122]

experience yourself, virtually. You need to have a need. You're not able to experience yourself in a positive, happy, sort of way.

Virabhadra: Would that tie up with relating to yourself in terms of your problems, you sort of see yourself in terms of your problems, like see yourself with particular problems that need to be sorted out.

S: Yes, I suppose that one could regard a problem or the solution of a problem as a sort of need, but I think it's usually more trivial than that. You just turn on the radio or you just look around for something to latch on to, something you could need or you flip through the ads, the colour supplements, just to see if there's something that you could need. So, 'I need not this or that, so I am happy. Because I possess the great wealth of Dharma, I am happy.' This is quite simple and straightforward but I think often people don't realize its significance, don't realize that they've got the wealth of the Dharma. They feel as though they are poor, they feel as though they are poverty stricken. (Laughter) They don't realize, they don't appreciate, what they've really got. They don't realize that the Dharma is in fact a wealth (Long Pause).

"Because I worry not about property, I am happy." Well, I don't know how many of you have owned property but if you have it you certainly have to worry about it. Certainly in India, you've got to look after it, you've got to keep it in repair, you've got to, well guard it, perhaps, against encroachment.

Sona: Whenever you just get one thing finished something else goes wrong.

S: Yes, yes either it's falling down or it needs repair.

Sona: Or it needs painting.

S: Or it needs redecoration.

Sona: You need to go round and start again.

S: So, "Because I worry not about property, I am happy." Because it suggests you can have property and not worry about it - presumably there are some people who can do these things without really worrying, but I would think they are relatively rare.

Sona: But, apart from that, just having property takes up so much of your time organizing repairs and...

[123]

S: I was reading something quite dreadful about the Duke of Windsor. In fact there's been, I think, a biography of the Duchess published recently, or something like that. Anyway there was something about it in the paper and he, according to this account, led a quite active life even when he was in Paris. And he had his work which he did every day, for quite a few hours, but apparently the work consisted entirely in dealing with his possessions and properties and investments - that was his work. So that sounded really dreadful. That was the only thing he had to do. This was referred to as his work.

Sona: On the other hand, actually thinking of someone like Aryavamsa, who actually does



enjoy looking after Stenfors. He doesn't do it as a hobby, because it's a nice building and that. He knows why it can be used and so on.

Subhuti: I remember Jayaratna after he'd come from living down in Cornwall at (Unclear). I think he'd had a caravan and houses and things like that, and coming to Sukhavati to do the treasury, he had much, much more work looking after that property and so on, the financial side of the property. He was saying, it just seemed completely different, because it was objective, it was for some sort of overall purpose rather than...

S: It wasn't his own.

Subhuti: It didn't feel like a burden.

S: Also, you know that you can hand over to the next man.

\_\_\_\_: Maybe he'll give up! (Laughter)

S: Well, he will sooner or later.

Andy: With some aristocrats, their whole work is just (unclear). That seems to be their whole work, just sort of organizing (unclear).

S: Well life is elaborated so that it fills up the whole of your time. If you lead the sort of life that society people used to lead in the old days, before the war anyway, you'd change your dress three, if not four, times a day, maybe more, according to what you were doing. If you went riding you went in a special dress, if you played tennis you went in a special dress, if you went out to dinner, if you went to pay a morning call, again a special dress. So that took time but you had the time to do it. Perhaps you needed to do all those things to fill in time (Pause).

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"Because I have no fear of losing anything, I am happy". He doesn't possess anything, therefore he's got no fear of losing anything. If you possess something, well there's always the fear of losing it or usually there is. Though again I think probably we must strike a note of warning here, that you can't be afraid of losing something unless you actually feel that you possess it. But I think in modern times it's sometimes happened that people have even lost the sense of possession. They don't worry about losing something because they take it for granted that it will be immediately replaced. Like spoiled children with their toys, they just smash them. They don't bother about looking after them. So do you think that is a positive state or a negative one or is it neutral?

Campbell: It's quite negative.

S: Why do you think that is?

Campbell: Well it's similar to what you were saying about giving up your kinsmen: you can't really give things up unless you care for them.

S: Yes, well it's like the spoiled boy. He is bought everything, he's bought a motor bike by his

parents. After a few days he smashes it up. He doesn't care, he knows it's going to be replaced within a few days.

Virabhadra: I supposed you could have that attitude to the Dharma.

S: Yes, you could have that attitude towards your wife. Don't bother to get on with her very well. If she's not very satisfactory you can replace her. That's the attitude now isn't it? And it's the other way round - wives can replace their husbands too. So, I mean, not that one is speaking in favour of marriage - absit omen - but very often you don't take trouble with people because you feel if things don't work out for one reason or another, one kind of relationship or another, well you can just replace them with somebody else. But it means again that there can be no real question of detachment or giving up, just because there is not real attachment or feeling of possession in the first place.

Campbell: You sort of keep everything on a shallow level.

S: Yes. It's well known, for instance, that public property is nobody's property. There's no... people treat it or use it carelessly. They don't feel that it's theirs. If you feel that something is yours in a reasonable sort of way at least, you treat it properly and you look after it. But to misuse things and break things and damage things because you have no sense or personal ownership or public ownership, this seems not to be a positive state. [125] It seems that a lot of young people, in this country anyway, are in that sort of state.

Subhuti: It shows up quite a bit in community life.

S: Ah yes.

Subhuti: They don't care for the property of the community.

S: Well you've noticed it with people on retreats doing the washing up and breaking so many cups - I'm sure that wasn't necessary, I'm sure it was avoidable. I mean you have the odd slip admittedly, you can't help that, but when it goes to that degree it suggests that people are, in a sense, almost deliberately not bothering - it suggests a degree of alienation. So this also raises the question of to what extent property is necessary for personal development.

Subhuti: You have to be able to have and to look after property before you can give it up.

S: Yes (Pause)

Subhuti: In a way it's an aspect of developing individuality.

S: It's being responsible for things.

Campbell: Like what you said before: you attach yourself to the right things. You could use that as an excuse just to go out and get really involved in ... But if you attach yourself to the right things that are going to benefit you, and then give them up...

S: Yes, right. Just give them up if it's now necessary to give them up. Or hand them over (Pause). But why do you think that nowadays people, especially young people don't care

about property, whether it's their own or whether it's public property?

\_\_\_\_: It's superfluity.

S: It's superfluity (Pause) But what does one gain do you think by really considering something as yours in a positive way if in fact that is possible? An inanimate thing. I mean is it really a virtue? One has to be quite sure about that. Is it really a virtue to look after things, and keep them, and make them last a long time, and be very careful with them, or is it according to circumstances? Well, I mean, to take the concrete example I mentioned, say, people on a retreat breaking cups unnecessarily. Is this positive or is it negative. If so, why?

Sona: It's negative because it means more time and energy has to be put into replacing them instead of into other things.

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S: Yes,

Kovida: It's just unmindfulness, right? To break things.

S: Yes, it's unmindful, yes. So it affects them in that way. But objectively it means that those things have got to be replaced, if a certain standard is to be kept up. That means other people's energy and money being used for that particular purpose. So you could say, in society in general, if certain people misuse, say, natural public resources, well other people have got to replace those, if a certain level is to be kept up. It could be, of course that the level is, so to speak, too high, in which case, well, too many things are being produced and people are having to put too much time and energy into those things. So the argument against misusing things is that it means that other people have got to put time and energy and money and resources into replacing them. Which they could, assuming that they could use that time, energy, money and so on, more positively. In a way, it's really quite shameful when you read of vandals, say, burning down schools. They are doing in one night two or three hundred thousand pounds worth of damage. That has all got to be paid for by the tax payer. So that money could certainly be used more positively, even if you just sent it to some foreign country that was in want. But vandals are just destroying resources in this sort of way, and they're not even punished, or hardly punished.

Sona: But vandalism isn't something that is done unmindfully of the effects; it's done to actually inconvenience people, to make people suffer, quite often. It does sort of seem to stem out of some sort of alienation from society. It's the only way people can experience themselves. Well, it's a very negative way, but at least they experience themselves.

S: Why can they not experience themselves positively? It would seem very strange.

Subhuti: There have been some studies of vandalism in different areas. It's been noted that in areas where there are trees and plantings and there's quite a pleasant environment, there's very little damage on council estates, and where they are very bleak and bare, there tends to be a lot of vandalism. It's quite interesting.

Sona: Could it possibly follow on just from what happens in the world, I mean, all the news that you hear is generally negative.

S: Yes, right.

Sona: And it's just sort of like an example to young people of how to behave.

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S: I think it's also to some extent a wrong ideology that's being propagated. In this country it's a sort of welfare state ideology in a negative sort of form. You've got a right to everything. For instance in Socialist countries, that is to say, in Communist countries, you're taught to respect public property. If you damage what belongs to the whole community, to the people generally, you are severely punished and you have to make it good. So it seems they don't have much in the way of vandalism. People are educated to value property that belongs to everybody (Pause).

Subhuti: Is that actually true?

S: Yes, as far as I can recollect. In, for instance, Russia, there is a whole category of offences against public property. It's not the property of the state, it's the people's property. In practice of course very often it's the property of the state but anyway in theory it's the property of the people. And if you damage the property of the people this is an offence that is taken very seriously. And you can be fined or sent to prison or made to make good the loss. If you say wantonly damage a lamp-post, that lamp-post belongs to everybody, so if you damage it, it isn't 'Well it doesn't belong to anybody and it doesn't matter' - No. You are educated into thinking that this belongs to the public, this belongs to everybody. And if you damage it you commit an offence against everybody, and that is a serious matter. I think - maybe I'm not over generalizing - in communist countries real property is common property. An offence against common property is a very serious offence. In this country, it seems public property is nobody's property and offence against public property is a very insignificant offence. Because private property is what is considered important. What is public doesn't belong to anybody. We don't think it belongs to everybody and everybody is hurt when it is damaged; we think it belongs to nobody and nobody is hurt when it is damaged. I think in the Communist countries it's very much the other way around. Private property is rather disgraceful. The real property, the valid property, so to speak, is public property and offence against that is really an offence - to damage a train or to damage a bus, that is a really serious offence. Here we think, 'Oh, what does it matter, it doesn't belong to anybody. The Government will pay. (Laughs) Who pays really? The Government doesn't pay. It's people that pay. So I think a lot of it is wrong education, or basically, wrong ideology, wrong philosophy, wrong outlook on life. (Pause) But what about the psychological value of property? Do you think people need to have things that are their own?

Kovida: Yes, I'd say it's quite important, because if you are responsible for something, property or possessions even, then, in a sense, they're objective, and it gives you ... and you can't be so subjective if you've got [128] that: an objective responsibility for something outside yourself. And if you're deprived of that, in a sense, you're in some ways deprived of a sort of expansion of yourself, in some ways, which is presumably why people get so... you know, become vandals and things like that because in a sense they've been denied that responsibility. They've been denied the ability to own something outside themselves.

S: Well they own it technically, but they don't own it psychologically.

Kovida: Well they've no responsibility for it. That's quite an important point - they don't feel responsible for it.

S: No. Well it's like a rich child with its toys. It doesn't look after them because the parents are wealthy enough to replace them, so it feels no responsibility towards the toys. Not that if it smashes them it won't get any until next Christmas time. No: they'll be replaced next day maybe. So in that way you don't even keep your toys long enough to become fond of them or long enough to become attached to them. Formerly things like dolls used to be handed down almost from generation to generation. You wouldn't get that now, would you?

Campbell: Same with clothes as well.

Andy: I suppose looking after property has an integrating effect because if you break it or it gets damaged, you have to repair it.

S: Mm. (Pause) So perhaps to have everything readily replaceable, therefore everything disposable, including even people, isn't good from a psychological point of view. I mean for instance formerly, people used to work for the same firm all their lives. Well, maybe that had a negative aspect in many cases. But if it was a small firm, and you were working for that firm - that meant, well, really for the same people, that whole time; well you had time to build up a relationship with them. But if you... you're just in and out, just stay a few weeks or a few months, there's no time to build up any relationship with the people for whom you work, even if the concern is small enough for you to be able to do so.

Kovida: Because you can't do that, then the quality of work deteriorates as well, because you don't feel any...

S: Any responsibility.

Kovida: ... any responsibility at all. No feeling of pride.

S: It would seem as though our freedom, in a sense, our mobility and all that, has got some, at least from a certain point of view, some [129] disadvantages attached to it (Pause) I certainly found myself, say, transferring from India to England after twenty years, though I was glad I did it and I did it for a certain reason, at the same time it was very disruptive personally because it meant that a whole network of relationships that I'd built up in India, to some extent extending virtually all over India, was just disrupted, and at the age of say forty, and I had to start all over again. And it's only sort of looking back that one can realize what a disruption in fact that was. And I think one should avoid that sort of thing. It's all right to be non-attached, but I think to disrupt existing positive relationships, which can only develop over a long period of time, is quite undesirable. Therefore, also, I tend to think, on reflection, that maybe for instance, chairmen need to spend quite a long time in a particular place, maybe in some cases all their lives. You see what I'm getting at, what causes me to think like this? I used to say formerly 'Well maybe one shouldn't spend more than two or three years in one place'. One can see the sense of that. There is a danger of getting into a rut, there is a danger of getting attached. But perhaps in the light of what we've been talking about, the danger nowadays is rather the opposite, that you don't get sufficiently into contact to start becoming attached. So perhaps one needs to be quite careful and not necessarily assume that people must keep moving. Perhaps we've had a bit too much of that; we've been too mobile. We need

to settle down and to put our roots down much more and expand from that centre. Not that we shouldn't expand or shouldn't go places or anything like that, but from a definite established centre - I mean our personal centre - our personal, even geographical centre.(Pause)

Subhuti: We realized the other day that there's nobody at Sukhavati who's been there ... I think there are two people who have been there for three years, but most people have only been there for eighteen months or less. There's quite a high turnover. That makes it difficult for there to be any network of relationships.

S: I mean for instance, just to give an example, you were getting along quite well with Paul Beasley. I don't suppose anybody has really inherited that relationship. It's difficult for you to keep up in quite the same way from here. But it is useful to keep on those sort of relationships. If one has a sort of network of them it makes things so much more easy, one can get so many more things done. I think, even as one moves about, as far as one can, one should be very careful to keep up old relationships, provided they are not something which one has definitely outgrown, or that it would be harmful to continue. At least to the extent of writing, or sending cards, or phoning occasionally or seeing when one is revisiting. I think that it is quite important. Otherwise you find that every few years all your friends and acquaintances have completely turned over and that means you've no long standing relationships and I [130] think this is ... or long standing friendships, let's say. I think this is not a very good thing. (Pause) So it's almost as though, as between say, medieval Tibet and modern England, what was a virtue then is almost a vice now. There's the risk of it being a vice. You have to be very careful in evaluating what is good and what is bad, what is skilful and what is unskilful. Especially careful about talking in terms of non-attachment because in the ears of the modern person this might suggest sort of indifference or just not caring. Absence of feeling, virtually alienation (Pause). I mean T.S. Eliot is not a poet I like very much, but in one of his poems he says, 'Teach us to care, and not to care'. Do you remember that? It's not enough to learn not to care or to not care or to be non-attached, you've got to learn to care also. So it's perhaps significant, maybe it's not reading too much into this, that he says, 'Teach us to care, and not to care'. Not caring has got no significance unless you're able to care. Non-attachment has got no meaning in it unless you're full-blooded enough to be capable of attachment and all that it involves.(Pause)

Campbell: I think, in relation to travelling about, just moving rapidly from one place to another, the only way I think you could get the benefit of travelling (because it does have benefits) and also not just be running away from situations, is to have a community that travels about, like a sort of travelling community. Do you think that would be possible?

Sona: So over the years you couldn't ... you'd have to have like sort of centres that you'd spend long periods of time...

Campbell: Why?

Sona: I mean to establish real friendships takes years. It's not just a case of a community coming together for a few months and just travelling around...

Campbell: It's the same people...

S: No, you mean a yacht, say,. You live on a yacht and you're sailing round the world.

Campbell: Well you might. I mean, I don't know.

S: Well you could. It's not impossible. You could have your own yacht.

Campbell: I mean the same people, so that you've still got the relationships, you're still deepening the relationships, but within that context of those relationships you can travel about and get the benefit of travel as well, because it does have benefits.

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Sona: Travelling with those people?

Campbell: Yes, that's what I mean.

S: Well I think we also have to remember that the nature of travel has changed since Milarepa's time or in the last hundred years. Because I think, in most former times, travel was not so alienating because you went mostly on foot - the ordinary person went on foot - so there was a very slow change of scene. But now you can go so quickly, by air, especially, or even by car.

Campbell: Yeah, but there wouldn't be any hurry to go anywhere: you could go as slowly as you wanted.

S: Usually there is. I mean the mere fact that you go by train or that you go by car - if you don't actually walk, it means you are hurrying. And to the extent that you are hurrying, even if unintentionally, that is conducive to alienation.

Kovida: I think the follow-up line is 'Teach us to care, and not to care. Teach us to sit still.'

S: Yes, that's right. Yes. To stay in one place. So travel is OK, but I think it has to be real travel and not simply being transported from spot to spot. For instance, in the old days, if we'd wanted to go from here to London, it would have taken us several days. I means we just go down in a couple of hours. Though we've got used to it, I'm sure it can't be good for us. You know? And to go off say to Holland in half an hour or to find yourself in India in seven or eight hours. In a way it's terrible. You go through all those intervening countries, you don't experience them. You just experience and abrupt change. Just like that - wham! - in a few hours a complete changes of scenery, climate, food, people, culture, everything.

Sona: I was quite aware on coming back from Helsinki I'd just made sort of short overnight stops in several places and in a few other places just a couple of days. By the time I got to visit a friend in Osnabruck I actually felt quite numbed, just suddenly meeting someone, and the changes, and then having to adjust to that. Although people were saying it was really nice to see you, you actually didn't feel like you could genuinely say 'Yes, it's been really...' You felt quite happy but it... you felt a bit numbed at the same time. It's almost as though you needed a week or something.

Kovida: Well, that's the difference between cycling to (Unclear) country and driving.

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S: How wonderful it would be if you walked.

Campbell: It's completely different. Because you get there... I mean you get there, but half the pleasure of going is actually going by... is actually the journey (unclear)

S: So actually one doesn't travel, one could say doesn't travel in modern times: you're sort of lifted up and plonked down somewhere. That's not travelling - then again lift up and plonk down and lift again, plonk down. This is what happens: you don't travel at all. You shouldn't call it travel. There should be another word.

Kovida: Transport? Trans-spaced?

S: Transportation, yes.

Kovida: Transposed?

S: Translocation? (Laughter) Because travel is connected with 'travail' - work - really, isn't it? We just sit there, and you're carried there. It's not 'travail' any more. It's not work any more.

Sona: And it's amazing actually how tired you get even sitting there doing nothing. You can be sitting on a train for the whole day and afterwards - you've been reading and things - you feel actually exhausted, but you've done very little.

S: There's a flux of impressions.

Campbell: It's very frustrating.

S: And also - another aspect of modern life - seeing so many people with whom you just don't have any relation. Whereas in ancient times, certainly in Milarepa's time, in this village where he was meditating and where Rechung met him, there were just perhaps a few dozen people at the most; a few score or a hundred or so; and you would spend the greater part of your life just in communication with a relatively small number of people. Of course it did have its limitations, but it did mean that you were really in contact with those people. I remember, say, looking back on my days in Kalimpong, I was well known to everybody in the town, all the different levels. I can't say that in this country, I can't even say it in Surlingham, where the whole set up is different. I knew all the officials, I knew the shopkeepers, I knew the schoolteachers, I knew the doctors, I knew the students, I knew the coolies, I knew everybody - and came into actual contact with them - in a natural sort of way. I didn't have to go out of my way, I didn't have to make any [133] special effort: it just happened. Because one was part of the community or considered part of the community and included in everything, at least where it happened to be appropriate - which was pretty nearly every occasion. So I think what we have to watch is, well, in a word, alienation. And we have to keep a very close eye on those qualities which are traditionally considered virtues like detachment or non-attachment, but which in our case may conduce to furthering alienation. It's as though the precepts almost have to be rewritten, bearing things like that in mind (Pause). It's like advising someone to leave home who's never had a home, who's been brought up in an orphanage, or been brought up by your ex-stepfather's ex-wife or something like that. This is what happens nowadays.

All right. So "Because I have no fear of losing anything, I am happy. Since I never dread exhaustion, I am happy." Why does he not dread exhaustion? Well, what's he been doing? He's been doing nothing but meditating. There's no question of exhaustion: he's not expending energy, he's taking in energy.



Virabhadra: If he can sit there in his cave for months and months...

Andy: He's got confidence in his own powers.

S: His own inner resources. Exhaustion is a typically modern complaint: 'nervous exhaustion'. I mean in ancient times you read of people feeling tired (Laughter) but not 'nervous exhaustion' (Laughter) Nervous exhaustion is just due to constant wear and tear and a constant succession of impressions that never impress you, or feelings that you never actually are able to feel. You can just feel exhausted just being swept from place to place - at a high speed - without doing anything - you're just swept from place to place. But impressions are constantly impinging on you, and you're having to take in far too many of them. And you reach a point where you can take in no more, and you feel exhausted. But you haven't done anything - you've just been subject to a constant bombardment. (Pause) So "Since I never dread exhaustion, I am happy. Having fully realized Mind-Essence, I am happy." Mind-Essence being here a simile for Enlightenment itself, Bodhi. "As I need not force myself to please my patrons, I am happy." The patrons are the lay-supporters. But why should he have to force himself to please them? How does that sort of situation arise?

Subhuti: You become dependant on them for economic support.

S: Yes, one becomes dependant upon them for economic support - they become dependant upon you for? ...

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Campbell: Spiritual support?

Subhuti: Sort of vicarious spiritual support.

S: Yes, it's not exactly spiritual support, but one might say it's rather psychological support; and that depends upon your being the sort of person that they expect you to be. Or would like you to be, or think you ought to be. So that means they have a certain expectation of you, or from you; you have to conform to their expectations. You can't, as it were, lead your own life; you have to please your patrons, you have to please your lay supporters. One certainly finds this in Buddhist countries, because the monks are economically dependant, and in many cases the lay people expect something, as it were, in return.

Subhuti: They're really just using the monk, or Milarepa, to sort of give a bit of a glow to their ordinary lives, they're not actually inspired to develop themselves.

S: Right, they're not inspired. To reinforce their existing attitudes, to confirm their attitudes, very often. They expect the monk, or whatever, to be a pillar of the established order.(Pause) You find this, for instance, in Thailand, where the Sangha is under the control of the Education Department, and the monks are not permitted to do or say anything displeasing to the government, on the grounds that monks are not supposed to meddle in politics. In that way, they neutralize the monks. If any monk is thought to be meddling in politics, even to the extent of expressing an opinion, well, the order goes forth from the Ministry of Education to his Abbot that he's got to be disrobed and returned to lay life. And he many not have done anything against the Vinaya at all, and be a perfectly good monk.

There was a very notorious case, some years ago, of a very well known senior monk in Bangkok - who was found by the police to be actually in possession of some Marxist literature. He thought he ought to inform himself of what was going on. There was no question of his being a Communist sympathiser or anything of that sort. But he was seized by the police and forcibly disrobed by the police in jail. And he refused to recognize this. But the Government held that they had the right to disrobe him through the police, if they wanted to. He refused to recognize this. And some years later with a change of government, he managed to get himself reinstated. I met him afterwards in Calcutta. He was a very elderly, quiet, respectable sort of monk, very scholarly and studious (laughs). Well he kept and read the wrong sort of books. They had this sort of McCarthyist attitude in Bangkok at that time - probably still have - and he'd suffered. But he stuck to his guns and would not recognize that he had been disrobed. He insisted that he was [135] still a bhikkhu even though they had removed his robes. And after, I think, six years in prison, there was a change of government, and he was released and he resumed his robes: he did not accept that he had been disrobed. So that's the sort of thing that can happen (Pause). But this was a famous case. I heard about it while it was going on. My Thai bhikkhu friends were all very, very outraged. But of course the monks couldn't say anything: there was no protest from the monks because they'd have all been in jail. In other words, the monks were expected, absolutely, to toe the government line. They weren't even supposed to read books that the government didn't approve of.

Subhuti: I notice there's an Act, in the library, in which Thailand proudly proclaims itself to be the only... Thailand says it's the only country which has an Act regulating the Sangha. They are very proud of this.

S: Yes, right yes.

Subhuti: It's actually the cause of great shame.

S: Yes, indeed. Well we would say in our terminology, it's Erastianism, pure and simple.

Subhuti: It's what, sorry?

S: Erastianism - the complete control of the church by the State. The church being considered a sort of department of the State, and the priests and ministers as civil servants. Well, the bhikkhus in Thailand receive an allowance from the State, according to the grade of Pali examination which they have passed (Laughter). Oh yes, they have these stipends from the State: they are like civil servants. Yes, I mean, things have changed since the Buddha's day! (Much laughter) - these innocent Western Buddhists, they think these bhikkhus, just because they wear yellow robes, are living just like bhikkhus in the Buddha's day -but they are not. In the Buddha's day the kings listened to what the Buddha and the monks had to say: it's the other way round now.

Sona: It's a wonder they don't claim diplomatic immunity (unclear).

S: Well, they do almost. Visits are handled by their embassies. Oh yes. Certainly in the case of the Thai bhikkhus. The Thai bhikkhus themselves have told me, in the past, that they are completely under the control of the Thai Ambassador. They can do nothing displeasing to him.

Subhuti: It's actually a department of the embassy, isn't it.

[136]

S: Oh yes, looking after Sangha affairs.

Subhuti: The months at the Chiswick Vihara (unclear). It's the department of the embassy.

S: Yes, technically it is. This is one of the reasons why one of the more active Thai bhikkhus not only disrobed, but took UK nationality, so that he could work more freely, and be out of the control of the Thai Ambassador. So state support has its dangers, hm?

Subhuti: Milarepa says "I need not force myself to please my patrons". I mean the question is raised, how do you avoid it? I mean we're trying to avoid it by setting up our own economic basis.

S: I think that's the only way you can. If you've got patrons, and if you are economically dependant on them, a sort of quid pro quo is understood. Well, you have to please them to some extent. Even the best of monks do it.

Virabhadra: Presumably he doesn't have to please them because he doesn't need any food!  
(Laughter)

S: When I was in Kalimpong, I got into a great deal of trouble, in a sense, because I spoke my mind to some of the local Buddhist notabilities, especially on the occasion of the Chogyal of Sikkim's wedding, which was conducted in most un-Buddhistic fashion, according to me, with the slaughter of so many animals, to provide food for the guests. I protested vigorously. I fired off many a letter. I've still got the carbon copies - they make quite interesting reading. But the Chogyal was quite upset. And one of the points I made was that 'You have the title of Chogyal which means Dharmaraja. You're not even an ordinary Buddhist King, you're a Dharma-rajā, you've got to live up to that, you've got to set a good example.' And it really upset him. He tried to argue in his letters, and tried to deny certain things which I knew were fact. And his sister got very upset. She stopped me in the Kalimpong bazaar one day and was really upset and she said 'Why have you been writing these letters to my brother?' I said 'Well, he's supposed to be a Dharma-rajā (Laughter) This is what he claims to be, so if he claims it, he must live up to it.' But they thought... but, in a way they took my criticisms quite seriously, at the same time I know they felt that it wasn't really my place to criticize, but I did vigorously.

End of Tape 6 Tape 7

S: I always did that in India. And I did get certain things done, or certain things changed. They were very careful what they did, knowing that I [137] was on the alert - (laughter) would make a fuss about this, that or the other. But this was because I'd built up this network of relationships. Here, I can't do that sort of thing, because that network doesn't exist for one reason or another. But there I could do it; there, whatever I said was taken quite seriously, even by such people.

(break in recording)

S: "Having no fatigue or weariness, I am happy".

Why do you think he has no fatigue or weariness? Is it the same as, the same reason that he never dreads exhaustion? I suppose it's because there is this perpetual source of energy, bubbling up within him, because he's doing nothing but meditation.

"As I need prepare for nothing, I am happy."

Well, what do you think that means? Prepare for something? And why should having to prepare for something make you unhappy? Well, he's thinking of planning, and scheming, and looking ahead, and making provision for this and for that - hm?

Virabhadra: Is it like when Rechung went away, and he just sort of sits down and meditates, and is quite happy without sort of thinking, 'Oh what shall I do now? My disciple has cleared off!'

S: Right, yes. On the one hand he has no needs to satisfy, and on the other hand, he isn't worried what happens to him. So therefore as I need prepare for nothing, I am happy.

Very often people worry about what is going to happen, and then it doesn't happen, and they realize, well, they might just as well not have worried in the first place! I mean, this is happening all the time, isn't it - hm? Sometimes you do need objectively to think and plan ahead, but that's different from worrying about what is going to happen. But even when you have objectively to think and plan ahead, even that is sometimes quite worrying, or rather it's bothersome, and it would be better if you were free from that. Unless you've got that sort of mind that needs that sort of exercise, some people aren't happy unless they are thinking ahead and planning. But in the case of Milarepa, he says 'as I need prepare for nothing, I am happy.' He is able to live completely in the present, that means. (Pause)

S: Since all I do complies with Dharma, I am happy, or since all I do is in accordance with the Dharma, I am happy. Everything that he does is a natural expression of the Dharma. He doesn't deviate from the [138] Dharma, doesn't depart from the Dharma. So he's happy. It means he is completely at one with the Dharma. Everything that he does, says, thinks, is a natural, spontaneous expression of the Dharma. He is the living embodiment of the Dharma. There is no question of him ever doing anything that is not in accordance with the Dharma - so he is happy. It's not that he has to think 'What is the Dharma?' and then, very laboriously, and with great effort and difficulty, comply with it - no. He has become completely attuned to the Dharma. He's become one with the Dharma. So, everything that he does, everything that he says, everything that he thinks, is a natural expression of the Dharma. He doesn't have to take thought about it. (Pause). Then, "Never desiring to move, I am happy." He's stayed there in that same place, that same valley, that same cave, all the time that Rechung's been away. Rechung's been to India and back - hm? The enterprising young disciple - but the old guru's just stayed on the same spot, hasn't moved, hasn't even opened his eyes, apparently - (laughter).

So he says 'Never desiring to move, I am happy.'

Why do you move? It's because you're not happy where you are. Why do you fidget when you meditate? It's because you are not comfortable. In the same way, why do you go out of the door? It's because you are not happy sitting where you are. It's due to some dissatisfaction that

you move. If you were completely happy where you were, or where you are, why should you move? You've no reason to move. You move in order to remove a discomfort.

Sona: Well, I mean to say, from the point of view of a Bodhisattva, that he doesn't move...

S: You could say, the Bodhisattva doesn't move - he certainly doesn't move in the sense that an ordinary person does. The Bodhisattva neither comes nor goes, we are told. But anyway that's getting rather metaphysical. So, never desiring to move - maybe that is the point, to be precise. He doesn't desire to move, there's no neurotic craving to move. That excludes the possibility that you move when there is an objective need to move. You might want to go to the toilet - well, there's an objective need. Someone might need something, there's an objective need. But you've no inner restlessness, or inner dissatisfaction or discomfort that impels you to move. You know how people get when they just want to go out, they don't know what to do for the evening - 'I feel like going out.' It means they're not happy just to sit still where they are. It's not that they particularly want to do anything, but they just don't want to stay where they are.

"As the thought of death brings me no fear, I am happy."

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People are often afraid of death, as they get older, especially. They start thinking about it more and more, it makes them feel quite uncomfortable, miserable. But Milarepa isn't bothered. The thought of death brings him no fear, so he's happy. (Pause)

But here again, one has got to be capable of being afraid of death, one has got to be capable of being attached to life. Your alleged fear of death shouldn't be a sort of lack of imagination, simply an inability to even imagine yourself as dead. (Pause).

"Bandits, thieves, and robbers ne'er molest me, so at all times I am happy."

Well, Milarepa was famous for this. He had nothing for anyone to take away, so of course they didn't molest him. There's a story in the life of Milarepa where he was staying in a cave and at night some thieves came groping around for something that they could take away. And Milarepa burst out laughing. The thieves were really surprised (laughter). Milarepa said "Well, I couldn't even find anything by day!" (laughter) "I don't suppose you'll find anything at night!" So the robbers themselves couldn't help laughing, and they went away. (Laughter).

So, 'bandits, thieves and robbers ne'er molest me'. It's well known he's only an old yogi, sitting in a cave, there's nothing there at all, there's no point in going there. He hasn't got his money hidden away, or anything of that sort. But you know when you have a lot of possessions, it's not just a question of looking after them, but preventing people from taking them away, guarding against robbery, hm? (pause)

So "Having won the best conditions for Dharma practice, I am happy."

That sounds a strange statement. I mean, all he's got is a cave, and nothing to eat, yet he says he's found the best conditions for Dharma practice! (laughter). Well, some people would think you'd need a lot of things for Dharma practice. A beautiful well-furnished place and a band of young disciples to look after you, and someone to cook your food, and someone to

run your errands, and all the rest of it. But Milarepa hasn't got anything at all, and he says 'having won the best conditions for Dharma practice, I am happy.' He's just shut up in the cave, with the opening closed with clay. He's just been left there, so he's convinced that these are the best conditions for Dharma practice - hm? So often people think that in order to practise the Dharma they need a lot of equipment. It's almost like if you take up a sport you need special gear for that. So sometimes it's like that with the Dharma, people think they need special equipment and are very concerned about getting the right equipment the right sort of yellow robe, or the right sort of [140] black cushion, or whatever it may be - you can't manage without these things - hm? Or the right books - hm? Or exactly the right meditation - if it isn't exactly right, well you can't meditate at all. (Pause). Or one could apply this to setting up new Centres, as we were talking about this morning. What are the best conditions for setting up a Centre? Well, where there's a terrible, ugly sort of industrial city, where the people are difficult to get on with, and miserable, and mean, and quarrelsome, and it's always raining. (Laughter). These are the ideal conditions under which to set up an FWBO centre! Any sort of self-interest that you had would be eliminated very quickly under those conditions.

"Having ceased from evil deeds, and left off sinning, I am happy."

Well, there's not much scope for sin or evil deeds, when you're all alone in a cave, and when you're meditating all the time. But that's quite a point, or quite a consideration, that you don't even have to be meditating, just sitting still and doing nothing, at least you are doing no harm. That's quite a considerable achievement - at least you are not actually breaking any precepts, so long as you're just sitting there. The chances are that as soon as you get up and start doing something, or as soon as you open your mouth, it's almost certain that bang will go a precept! - in one way or another. But if you're just sitting there, especially with your eyes closed, not even looking at anything, just sitting, (laughter) even without meditating, you're not overtly at least breaking any precept or doing anything wrong. But as I said, as soon as you start doing anything, the chances are sooner or later you'll do something quite unskilful.

So, 'having ceased from evil deeds, and left off sinning, I am happy'.

This draws attention to the importance of non-action. I mean, so often we tend to think in terms of "doing good." Before you can think in terms of doing good, well just stop all of the, well it may not be evil, but at least mischief that you are doing. As I was saying some time ago, very often the best thing you can do for other people, the best way in which you can help other people is just to leave them alone, don't get in their way, don't get in their hair; it's the biggest thing you can do for them. Keep your big feet out of their way. That's a quite important contribution to their welfare. (Pause)

"Treading the Path of Merits, I am happy" - the path of skilful actions which results in 'punya', in merit. In what sense is he treading the path of merits? He's not doing anything, sitting in the cave, so how can he say he's 'treading the path of merits'?

Virabhadra: Well, he's engaged in highly skilful mental activities

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S: Yes, he's constantly producing highly skilful mental states, so what could be more meritorious than that? - The merit derived from the mental attitude with which you perform the so-called skilful action, or speak the so-called skilful word. Skilful thought is the essence

of what is skilful and meritorious. Meditation is an uninterrupted flow of positive mental states. So what could be more productive of merit than that? (Pause)  
So, "Divorced from hate and injury, I am happy".

It's not clear whether it's because his own mind is free from hate and injury, or because he's free alone in his cave, from the hate and the injury which might be inflicted by others, possibly the second - hm? He's not the object of anybody's hate or injury. But it could be subjective too.

"Having lost all pride and jealousy, I am happy".

Well, if you're just living on your own, there's not much scope for pride, or for jealousy - which involves a comparison with other people. (Pause)

So, "Understanding the wrongness of the Eight Worldly Winds, I am happy".

This is the same eight that we had this morning. Understanding the wrongness of them means presumably understanding the way in which the mind oscillates between them, or is affected by them. It is happy when it experiences joy, unhappy when it experiences suffering and so on.

"Absorbed in quiet and even-mindedness, I am happy".

Often people think that being quiet and even-minded is a very dull, wretched sort of state to be in. No fun, nothing stimulating, but actually that isn't so. So Milarepa says 'absorbed in quiet and even-mindedness I am happy' - that's the true happiness.

"Using the mind to watch the mind, I am happy".

Being completely aware. Obviously it's not an alienated sort of awareness, not just standing aside, isolating oneself from one's own mind, so to speak.

"Without hope or fear, I am happy"

Another pair of opposites. People are often thinking in terms of hope and fear. You hope for this, you fear that. Hope represents something [142] positive that you would like to have, and fear something negative that you would not like to have.

"In the sphere of non-clinging illumination, I am happy".

So it's illumination without clinging . The suggestion is that it's a state of awareness, a state even of enlightenment, in which there is no distinction of subject and object. So where there's no distinction of subject and object, how can there be clinging?

Then "The non-distinguishing wisdom of Dharmadhatu itself is happy".

Non-distinguishing in the sense that it doesn't make, it doesn't see, any absolute distinction between this and that. It sees everything equally as void.

"Poised in the natural realm of immanence, I am happy".

Immanence seems to translate 'Sahaja', what is innate or congenital. So 'poised in the natural realm of immanence, I am happy' - that is to say one has an experience which is an experience of poise and balance, and at the same time, an experience of spontaneity, spontaneous action, and these are an expression of the state which is natural - not in the ordinary sense of the term, but in a metaphysical sense. They represent what really belongs to you in the deepest sort of sense. They're an expression of your ultimate nature, if such an expression can be used. (Pause)

So if you give expression to your own real nature, in the deepest sense, you're very poised, you're very balanced, because you're very, as it were, deeply established, you're established on your own deepest foundation - at the same time, you have complete freedom and spontaneity. (Pause)

"In letting the Six Groups of Consciousness go by, to return to their original nature, I am happy".

Presumably he's referring to the five sense-consciousnesses, and the sixth, the mind-consciousness. What do you think is meant by 'allowing them to return to their original nature'?

Kovida: Not giving them any attributes. Just like the information is - just comes in, it doesn't get any personal ...

S: Yes, they're just functioning in a, so to speak, completely natural, objective sort of way. The eye is simply seeing, the ear is simply hearing. There's not reacting in any subjective sort of way. The mind is thinking, but there's no worrying, there's no evaluating in terms of good and bad.

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"The five radiant gates of sense, all make me happy".

There's nothing wrong with the senses, nothing wrong with hearing and seeing, nothing wrong with seeing colours, nothing wrong with hearing sounds. The damage is done when the mind, the defiled mind-consciousness, starts thinking in terms of attachment: 'this is mine,' 'that is yours' and so on.

"To stop a mind that comes and goes is happy".

The mind that comes and goes. The restless, clinging mind that tries to find satisfaction, as the Buddha says, is now here and now there. To stop that sort of mind is happy.

"Oh, I have so much of happiness and joy. This is a song of gaiety I sing. This is a song of gratitude to my Guru and the Three Precious Ones - I want no other happiness."

So that is all he wants. He's quite content with those three things, his guru and the Three Jewels.



Would someone like to read that concluding verse?

"Through the grace of Buddhas and the Gurus Food and clothes are provided by my patrons. With no bad deeds and sins, I shall be joyful when I die; With all good deeds and virtues, I am happy while alive. Enjoying yoga, I am indeed most happy. But how are you Rechungpa? Is your wish fulfilled?"

S: Mm. So Milarepa says "Through the grace of Buddhas and the Gurus, food and clothes are provided by my patrons."

It's because of their faith in the Buddhas and Gurus that his patrons, his lay supporters, provide him with food and clothes.

"With no bad deeds and sins, I shall be joyful when I die".

When he has committed bad ... (break in recording) ... - Enlightenment, so he'll be joyful when he dies.

"With all good deeds and virtues, I am happy while alive.  
Enjoying Yoga, I am indeed most happy.  
But how are you, Rechungpa? Is your wish fulfilled?"

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Well, have you got cured? Have you had your nice long journey to India? (Laughter)

So what does Rechungpa say? Who's next?

"Rechungpa said to Milarepa, "I am well again. I have obtained what I wanted. From now on I would like to remain in solitude and stay near you. Please be so kind as to grant me further inner teachings.'

Milarepa then imparted to Rechungpa additional instructions and stayed with him in the Silk Cave. Through the continued practice of meditation Rechungpa attained the perfect experiences and realization.

This is the story of Milarepa meeting his Heart-Son, Rechungpa, in the cave of Zhaoo."

S: So 'Rechungpa said to Milarepa "I am well again. I've obtained what I wanted. From now on I would like to remain in solitude and stay near you.'

It's as though he might as well have done that in the first place. But anyway, he's cured. Maybe he would have got cured if he'd stayed with Milarepa. We don't definitely know.

So 'Please be so kind as to grant me further inner teachings.' Teachings about meditation. So 'Milarepa then imparted to Rechungpa additional instructions and stayed with him in the Silk Cave. Through the continued practice of meditation Rechungpa attained the perfect experiences and realization.'

I'm not sure that we are to take this completely literally, because quite a lot of things happen

to Rechungpa after that, but, at any rate, he had quite a deep experience of meditation under Milarepa's guidance, at that time.

So what's one's general impression of this whole episode? There's Rechungpa meeting Milarepa, being inspired by him, practising with him, but then being cursed by his mother and his uncle, afflicted with leprosy, meets the five yogis, goes off to India, gets cured, returns, finds Milarepa still meditating, is afraid he is dead, inquires after his health, and gets that song from Milarepa, and then himself meditates with Milarepa for a while. What's the sort of general picture that one gets? Is there one? Or what is actually happening?

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Sona: It does seem quite typical, in a very general way, of the spiritual, the whole spiritual life. You know in a sense that all you've got to do is sit down and get on with your practice, or get on with your work. There's always these sort of things that assail you, that make you a bit restless and want to go off and do something, (maybe often do) and come back.

S: There are things coming from the past also, hm? As represented by the mother, and the uncle, yes? It wasn't so easy to get away from them, for Rechungpa. (Pause)

Sona: It's also - one of the things we mentioned this morning about the horse of Prana-Mind. That - like Milarepa - his whole life is so smooth ...

S: Yes, once he got on to the right path, yes?

Sona: Whereas Rechungpa's - you get the impression he's rather like a young horse that needs to sort of...

S: Well, he was very young, probably just a teenager. (Pause)

Kovida: It's as if he did - as if he had to prepare himself before he was able to actually sit down and meditate.

Campbell: Because Milarepa never forces him to do anything.

S: No, that's true. Didn't scold him, did he, whatever he might have thought, he let him go off, and he let him come back. While he was away, he didn't bother, he just got on with his own meditation. (Laughter) Didn't send him any anxious messages. "How are you getting on in India? Are you cured yet?" Just didn't bother. He just sat there and didn't even wait for him to come back. If he hadn't come back, presumably he would've just gone on meditating (laughter). Just as well Rechung did come back, perhaps.

Andy: You made that point, in the lecture, about "Is a guru really necessary?" That the guru doesn't have to teach anyone.

S: Yes, of course, yes. That's in a way - that comes under what Milarepa said about patrons - 'as I need not force myself to please my patrons' - well, some patrons expect you to give little sermons periodically. They might not listen, but it's your duty to give them, and you ought to be giving them because it's your duty and because you're supported; whether they listen or not, that's another matter, but it's your duty to give these little sermons, and discourses.

(Pause)

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I remember when I was at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, one of the complaints against me by some people was that I wasn't there every day, all day, that I actually was out sometimes. The impression I got was that I was expected to be a sort of what in India is called a (Chakida?) which means a sort of glorified watchman on duty on the door. I had to be there, I had the duty to be there. They had the right to be annoyed if I was not there - as though I was employed by them. It was really very strange. One of the things they charged me with when they decided not to renew my invitation to stay there after I came back - I mean when I was in India, this was - was that I had absented myself from the Vihara. It was almost like absenting yourself from the army without permission, or going absent without leave - it was like that. They didn't seem to appreciate that I was a totally free agent staying there for their benefit, totally of my own free will, and perfectly free to go when I wished, to come and to go when I wished. That was a complaint, that I absented myself from the Vihara, as though I was a sort of truant schoolboy or something of that sort! (Laughter)

It really astonished me. That I had to be there. If anyone rang up, I had to be there to answer the phone, and to tell them whether there was a lecture on Sunday, and what the title was, and whether there was a meditation class on Thursday and so on and so forth. Well, this was the attitude of some people, not all, but quite a few. That it was my duty to be there and constantly available. It wasn't even as though they paid me! (Laughter).

But the opinion was the lay people literally controlling the bhikkhu, he was almost like a servant to the laity - a sort of domestic chaplain, in its eighteenth century sense, at your beck and call, to say grace when you wanted him and keep quiet at other times. Just to be there, maybe to write a letter, or do a bit of tutoring in the family - that was the sort of attitude. I mean, small-scale Erastianism. Sort of crowned by Mr Humphreys' famous remark that I should consider myself - he thought this quite a high ideal for me to aim at - the Buddhist equivalent of the vicar of Hampstead! Well, anyway, we won't go into that now.

Sona: Some people must have been really kicking themselves at inviting you in the first place..

S: I think there were, actually.

Sona: A terrible mistake!

S: But what surprised me was, you see, there were people who did regret having invited me, who did regret it when they found I wasn't a strict Theravadin, but who had reviewed my "Survey", what to speak of just [147] reading - they'd reviewed it and praised it. It's as if to say, what I wrote there in criticism of the modern Theravada - they didn't just take it seriously; it was just sort of words as far as they were concerned. That I was going to act upon it, or take my own words seriously - they seemed not to dream of that possibility. That seems to be strange to me, that they hadn't taken seriously my very, very strong expression of faith in the Mahayana. Or at least the Mahayana attitude. They seemed not to have taken that seriously at all. So I think this is sometimes something that people find very difficult to appreciate - that one means what one says. But this is what I sometimes say about the great English writers - and poets especially - that people who read them don't realize, usually, that they mean what they say. They mean it quite seriously. It isn't just flowery words or just some

highfaluting sentiment that they're giving expression to - it's what they actually think and really believe.

It was the same with Lawrence - people didn't always take seriously what he said, but he meant what he said. Even though he might have been wrong sometimes. But he meant it. So I found the same thing, that people didn't take seriously what I said. They thought I was just making the usual conventional gestures in the direction of the Bodhisattva ideal or whatever. (Pause). Anyway we'd better stop there. We've got through a short chapter at least.

(Discussion of retreat programme, followed by 'Thank you, Bhante' - various voices).

End of seminar. Completed in August 1992

Spellchecked and put into house style Shantavira January 1999