

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

From "The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa"
(translated by Garma C.C. Chang. Published by Shambala, Boulder Ca., 1977)

Chapter 35: Rechungpa's Departure

Held at: Padmaloka

Date: November 1980

Those Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Brian Duff (now Dharmavira), Suvajra, Mangala, Vajradaka, Adrian Macro (now Shantiprabha), Clive Pomfrett (now Kevala), Peter Shann (now Vajrananda), Asvajit, Aloka, Pete Hayes (now Bodhivajra), Atula, Malcolm Webb (now Sudhana)

Sangharakshita: All right. Would someone like to read that first prose paragraph, or perhaps the first two, they do go together.

"Rechungpa the heart-son disciple of the Jetsun Milarepa, had difficulty because of his affiliation with the noble woman Lady Dembu. In order to free him from this hindrance, Milarepa transformed himself into a beggar and came to Rechungpa for alms. Now Rechungpa possessed at that time a very large piece of jade, obtained from a ravine in the valley of Yagder. This he gave to the "beggar", saying,

"Use this jade to buy your food." Milarepa thought, "My son has no attachment to material wealth, but has great compassion."

As a consequence of this almsgiving, Rechungpa separated from the Lady Dembu. Disheartened and wearied of her, he left, and returned to the Jetsun."

S: We're not told in this chapter at least how this state of affairs came about. Apparently Rechungpa, the heart-son disciple of Jetsun Milarepa is, at the beginning of the chapter, living with the [2] Lady Dembu, and the text begins by saying that he had difficulty because of his affiliation with the noble woman Lady Dembu. This term 'affiliation' in the translation isn't really very appropriate here. I don't know what the original Tibetan is, but obviously it should be something like 'connection'. Affiliation means, it is, of course, from filius, son, it means connecting yourself with somebody as a son, but clearly that is not the real meaning here. We talk about an association, being affiliated with another association. Here it clearly stands for just a connection. "So in order to free him from this hindrance Milarepa transformed himself into a beggar and came to Rechungpa for alms. Now Rechungpa possessed at that time a very large piece of jade, obtained from a ravine in the valley of Yagder." The Tibetans, like the Chinese, value and prize jade very highly, and it is used for ornaments. "This he gave to the beggar," the supposed beggar "saying, "Use this jade to buy your food". Milarepa thought, "My son has no attachments to material wealth, and has great compassion". As a consequence of this almsgiving Rechungpa separated from the Lady Dembu; disheartened and wearied of her, he left, and returned to the Jetsun." Now this is really quite extraordinary isn't it? As a consequence of this almsgiving Rechungpa separated from the Lady Dembu. Well how on earth could that particular almsgiving, that giving of that

piece of jade to the beggar have this sort of effect on Rechungpa's mind? How did it work so to speak? What was the psychology of it?

Malcolm: Would it be that, because he had no material wealth left, he was no use to her.
(Laughter)

S: Well, that is a possibility, it suggests a slightly cynical view of, you know, the opposite sex, but perhaps there's an element of truth in that. But it ... Yes?

Clive: Could it be that he experienced a heightened state of consciousness by this act of compassion, that he saw his ...

S: Yes, because Milarepa says, or Milarepa thought, "My son has no attachment to material wealth, but has great compassion." So that seems to, you know, have some connection with it. It's as though the sight of the beggar aroused Rechungpa's compassion to such an extent that he gave the beggar a very large piece of jade, saying 'Use this jade to buy your food.' It's mentioned that it was a very large piece, so that suggests it must have been quite valuable. The beggar could have sold it for quite a lot of money, so it would not have been possible for Rechungpa to give that piece of jade if he hadn't been activated by very strong feelings of compassion. So it's as though the mere sight of that beggar and the beggar's request for alms, activated, I was going to say all, but at least some, of Rechungpa's dormant spiritual qualities which had not been active during the period of his relationship with Lady Dembu, because I mean usually one finds if you enter into a relationship of this sort you become very self centred, you become very selfish, you forget about other people, you've no interest in other people, you've no compassion. So as it were, compassion for other people is a sort of enemy to this type of relationship, it makes you aware of the wider context.

So it's as though the sight of the beggar, the experience of compassion, the act of generosity, all helps to awaken Rechungpa's nobler side, the nobler side of his character, the nobler side of his nature and as a result of that he separated from the Lady Dembu. "Disheartened and wearied of her he left and returned to the Jetsun." But it is quite interesting perhaps to notice that Milarepa didn't sort of preach him any sermon, he didn't say, well it's really wrong of you to be involved in this way, and to forget your meditation and your spiritual life, you ought to leave her, you've got yourself entangled in a relationship. He [3] didn't say all that. He just took on the guise of a beggar and he went to him for alms. Rechungpa didn't recognize Milarepa, that's also perhaps significant. He didn't recognize him, all he saw there was a beggar, but the sight of the beggar aroused his compassion. So this suggests that if you want to help somebody extricate themselves from a relationship of this sort, it's not enough, at least not in all cases, just to point out to them how unskilful it is and what harm they're doing themselves, one has to arouse their positive emotions. One has to give them a wider perspective, one has to enable them to experience a better part of themselves, and that will do its work. Because that is very difficult. I mean this was a very special situation, Milarepa had very special powers, but he was able to awaken Rechungpa's positive emotions, especially his compassion, in such a way that the positive emotion broke through his attachment you know, for the woman, and he went back to Milarepa.

Adrian: Could you say that Rechungpa's sort of brought face to face with his own inadequacies, he sees a beggar and all he feels he can give him is a large piece of jade and when he sort of turns it over in his mind a bit he realizes, well how can I give more, he

realizes he's got to get back to his teacher.

S: Yes.

Vajradaka: Its an accumulative process too isn't it, once you've experienced one kind of surge of compassion, then it, well it develops and other experiences don't seem satisfactory.

S: Because it says "disheartened and wearied of her he left", it didn't seem, it seems he didn't at that point experience much difficulty in leaving her.

Asvajit: In other words the attachment isn't really broken until one's vision has been broadened, so that one can actually see what's taking place.

S: Yes; I mean the important thing here seems to be the part played by positive emotion, a sort of intellectual conviction that you ought to extricate yourself from the situation, that is not enough. Your skilful positive emotion needs to be aroused.

Well, any further point arises in connection with this particular passage?

Malcolm: I mean, a point that does seem obvious, that the positivity of the spiritual community should attract people I suppose, rather than just convictions.

S: It's also as though what is important is that if you have an opportunity of, as it were, going out and being of some help to others, well this decreases your self centredness and makes it less likely that you'll become involved in this kind of way.

Vajradaka: I think a very big danger is when you actually begin to attach your young shoots of compassion, and wanting to help, to the person in the relationship. Then you get a kind of double bind situation. You feel you're in the relationship to help them. You feel that you're actually practising your compassion when in fact it's completely misguided, and that just catches you in a double bind situation.

S: Yes; well enables you to rationalize; so in the case of a beggar, maybe an old, ugly looking beggar, well there can't be anything else except compassion.

Kevala: This is often a rationalization people use isn't it? They can't help everyone, so they start to get involved in the one [4] person so they can really help.

Malcolm: Sorry, did you say that's the rationalization?

Kevala: That is a rationalization.

Malcolm: Yes, a lot of people use that don't they. I mean you can't take all the world's troubles on your shoulders, kind of thing.

Kevala: Except one person.

S: So you just look after your own family.

Adrian: But in a sense I mean, you do help to create the world's problems. It's your mind that's part of like a collective mind which is creating the world's problems, so in a sense you are responsible.

S: Yes, you've got one six billionth part of the responsibility.

Adrian: Sounds quite insignificant, but it's rather a lot.

S: Anyway carry on then, next para.

"On his way back he came to the house of a rich man, and was given two portions of dried meat which he preserved with great care in order to bring them back to the Jetsun as a present. At that time Milarepa was staying at Chu Bar with some of his disciples. He said to them, "Rechungpa is coming, and is bringing us something so extremely large that a whole valley is not big enough to contain it."

S: All right so, "On his way back, he", Rechungpa, "came to the house of a rich man, and was given two portions of dried meat." Tibetans in the old days used to subsist very largely on dried meat, for obvious reasons, "which he preserved with great care in order to bring them back to the Jetsun as a present."

What do you learn from this, in what way is this in a sense a continuation of what has been happening before?

Asvajit: Well the arousal of Rechungpa's positive emotion, his generosity.

S: Yes. You see it was aroused first of all with regards to the supposed beggar, as a continuation of that he's not only going back to his old guru but he's going back to him with apparently, renewed feelings of devotion, as a result of which he wants to go back with a gift, with a present. So he's given some dried meat on the way, instead of eating it himself, apparently he keeps it, he preserves it with great care, in order to bring them back to the Jetsun as a present. So this suggests that his encounter with the supposed beggar has brought about quite a radical change in his whole attitude. First of all the compassion has been aroused towards the beggar, and now devotion, and along with devotion an impulse to generosity towards Milarepa himself. It's as though one positive emotion gives birth to another.

"So at that time Milarepa was staying at Chu Bar with some of his disciples, he said to them, Rechungpa is coming and he is bringing us something so extremely large that a whole valley is not big enough to contain it." Now what was Milarepa's meaning?

Asvajit: Generosity.

Kevala: He's referring to the act of compassion, to the growing [5] compassion of, in other words not merely the dried meat but the enormous size of the compassion that goes with it.

Pete Shann: Isn't it more just that he's returned?

S: Yes that too. It seems to be more as though Milarepa is saying that, the size of the offering

depends on the state of mind with which you offer it, the faith and devotion with which Rechungpa is coming back, the faith and devotion with which he's preserving those two pieces of dried meat, the faith and devotion with which he is offering them to Milarepa or going to offer them to Milarepa, are so great, that it makes the offering itself great, it makes those pieces of dried meat great, so big in fact that they fill the whole valley, it seems to mean something like that. The size of the offering, depends upon the, well the extent of the skilful mental state, so that even if you offer a large offering, if you offer it unwillingly or in the wrong sort of way, well it isn't really a large offering at all, whereas if you offer quite a small thing, if you offer it with a very positive mental state it's a big offering. So it seems that directly or indirectly it's Rechungpa's mental state that, and one might even say Rechungpa himself, that Milarepa is referring to. Milarepa apparently knows what is happening.

Adrian: Could it be also that the rest of the disciples are a bit fed up with Rechungpa. He's been off in the mountains with his lady for sometime, and so Milarepa is actually trying to arouse something in them, he's going to bring them something really big and so they're going to be a bit sympathetic to Rechungpa's return.

S: Yes. Rechungpa is probably very much the black sheep, the prodigal son; yes there was quite a discussion about black sheep a couple of years ago wasn't there? All right, next paragraph, and then the song that Milarepa sings, the first section of it anyway.

"Before long Rechungpa arrived. He offered a bag of the dried meat to the Jetsun and asked after his health. In answer Milarepa sang:

A yogi I roam the mountains;
Like a great Mandala,
My body is full of bliss.
Cleansed of desires and pride,
I feel well and happy.
With longing for diversions killed
I feel joy in solitude.
Since I have renounced all things,
Happy am I in no man's land.
Since I have cut off ties of kinsfolk
Getting and saving are not worries ...
Happy and joyous do I live.
Without desires for scholarship or study
Of more books, I have no inferior feelings ...
With mind-essence I feel only happiness."

S: All right, so, "before long Rechungpa arrived, he offered a bag of dried meat to the Jetsun and asked after his health. In answer Milarepa sang: "A yogi I roam the mountains Like a great Mandala My body is full of bliss, Cleansed of desires and pride, I feel well and happy. With longing for diversions killed I feel joy in solitude. Since I have renounced all things Happy am I in no man's land.""

What does Milarepa mean by saying, 'Like a great Mandala, My body is full of bliss.'? What is a Mandala?

[6]

Malcolm: A sacred spot.

Brian: A sacred offering isn't it?

Asvajit: A symbol of integration.

S: A symbol of integration, but what form, in the Vajrayana especially does it take?

Asvajit: What the body?

S: No the Mandala. We did touch upon this yesterday. What do you see, what do you find in the Mandala?

Suvajra: All things of value.

S: All things of value, what things in particular?

Asvajit: The Dakinis.

S: Yes, what else?

Kevala: All aspects of one's being.

S: All aspects of one's being, at what level though?

Adrian: The highest level.

S: The highest level, so what do you find in the mandala therefore?

Vajradaka: The Transcendental.

S: Yes. But in what form?

Vajradaka: The Buddha.

S: Yes, but do you find just the Buddha?

Adrian: The family of Buddhas.

S: The family of Buddhas yes, a mandala is, essentially an arrangement of Buddha figures, or figures equivalent to Buddha figures, in such a way that you have one at the centre and the other four at the four cardinal points, that's the basic structure. You can have eight at the eight cardinal points, you can have sixteen, you can have thirty two, you can have sixty four. You can have all sorts of other figures and objects in between, symbolizing correlated aspects of existence. So a more or less simple arrangement of these figures makes up a mandala. So essentially mandalas consist of Buddhas, their as it were female counterparts, Bodhisattvas, Dakinis, and symbols of such things as the five elements, the five colours. So Milarepa says "Like a great Mandala my body is full of bliss."

So this raises two questions. How is it that his body is like a Mandala, and how is it that the mandala and the body are both full of bliss? How is it that his body is like a mandala is like a mandala? I mean we touched upon this yesterday.

Mangala: He embodies all the different aspects of Buddha nature should we say.

S: Yes! He has meditated upon, he has realized all the different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. I mean he has gained Enlightenment, so therefore all these different aspects of Enlightenment, all these different Buddha and Bodhisattva figures are all contained within him, they are all within his body, his body itself...

[7]

[end of side one - the next small section up to tape two is no longer on cassette for reasons unknown!]

...is the mandala, the great mandala, containing all possible Buddhas and Bodhisattvas because his realization is complete. Yesterday we mentioned about, Milarepa mentioned about his body being a palace or a temple. Just as in the temple one has all the different Buddha images, so within the yogi all the Buddha images, all the archetypal Buddhas especially are present, in the sense that he has realized every one of them. He experiences all these different aspects all these different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Dakinis, Guardians and so on. But what about the bliss?

Kevala: Well not only does he experience all those aspects of the mandala, but its, the whole thing is lit up by the light of the Transcendental.

S: Yes, but even more specifically than that you could say, I mean that many Vajrayana mandalas, especially the most esoteric of them represent the Buddhas in the Yab-Yum state, that is to say it represents the male and female Buddhas in a state of sexual union. This symbolizes the union of wisdom and compassion you could say, or it represents a union of wisdom and skilful means and the bliss that results from that, so inasmuch as the mandala is full of figures in Yab-Yum mudra, the Mandala is full of bliss. In the same way the yogi's body is full of bliss, because in the yogi's body in the ...

[Tape 2 Side 1]

S: ... bliss.

And further he says, "Cleansed of desires and pride I feel well and happy." I mean if people are troubled by desires, if they are troubled by pride they feel unwell and unhappy, do you see that? How does it actually happen?

Asvajit: Well you feel, if you're thinking of pride you feel, before desires, I don't quite know why I put it in that order, you feel that you're, you should, you're in a position that other people don't recognize.

S: Yes; you're always on the lookout for recognition or always on the lookout to see whether people recognize you or not, and if they don't, you wonder when they are going to and if they don't well why they don't. In that way your mind is troubled. You're not getting, or the sort of

recognition or the sort of treatment, or the sort of position that you think you're entitled to.

Clive: Oh, so that sort of wanting attention in a way, or an excess of attention.

S: Its not only attention, its attention of a particular kind, that is to say, you turn up at some function or some party, you don't just want attention, you want special attention, you want to be given a prominent place in the proceedings, you want everybody to look up to you or pay you respect. So if you're not getting that, it's not that you feel the lack of attention, you feel the lack of that particular kind of attention, you might even feel resentful.

Clive: Well what would be the other kind of attention? Well I mean if you weren't in a prominent position then people might not take any notice of you.

S: That also.

Clive: So that what's the other kind of attention where you're [8] not in a position but people still take notice of you?

S: Well it's almost like a sort of infantile desire for attention; you just want attention. You don't especially want to be prominent or important it's enough if you get attention in a friendly sort of way.

Mangala: You don't care what kind of attention it is.

S: You don't care what kind of attention it is, yes in some cases it's as extreme as that.

Clive: So what's a healthy kind of attention?

S: If there is one that is.

Clive: Well you were saying that if you want attention.

S: I didn't bring in the word attention at all, because the text speaks of pride, it's a question of the satisfaction of pride. You expect to be treated in a certain way because you've a certain image of yourself, as an important person and if you're not given the corresponding treatment you feel troubled and uneasy, you feel unwell and unhappy, because the treatment that you get does not correspond to your image of yourself.

Mangala: I think sometimes that, well yes there could be an objective case there, where you are just perhaps not treated with respect, or due respect.

S: Yes but that would not make you feel unwell and unhappy. I mean if at least you had some sort of spiritual awareness. You might recognize just objectively that people weren't treating you in the appropriate manner but it wouldn't upset you. I think this sort of thing is not noticeable so much in, well at least present day England as it is in the East, certainly in India and in Tibet. There still position is very important. For instance in Poona we came up against a little or rather Lokamitra came up a little bit against a little difficulty. We were in contact with some people there, some friends of ours who've got some position in society, let us say, in the sense that they're quite high ranking government officers, and they are Buddhists and

they're in contact with Lokamitra. But when there's a meeting, say a Buddhist meeting, they expect to be given a sort of seat of honour in the front. Maybe along with the Upasakas and the Anagarikas just because of their position in government service. If they don't get this sort of treatment they get a bit upset. Do you see what I mean?

So this is the sort of thing that Milarepa is getting at. People attach quite a bit of importance to position and place and recognition. In England there seems to be a different sort of tradition. That even if you have got are entitled to a special treatment, it's a sort of, well accepted behaviour that you don't make too much of that. At least that's the modern tendency, maybe it's not quite so much like that in the States, but its like that here. Everybody knows that you're someone special or important but you act as though you weren't, or you pretend that you weren't, and that is supposed to show some special modesty or humility on your part, that you don't expect any special treatment.

But in India and in Tibet still, at least the old Tibet, it's not like that, people who think that they're important or who do have a position of importance in society really expect to be treated, and demand to be treated as important people. So if they don't get that treatment because sometimes it may happen that your importance is not generally recognized, then they will become unwell and unhappy in their minds, as do the people whom I [9] mentioned.

Mangala: They become sort of dependent on that kind of recognition and treatment.

S: Yes, and even if for instance, I know that Lokamitra has been sometimes criticized for not giving these sort of people the treatment that they expect. From a Buddhist point of view they're just the same as everybody else but on account of their position in government service they expect special treatment and special position and special seats etc., in a purely Buddhist function, on a purely Buddhist occasion and Lokamitra is not always able to agree to this. Do you see the sort of thing that can happen?

Clive: So people often, even if they haven't got position where they have an opinion of themselves, or an idea of what they are, are constantly looking for recognition of that, so that ...

S: Yes it strengthens their own feeling about themselves then.

Clive: In a way I suppose you can get to the stage where any kind of attention is twisted by them.

S: Is better than.

Clive: ... is to be an affirmation even if its attention of a negative nature, it doesn't matter because they'll twist it to reinforce their idea.

S: So not only pride but desires. How is it that desires, presumably cravings, is meant, make you feel unwell and unhappy. How does that work?

Asvajit: Well you feel that there is something you haven't got.

S: Obviously.

Asvajit: And in as much as you haven't got it, you're unhappy.

S: Restless and uneasy.

Malcolm: You're missing out on something, that kind of thing.

S: Yes, then Milarepa says, "With longing for diversions killed, I feel joy in solitude."

Perhaps this is a little bit of a hit, a little bit of a knock at Rechungpa, because he went off in search of diversions unlike Milarepa. So it's as though the two things are antithetical, the longing for diversions, and the joy in solitude. The fact that you go off in search of diversions, that you long for diversions is that you cannot experience joy in solitude. That you cannot experience joy in your own self. You look outside for that, you look to some diversion or distraction just as Rechungpa did.

Vajradaka: That's more likely to happen when you're not really busy, when your not fully occupied.

S: Yes.

Atula: Milarepa seems to be saying, look I'm a world in myself. I don't need to look outside in the world.

S: Yes.

Adrian: Just going back to what we were talking about a couple of minutes ago. I'm just wondering why people of some social [10] position do find it, in this country, sort of find it necessary, or useful to actually take a place amongst the lesser members of society.

S: Well why do you think that is so?

Adrian: Presumably it's some sort of substitute for communication. That they don't feel that they can communicate if they remain in their sort of normal position. They think that by actually changing their physical position they can actually communicate with people, they sort of appear to be one of the lads.

S: Do you think it's that, or do you think it's just a sort of, conformity to the current democratic, or pseudo-democratic ideology, just going along with that.

Vajradaka: President Carter going for that marathon run is an example of that. It's seen as the thing everyone should do.

S: Or just the statement that I heard on the radio, I think it was some weeks ago, that, when Mr Callaghan used to go into the tea room of the House of Commons, even as Prime Minister, he never used to expect any special treatment and nobody took any particular notice of him, just as though he was like any other MP, and he just behaved as though he was any other MP and it was suggested that was in some way admirable, that he didn't sort of act the Prime Minister there, though of course everybody was perfectly aware that he was the Prime Minister.

Asvajit: Do you feel that that's an entirely healthy attitude? It doesn't allow actually for the fact that there are differences in people.

S: Well yes if the Prime Minister goes into the tea room of the House of Commons, how can you really forget that he's the Prime Minister? How can you really pretend that he's just like any other MP. So it's an act. It's not honest, but in the case in India that I was referring to it's a Buddhist occasion. You are there as Buddhists. You are not there on the basis of your position in government service. So you should not have a more prominent Buddhist position just because you have a more prominent position in government service. But this is what people seem to expect, and they think it quite natural. The mass of people. No one among the ordinary Buddhists would object if the Buddhist who happened to be a high ranking officer in the railway was given a seat in front, a seat of special prominence. They would think that entirely right and natural. Because they are still governed by those sort of ways of thinking. It's only Lokamitra who won't do things that way!

Clive: Do you think the thing about the Prime Minister in this country is a bit of a rationalization for not being able to actually express respect openly? In this country we can't really express openly respect. We haven't got that emotion.

S: Yes, well there is perhaps no traditional way of expressing respect for a Prime Minister. Even his position in a sense is ambiguous, he doesn't occupy a very high place in the official order of precedence, he ranks a long way after quite a lot of other people.

Clive: Like who?

S: The Lord President of the Council I think comes before him, and of course all the members of the royal family, Princes and Princesses of the blood, Archbishop of Canterbury, they all come before the Prime Minister; the Lord Privy Seal, I think he comes [11] before the Prime Minister. So I mean there is still an accepted way of behaving say with regard to the King or the Queen but not towards a comparatively lowly and recent creature like the Prime Minister, what to speak of a big trade union boss. If it was sort of medieval China, well if you went into the presence of a big trade union boss you would just sort of grovel on your knees, and just fling yourself at his feet and beg for mercy, but when you meet him now you just have to slap him on the back and call him Joe, [Laughter] even though he's got practically power of life and death over you. And the Queen perhaps who 's got really no power at all you have to curtsy and kneel as though she still does have the power of life and death over you which she certainly doesn't have.

Asvajit: A crazy world.

Brian: It's an interesting thing that, social hierarchy, I was up at a small town in Scotland with Ajita and we went to see a cathedral, and there was a high ranking police official and obviously the vicar or whatever, and the police official actually seemed to be intimidated by the vicar, it was almost as if he had the higher social status.

S: The Minister it must have been.

Brian: Hmm. Minister, sorry.

S: So it does often give people quite a sense of security if they know their exact position in society in a purely external way so to speak, even if it isn't a very high position; and if you can't be sure of your position or you have a sense of your own position which is not acknowledged by other people, it can give rise to a great deal of uneasiness in you, which suggests that you don't sufficiently experience yourself as, or behave as an individual simply. Anyway ...

Aloka: Is that necessarily a negative thing, people knowing their place in society, I mean in the social structure.

S: Well it is both positive and negative. It's positive in as much as it does give people a sort of feeling of security and belonging within the group, but on the other hand it can be negative if they depend entirely upon that for their self consciousness, and therefore fail to develop themselves as individuals. Because ultimately if you want to be an individual at all, your self confidence must come from your sense of being an individual, not from your sense of having a certain position in the group.

Malcolm: People often look quite pathetic when they've retired, when they're sort of 65 and finished with work and they've more or less finished with society.

S: Anyway he goes on to say, "With longing for diversions killed, I feel joy in solitude." Do you notice the word killed, they're permanently finished, they're destroyed, so what is it that can kill the longing for diversion taking that word kill quite literally, what is it?

Vajradaka: Prajna.

S: Prajna, it's insight, it's only that. When you've really seen through those diversions, really, permanently, deeply understood what is really happening, and when you feel joy in solitude. Joy in solitude doesn't simply connote having a positive experience of yourself when you are alone, but having a positive experience of yourself all the time, whether you're alone or not alone, in solitude or not in solitude, in solitude or in society. You have an uninterrupted joyful experience of yourself, as a result of which [12] you've no longing for diversions, whether you're on your own or not on your own. (Long pause).

Then he goes on to say: "Since I have renounced all things, happy am I in no man's land." What is no man's land?

Clive: He's in a state in which no man can lay claim on him.

S: Yes, yes, but originally where does this expression in English 'no man's land' come from?

Atula: Between two armies.

S: Between two armies, it's the area, it lies between, neither of them exercises any control over it. I think here, it has a somewhat different meaning, as far as I remember in Tibetan there is an expression which means the land of the no men, it's monkey land, it's that land high up in the mountains where there's only monkeys, where human beings haven't established their dwellings, where there's no government, where there's no administration, so in that sense a sort of no man's land, where the writ of the government doesn't run, so to

speaking. Where you're out of the government's control, where you're completely free, where there's nobody to tell you what to do, so that has a literal as well as a symbolical significance. "Since I have renounced all things, happy am I in no man's land." I've no needs, I've no desires, I don't need an administration to run things, or provide things for me, I'm quite happy with the monkeys. Nowadays it's quite a thought, but there probably is no part of the world which is no man's land. Even in the last century, maybe even at the beginning of this you could find areas of the world which didn't belong to anybody, which were not part of any state, but you can't do that now. Formerly there were areas in between states, which didn't belong to anybody, and you could just go there, very often monks did, not only Christian monks, Buddhist monks and people like that. You could carve out your own little kingdom as it were, but you can't do that now because the whole of the surface of the earth is divided among sovereign national states. So there's nowhere that you can go and get away from a government and not be under a government and not under an administration. This is the first time in history that this has happened.

So Milarepa says, "Since I have renounced all things, happy am I in no man's land." We can't find the no man's land in the literal sense, it has to be a psychological and spiritual no man's land. That's quite important, this sort of point isn't often made but I think it's quite important to realize that a time has come, a situation has been created in which we cannot get away from governments. Even the Pilgrim Fathers they didn't like the government in England so what did they do they took ship, they sailed from Liverpool, they went to America, and they set up their own - well their own, well government it eventually became there, so that they could live in the way that they wanted to live, make a completely fresh start or as fresh a start as they could. We can't do that now. We can't go away, from the existing society so what do we have therefore to do? What can we do?

Clive: We have to create our own no man's land within.

S: Well yes, that is possible only to a limited extent isn't it? So it really means that you have to, well you've no alternative but to change society. You can't get away from it to start a new society, you have to turn the old society into the new society which isn't easy of course.

Adrian: But wasn't that true of the people we've just been talking about, in the sense that though they could go somewhere

[13]

new geographically, somewhere where they weren't under the direct influence of the government, they were still under the influence of the situation that they'd come from.

S: Oh yes of course, because they'd grown up in the midst of it and they couldn't be entirely free from it. Obviously, they couldn't make a completely fresh start really, only relatively so, but still no doubt a great improvement in many respects. They were very clear about the sort of set up they didn't want. They didn't want kings, they didn't want bishops, they were clear at least about those two things. They didn't want to be burned at the stake for not believing certain things.

Vajradaka: It almost has a Swiss Family Robinson feeling about it on quite a large scale.

S: So in the modern state you can't escape the control of the state, you can't avoid paying

taxes, etc. It's endless. So the only thing you can do is to try to change the existing system, you can't get away from it, that is to say you can't get away from all systems and set up one of your own on completely virgin territory. That isn't possible any more.

Asvajit: In a way that seems to be quite an important spiritual teaching, as well, not only a sort of organizational realization in the ordinary world. Everything that goes on in your mind in a sense is just, conditioned as tracks that have been beaten before; you have to go beyond that kind of mental conditioning as well.

Malcolm: In the hippie days it was a bit like that. People just lived in a fantasy world, didn't they. They just pretended it wasn't there, everybody just doped up to the eyeballs.

S: Some of them still are. (Laughter)

Clive: So in creating a new society you're giving expression to a psychological and spiritual, 'living in a no man's land', or is it working the other way? I suppose they're both having effect on each other. By creating a new society you're giving yourself an opportunity to create a psychological and a spiritual no man's land.

S: Well what is - leaving aside what Milarepa says - but what is the significance of the new society as compared with the old, or why does one object to the old society? One objects to the old society because it does not provide the conditions which are necessary for the development of the individual and one wants to set up a new society in the sense of setting up conditions which are more conducive to the development of the individual. Not that once you've set up the right conditions the individual will develop automatically, but at least there shouldn't be anything that gets in the way of the individual, and possibly there are conditions which do actively help him to help himself to develop.

Clive: Would you say then that the first step then is to create the new society, and out of that the individuals will grow. You can't have it the other way round, the individuals can ...

S: Well it's as though from a practical point of view you can't, say within the old society create a new society and then sort of bring individuals into it from the old society, except to a very limited extent, you do a bit of one and then you do a bit of the other. This is what we've done in the FWBO, we've set up quite limited positive conditions - the new society in a very small way - and then people come under the influence of those conditions and then they become more truly individuals, and having become more truly individuals they help set up the new society a little bit more, do you see what I mean? Then more individuals, more people come in from outside and they become still more [14] individuals, having become more still individuals they also improve the conditions under which they are now living, so that the conditions under which they are now living approximate still more closely to the "New society". Do you see what I mean? You don't have either the "New society" or true individuals all at a stroke, or brought into existence all at a stroke. You have a little bit of the "New society". That helps people to be a little bit individuals. As soon as they're a little bit individuals, they can make the new society a bit more like the "New society", makes it possible for people to be still more individuals. It's a sort of dialectical process. Not that first of all in the midst of the old society you get a group of people who are completely individuals, and then they proceed to set up a "New society" which is completely a new society. It doesn't function like that, or certainly you don't get people who are not individuals

setting up a society which is completely the new society, that is impossible.

Anyway Milarepa is happy in no man's land, and he says "Since I have cut off ties of kinsfolk, getting and saving are not worries, happy and joyous do I live." So since I have cut off ties of kinsfolk getting and saving are not worries. Is it possible to actually cut off ties of kinsfolk completely. Can one do this?

Atula: Not very easy, no ...

S: Well, what does one think? Cutting off ties of kinsfolk.

Suvajra: You've always got you're parents, sort of on you're mind to a certain extent, your family. Its very difficult to ...

S: I don't think Milarepa was thinking so much of mental ties, because he refers to getting and saving. It's as though the economic responsibilities that you have with regard to your family, especially wife and children. "Since I've cut off ties of kinsfolk, getting and saving are not worries." So he seems to be referring to the gross external ties which involve a certain amount of responsibility, especially economic responsibility. "Since I don't have those ties, since I've cut them off, happy and joyous do I live." So do you think its necessary or possible to cut off ties of kinsfolk in that way?

Vajradaka: With the social security system, its certainly is easier. I mean may mother is living on social security now, whereas perhaps in the old days as a dutiful son I would have had to support her.

S: Yes, right.

Vajradaka: So it let's me off the hook, rather nicely.

S: Yes.

Asvajit: I think even in a case though, where you're cutting yourself off from a relative, or kinsfolk doesn't involve economic hardship, it can still be a psychological wound that doesn't heal. There can be a great deal of bitterness.

S: Yes.

Asvajit: I know with my first wife there was something of this feeling, although she's very comfortably off, she's never forgiven me. I don't suppose she ever will.

Clive: I don't think your parents really, they just don't let you go. You can stay away from them physically, but it's as if; I experience it like treacle. You've sort of, you're away, but you've still got, you can't quite get your fingers out, and so there's always [15] a drag, but you can be materially free.

S: Well that in a way is an advantage nowadays because, being free materially and having no economic responsibility you've just got the psychological factors to deal with. Those are isolated and those are the really important ones. Because if say you're psychologically free

from your parents, well perhaps it wouldn't matter so much if you had to devote a certain amount of time and trouble to supporting them economically, but the big tie is the psychological one. So modern conditions seem to enable us to isolate that and deal with that without it being mixed up with anything else.

Clive: I see what you mean.

S: Supposing one was, not only psychologically tied to one's parents, but also recognize an obligation to stay with them and look after them and earn money for them, well it would be a terrible sort of mix up wouldn't it, and it would be very difficult for you in that situation actually to tackle your psychological tie with your parents, because the economic necessity would keep you with them all the time, or their economic necessity would keep you with them all the time, whereas if they were not economically dependent on you, and you were free to go away, well then you'd have a much better chance of dealing with that psychological tie.

Anyway he says, "Since I have cut off ties of kinsfolk, getting and saving are not worries, happy and joyous do I live." Reminds me of Dr Johnson's famous statement, he says, "A married man will do anything for money." Well you've got responsibilities, your wife is starving, your children are starving, what will you do, you'll steal if necessary, you'll do anything to get money. Well they might not even be starving your wife might want a new fur coat, or a new car, all right, you'll falsify the accounts. I mean there's many an accountant done that sort of thing, not because he's hard up, not because his family was hard up. They wanted a higher standard of living and more luxuries than he could give them on his salary. So, a married man will do anything for money, if the wife presses him hard enough.

Mangala: Some unmarried men will as well. (Laughter)

S: Yes, yes, and usually for the same sort of thing. (Pause)

Anyway "Happy and joyous do I live. Without desire for scholarship or study Of more books, I have no inferior feelings - With mind essence I feel only happiness."

Here again another little knock at Rechungpa.

Malcolm: He says I have no inferior feelings. It's like you shouldn't feel inferior because you're not as scholarly, or something like that.

S: Well we do know from our own experience in the Friends that some people do feel inferior, or did feel inferior because they didn't go to university, they haven't had such a good education, they don't speak such correct English etc., etc. People do feel inferior on account of these things. But Milarepa is saying it doesn't matter. He says, "Without desire for scholarship or study of more books, I have no inferior feelings, With mind essence I feel only happiness." I've realized my own mind, I'm Enlightened, I don't bother about books, I don't care that I didn't go to university, I don't care that I didn't become a learned Geshe and know all about logic and science. I don't care that I haven't studied all the Buddhist scriptures. I'm Enlightened. (Laughter) Whereas a scholarly monk might come along and say, [16] "Ah, mm, he might be quite enlightened but he hasn't studied the scriptures." But where do the scriptures come from - they issue from the Enlightened Mind, if you have the Enlightened Mind what need do you have of the scriptures. It's just so much waste paper as far as you are

concerned.

Like they used to say about D H Lawrence, "He's a genius, oh yes he's a genius, but, he didn't go to university." And Lawrence used to say, "I'm fed up with people saying about me, "He's a genius, but!" They always say that, "He's a genius, but!" and someone wrote a biography about Lawrence called, "Portrait of a Genius but" (Laughter) and Lawrence got really fed up with this sort of attitude. And some people genuinely almost commiserated with him that, well, yes he was very talented in fact he was a genius, he wrote rather well, but he hadn't had the benefit of a really good education. He hadn't been to Oxford or Cambridge and nothing could make up as he put it, for the lack of those incomparable advantages. But that is people's attitude, they miss the real thing, so people themselves sometimes feel inferior thinking they've missed out on a good education, they've missed out on going to university. They don't know the scriptures very well, but of course if you happen to be Enlightened and don't know the scriptures very well, you don't bother, because "With mind essence I feel only happiness."

Clive: What do you think makes people use those things as a reference, even people who haven't actually had these advantages?

S: Well I think that originally there was some validity, I think that originally perhaps Oxford and Cambridge did stand for real education, real knowledge, real learning, at least up to a point, but that is no longer the case.

Clive: Well in our society it's sort of expanded a bit more to universities in general.

S: Actually it is said, I don't know for sure, it is said that some of the red brick universities, which are really looked down upon socially in respect of certain subjects are far better academically than are Oxford or Cambridge.

Pete Shann: Sussex apparently is reckoned on for physics, than even Cambridge.

Suvajra: But do people use this phrase, "Yes, but, you haven't had the advantage of such and such," they use it to put themselves in a superior position.

S: Well the people who used to speak to Lawrence in this way or about Lawrence certainly did, but they didn't do it to put themselves in this position, they were impregably convinced that they were already in that position. They didn't doubt it, they didn't question it. He was a mere provincial genius who'd been to this little provincial university, Nottingham University, it was almost a joke to call that a university! That was their attitude, they didn't regard him as an educated man. Whereas actually he was no less educated than they were even on their terms. He was as well read, as intelligent, and of course he was a genius, but he hadn't been to Oxford or Cambridge!

Clive: Nowadays it seems it's used by all sorts of people, even people who haven't been through that, gone to university. In other words it's a sort of social criterion, you can't do certain things unless you have had an education, been to a public school etc.

S: Well it is amazing still the percentage of Members of [17] Parliament who've been to public school, been to either Oxford or Cambridge. It means that it still counts, socially and politically.

Suvajra: I've also encountered it in the Buddhist movement, "Your movements all right, but you haven't had teachings from Lamas."

S: Yes, yes, you could say that.

Suvajra: Unless you've had a real Lama teaching then you're nowhere.

S: Right, yes, that means a real Tibetan Lama, from Tibet, who's the seventh, or eighth, or tenth, or fifteenth incarnation of this or that. He's got a special kind of red or black, or blue, or green hat. [Laughter]

Clive: I think certain levels of development, maturity I think, are associated with certain institutions, and you can only achieve that level of maturity by going through certain institutions.

S: It may well have been at one stage of history, that you could get a certain kind of education, in a sense of a certain kind of knowledge and training, only at those two places, that may well have been the case, but it is now no longer the case. I mean in some foreign countries, some foreign universities, especially on the continent, and even in America, Oxford and Cambridge are now a bit of a joke.

Malcolm: It does mean that the persons concerned worked hard, you can't get to Oxford and Cambridge if you're silly presumably. I don't know. You probably have to work quite hard at a certain age.

S: I'm not so sure about that, some of the people I've met at Oxford and Cambridge seem pretty silly.

Malcolm: I used to think that myself sometimes, I probably don't think that now, there must be something there.

Clive: At those two universities especially academic standards aren't particularly high in some cases, it depends quite a lot on which school you went to, and what type of character you are.

Vajradaka: I haven't generally come across very much degeneration, or people saying, oh, you haven't had a university education, therefore you are a second class citizen.

S: No, I don't think people do say it any more, but they feel it, that is to say people who haven't had it feel it, you see? It's as though the people who have had the education, they don't need to say it, they don't go around saying, "Oh I've been to Oxford or I've been to Cambridge", it's sort of subtly conveyed, and it's the people who haven't been who get self conscious and feel inferior, or wonder if they haven't missed something.

Clive: There's often a condescending smile when you mispronounce a word.

S: I mean the English are very good at putting something across without actually saying so, or saying anything. Anyway maybe its not a very pleasant subject to pursue.

[End of side one side two]

Anyway he goes on to say, or perhaps, we should stop at that point and have our coffee, because it's a new section of the song

[18].

[Tea Break Chat]

Pete Shann: I think it depends on the subject to quite a large degree. I think in Oxford and Cambridge if you've done literature and stuff like that, I think you possibly do get a better training, but in sciences I think you're much better off in some new building.

Asvajit: I think the whole sort of basis of education in the humanities at Oxford and Cambridge is one of criticism and oneupmanship, and although that has its good side it also has its bad side. Your eyes are always turned to the unsatisfactory, rather than the positive.

S: One also gets the impression that some of the "authorities", inverted commas, at places like Oxford and Cambridge have blown up out of all proportion the reputations of certain figures for reasons of their own. I personally believe that James Joyce's reputation is grossly inflated and I suspect T.S. Eliot's also. On the other hand it is well known that apart from Levis who first portrayed him that Lawrence was persistently denigrated, and has only quite recently come into his own so far as the academic people are concerned.

Asvajit: And Lawrence himself of course is quite a sort of guru figure. It's quite difficult to see him as he is.

___: Why?

Asvajit: Well, because he's regarded as kind of the authority.

S: When I was down south some years ago a friend of mine, who was a Cambridge man took me along to hear a lecture by Levis. I was really looking forward to that. It was well attended about three hundred students, but it was awful, it was a dreadful lecture, it wasn't even worth going to hear. I was very, very disappointed, but people took it very enthusiastically, they seemed really pleased with it, but it just was a poor lecture, really poor, and poorly delivered. I had the same experience in the States when I went to hear Norman O'Brown, having read 'Life against Death'. This was Kevin's bible for some time, it's quite well written at least, but as a lecture it was a hopeless performance. But everybody seemed absolutely carried away by it, as though it had a symbolical value which had nothing to do with what was actually said. The fact that there was Norman O'Brown, the famous author of 'Life against Death', speaking.

Asvajit: Yes, I remember feeling something of that sort when I first went to Christchurch in New Zealand and we had a visiting speaker, which of course is now against what you advise and what we actually do in the FWBO, who was introduced as, not a Buddhist, someone who was actually a Hindu and a Buddhist so far as I recollect, and he had this sort of reputation and people seemed to be very amused at this, and thought it very interesting but again it was a terrible talk. But the general feeling among the people seemed to be well he's worth listening to because he's this sort of person, but actually there didn't seem to be any real appreciation of the fact he was someone who was just hopelessly undecided and uncommitted and ignorant really, from a spiritual point of view.

S: I think I read a report of that too - yes.

Malcolm: You can almost see why people are picked, like pop stars, by society, and society picks out somebody and decides to make them a star.

S: Apparently they're not picked out by society, they're launched [19] by some hard headed and hard nosed businessmen. They decide what is wanted and what is going to make money and then they send out their scouts around the little discos or little clubs, or whatever to find four young men who could be groomed to function in that way and make money for them.

Clive: It's a sort of common trend isn't it for the, well I suppose you could call it the alienated mind, to pick on something which has some small intrinsic value and then sort of inflate it completely.

S: In this matter of lectures, it's as though people have lost the ability to tell what is a decent lecture and what isn't. They think oh so and so is giving it, it must be good. It's the same with some of the Lamas who give talks, you hear tape recordings of their talk, they just ramble along in an incoherent sort of way, and everybody seems quite thrilled and impressed.

Malcolm: I've found that with Dudjom Rimpoche, I went when he was up at Chelsea Town Hall. He was strangely very low key, it was quite boring, it's as if you've heard it all before kind of thing, and yet he came across as the John Wayne of Buddhism. I know he isn't really John Wayne (laughter) but that's how he came across to me like he was the big old man of Buddhism ...

S: Has anybody else been to university apart from Asvajit? Oh you have yes, right so there's two.

Suvajra: Just two? That's quite a small percentage isn't it?

S: I suppose it is.

Suvajra: Not really university.

Malcolm: Where did you go Mangala?

Mangala: Art school.

Brian Duff: Which one?

Mangala: I was at two actually. I was at Belfast for two years then I was in London for three.

S: Where did you meet Kevin then because it wasn't Hornsey.

Mangala: No it was, in fact it was St. George's Hospital.

S: Ah right. I remember because that's where Kevin met me because I went and gave a talk there.

Mangala: Yeah, I don't think that's where he met you actually. I think he actually met you at Sakura.

S: I gave a couple of talks there. During one of my talks someone was led away screaming.

Vajradaka: Was it a mental hospital?

S: Well, what was it Mangala?

Mangala: It's actually a general hospital but there is a mental part attached to it.

S: Mental outpatients department wasn't it?

Mangala: Yes and that's where you gave your talk actually.

S: I gave two talks.

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Mangala: I heard one of them.

S: I think most of the people looked all right, didn't they? Some of the doctors and nurses looked a bit weird to me. [Pause]

Vajradaka: While we're waiting for the coffee, can we go back, quite a few days to something that you mentioned very, very briefly. We were talking about the different kinds of dependence.

S: Yes.

Vajradaka: Unreasonable dependence, and you said the most important, or the most common, or the worst kind of dependence was the support on others for your experience of yourself, and you mentioned that actors very often were described in this way.

Can you say a little more about that because it's rung a few bells and I haven't quite been able to get it clear. I think I know what you mean within myself, but I'm just not intellectually clear.

S: Well one has for instance noticed with actors that offstage they seem sort of quite deflated, very often, unless of course even off stage they've got a circle of admirers around them, so they carry on acting. But if they really are sort of on their own, and not surrounded by the circle of admirers, and they're not acting, they seem to sort of shrink to nothingness almost, as though they don't exist. It's as though they're not experiencing themselves any more. That in order to feel themselves in any sort of way, they've got to have a lot of people around watching them, and admiring them, and applauding them, and then they can feel themselves. So their experience of themselves is reflected back to them from these other people who are seeing them and experiencing themselves.

Atula: There was a film recently. It's not a particularly good film called 'The Rose' about, more or less based on Janis Joplin's life. That was very much, that was what is was about

more or less, all the time she was in the public eye she felt herself, as soon as she was apart from it she fell to pieces and started taking drugs and getting drunk.

Malcolm: They say this about actors and actresses as soon as the audience comes up. I had a friend who was an actress. I went out with her a few times, and I had a really strange feeling that when I was with her and we were quiet her psyche was in a very strange place ... (obscured as the tea arrives) ... really kind of strange and everything she did seemed to be so perfect ... () ... when she talked or just behaved it was nicely done, yet her mind just didn't seem to be there at all.

Clive: What I think is quite interesting, that tendency, is that ordinary people have it too. I go to this weight training club and there's a sort of fairly regular group of people there and there's one boy who comes and he plays football for 'Norwich City', he's quite a celebrity, he's sort of, I think he's actually in the England team, and he's black, and as soon as he comes in everyone lights up, they start bouncing off him, they start relating to him, they come alive, and it occurred to me that well, they do this because this person actually feels real to them. He's on television, he's known as a public celebrity, he's real and they experience themselves when he's around, much more strongly, and it's a bit like that. I don't know if they are acting or if it's themselves, it's probably that they're acting, but they just sort of come alive, when he's around. He's a real person, a real audience.

Vajradaka: But it's like the other side of the story though isn't it, the actor.

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S: It's as though the audience is acting too.

Clive: Yes, I think that is also the same tendency, as these sort of Guru figures or cult figures, that ordinary people latch on to famous celebrities.

S: Yes, he's famous, he exists as it were, so by connecting themselves with him they sort of latch on to that. They also are brought into the picture. I mean some people really like to have their photograph with various celebrities. So the fact that he exists, proves that they exist because they are associated with him. I met in India once, someone came to see me and stay with me. He was a Swiss who'd become a sort of Hindu holy man and he had two big photograph albums; one was all the palaces of Maharajas where he'd stayed and the other was all the famous people that he'd been with or met and there were photographs of him with Pandit Nehru, him with Vijendra Prasad, him with Mahatma Gandhi, him with, oh dozens and dozens of people well known in India and he'd, every time he met anyone he'd show them through these two albums as though that gave him existence, it proved that he existed almost.

Clive: And I think it, to a certain extent does have an effect on others. If you know someone who is well in with someone who's famous, then, well, you exist as well by knowing them.

S: You might point out someone and say, oh he's really friendly with whoever it might be, some famous pop star, and you take a real interest. Oh is he? - and you take a real good look at him as though there must be something special about him, isn't it so?

Malcolm: It does, it definitely works with me, if somebody's a celebrity it definitely has more weight with me, I think it's a terrible thing to confess.

Clive: There's a real added interest. I've been to a couple of plays and I saw this same person at these two plays and I think that he's an actor himself. I think I've seen his face somewhere before, and I was sort of in a way mesmerized, I kept on looking at him, because he's, I can't quite place him but I know that he's famous in a way, he's well known and it's sort of magical.

Asvajit: It's not altogether a bad thing to look at someone in that way and ask yourself well what is there?

S: Especially if you ask it quite sceptically. (Laughter)

Malcolm: A hell of a lot of projection goes on. I felt that with, is it Joy Adamson did 'Born Free'? Well, she used to come into the place where I worked in Chelsea and I was, sort of looked at her and I immediately thought, ah! Isn't she lovely, because I remembered her from the film, but as I got to know her, well got to see more of her, things weren't quite so, she was a bit of a pain I suppose.

Vajradaka: She got eaten eventually, didn't she?

Suvajra: She got murdered.

Malcolm: No, I'm thinking of the actress actually, oh, Virginia McKenna, that's it, Virginia McKenna.

Pete Shann: She was being interviewed just after the, the lady actually who she portrays in the film got eaten by a tiger.

Malcolm: "How does it feel like to be eaten by a tiger?"

Pete Shann: She came over very insincerely, saying how she was very sorry about it, and had a connection with her, the part she'd [22] played, I didn't believe a word of it. It seemed so insincere.

S: One gets that impression on programmes like 'Desert Island Discs' where Roy, what's his name?

Vajradaka: Roy Plomley.

S: Roy Plomley, he's interviewing somebody and quite often it's some actress, and she's telling with his help the story of her career, and he's talking in such a way as if to suggest this third rate actress' career is of world shaking importance, and he says things like, well then of course, after that you did such and such a show didn't you and she says, 'oh yes I did, that was marvellous', as if to say, well it's such a big thing, as though everybody knows about her and that is the sort of assumption on which it's discussed, but surely they must both know it isn't as important as all that by a long chalk. As though the whole world is intimately acquainted with every detail of her theatrical career.

Vajradaka: I sometimes get the feeling though that even Roy Plomley gets rather bored.

S: Well, he's a smoothie, it's his bread and butter also.

Pete Shann: I think he probably sees through it but I doubt if the actresses and so on do ...

S: She probably really thinks her career is of, well, world significance almost.

Malcolm: That's funny. I thought I was the only one who didn't think it was.

Clive: Interesting thing this, is it Eva Peron, she became some of kind of national symbol didn't she?

S: Yes but that was basically through her association with her husband, who was the dictator of Argentina. Whether she would have risen to that position by her own efforts is very doubtful, she was just a dancer in a night club he happened to get friendly with and eventually married. She had a certain character and flair and drive one must admit that too.

Malcolm: What did she symbolize, romance or something?

S: The people.

Malcolm: What did she symbolize in the people, she couldn't have symbolized ...

S: I think the people felt and maybe rightly, that she felt for them, that she was genuinely concerned, she did what she could for them. The fact that she was also covering herself in mink and diamonds, that was neither here nor there, well she does seem to have worked hard and exercised a certain influence. (Pause)

All right, Milarepa sings,

"I am well and happy
Without "gab" and "babble",
For I do not want proud talk.
I am well and happy
Without plans or schemes.
For my mind is free from fraud.
I am well and happy, for I never
Involve myself in slanderous gossip
And I desire no fame or glory.
Where'er I stay, whate'er I wear [23]
Or eat, I feel truly happy.
At all times am I happy and well. Son
Rechungpa you are in health on your return?" [Laughter]

S: So, I am well and happy without 'gab' and 'babble', what is this 'gab' and 'babble'?

Pete Shann: Useless speech.

S: Useless speech, bibble babble it's sometimes called. Do you think people are really happy with it, or why do people indulge in gab and babble, exactly what is happening?

Pete Shann: I think that possibly, that they're quite boring.

S: They're boring?

Pete Shann: Yes, so they fill up the space with interesting snippets of news that they might have heard.

Asvajit: Not only are they boring, they're bored, I feel.

S: Perhaps, perhaps they don't realize it, though.

Clive: I think what it is often is that they're alienated from their actual feelings.

S: If you listen to or you happen to hear sort of smart conversation, it's terribly inane, there's nothing to it. It's so insincere, so artificial, it may even be very witty, even be very clever but there's nothing to it, it's thoroughly hollow. But why do people do it, why do they indulge in it?

Pete Shann: Because there's very little character there in the person who indulges in such a thing. That's why I was saying they're boring people because there's very little character there for them to express.

Mangala: Maybe it's a kind of a cover up for perhaps something they're perhaps really feeling at a deeper level, and maybe which they don't want to experience or to be seen.

Clive: I think it usually happens at quite an early age, they start to experience things that they experience as negative, deeper feelings, and rather than accept that, they chatter to distract themselves from it and it becomes sort of ...

S: And very often the chatter is very bright and pseudo-cheerful, and pseudo-witty and all the rest of it, as though everybody's having a good time, but really everybody's heartily glad when it's over more often than not.

Clive: Pseudo aesthetic appreciation.

Vajradaka: I was struck by a quote of what somebody said to Oscar Wilde, about his frivolous speech. It went something along the lines, For most people, it's not of any consequence, but for you it's going to be the means by which you go to hell because you know that there's something deeper, yet you ignore that, and indulge in this frivolity. It's like just a means of plastering over, covering over, something which is much more real.

S: Yes, yes.

Aloka: It's also just a really good way of holding people off, isn't it. If someone can keep up a whole barrage of that sort of chat to you, then you feel that they're literally holding you at arms [24] length.

S: Yes, right, yes.

Clive: I always feel as if they're foiling with you, they're fencing, it's just like that. They can be very adept at it.

S: Yes, well that suggests it's also competitive. So very often you get the impression that when a lot of people are gathered together you get usually either one of two things. Either there is this 'gab' and 'babble', or else there is a sort of dull, bored, stagnant silence, an uncomfortable silence. Those seem to be the two extremes, but very little in the way of quiet meaningful conversation, not to speak of communication, not even conversation sometimes.

Pete Shann: Yes sincerity seems to be put down as quite weak, as being...

S: Yes.

Clive: It's quite interesting in a way, if you're trying to have a conversation with somebody who's really into this and you won't let them indulge in gab and babble, then the only alternative they can think of is this dull bored state, so they think in fact that that is what it is that you're wanting.

S: Well, why do you think Milarepa adds, 'For I do not want proud talk', as we can't take the English here too literally, because it is a sort of translation, but he connects proud talk with gab and babble. What does that suggest?

Pete Shann: Supporting each others egocentricity.

S: It suggests you're trying to impress, that there's a strong element of competitiveness, people are trying to gain the upper hand through their own particular 'gab' or 'babble'.

Atula: One of Blake's aphorisms, "Folly is the cloak of pride."

S: Yes, very often the party gab or babble consists to some extent at least, of name dropping, and you could say that that was an example of proud talk.

Then, "I am well and happy, without plans or schemes." I think may be there should be a comma after schemes, there's a full stop, it says, I am well and happy without plans or schemes, for my mind is free from fraud. It would suggest that the plans or schemes that one has would be fraudulent. But in a general way what does plans or schemes suggest?

Mangala: It means having your life all programmed and laid out and worked out, to the last detail.

S: Yes, not only that but certain ends in view, something that you're trying to make happen. Something that you're trying to bring about, something you're trying to achieve in this indirect scheming, planning sort of way.

Pete Shann: Presumably he's transcended that.

S: Yes, indeed.

Pete Shann: He's not perhaps suggesting that we shouldn't scheme and plan.

S: Yes he says, 'I am well and happy without plans or schemes, for my mind is free from fraud.' I mean you can presumably have [25] a plan or scheme with a quite positive motive,

that possibility shouldn't be excluded. But perhaps you shouldn't tie your life up too much, even with positive plans and schemes.

Asvajit: You find everything else beginning to revolve around those, you become quite rigid.

Atula: Even creating institutions.

S: I think we should be careful not to use institutions, or the word institutions purely in a negative sense. I think, the point that one should be careful about a scheme or a plan, is, that when you make it, and when you commit yourself to it, it should be something that is capable of absorbing the whole of your energies, and all your interests. Do you see what I mean, do you see why this is so? Because supposing the plan or scheme does not absorb the whole of you, suppose it doesn't absorb all your energies and all your interests. Well there is some energy that is left outside, there is some interest that isn't provided for, but nonetheless, you are committed to this particular or scheme and after some time you'll start resenting the fact or rebelling, or there'll be some other difficulty of that sort. So it's all right to have a plan or scheme, it's all right to commit yourself totally to it, say for a period of five years, provided you can in fact put all your energies into it.

Mangala: I suppose it's best if your plan's a very broad one in that case.

S: Yes, and that suggests, and I think it was in this group that we were talking about this subject, that you know yourself very well. You can't decide to commit yourself to a certain scheme, i.e. to decide at least in principle, at least in theory, to put all your energies into it, unless you know yourself so well that you can be sure that that particular plan or scheme is capable of accommodating all your energies, that your energies are of such a nature as to be accommodated by that. I mean you might for instance decide to commit yourself say to art school for 3 years. That's going to take up the greater time of your energy, but that assumes you don't have any other major interests, because if you've got say two or three other things which are just as important to you as art school, but nonetheless you have committed yourself to art school for three years, well, there's going to be some tension after a while because those other interests, those other energies are not being satisfied.

Suppose you commit yourself to say plastering for a year, well you must be quite sure that that is something into which you can put all your energies for a year. Do you see what I mean? So a plan or a scheme is all right provided you can be sure that, first of all it is a skilful sensible scheme obviously, and then that you yourself can actually put all your energies into it. That you're not going to feel after a while that it's only taking up a part of your energy or satisfying only one or two of your interests.

Brian: Could you get too particular then in what you were studying, or trying to perfect.

S: What do you mean?

Brian: Well, to take the example of art, if you were actually interested in art and wanted to develop your ability to draw and paint, could you actually get too caught up in [26] drawing and painting and forgetting about why you're doing it?

S: Well, I don't know whether that is actually psychologically possible, unless you were doing

it for an end outside art itself. But from an artistic point of view if you were caught up in drawing for instance for its own sake, that might well be a good thing.

Atula: I don't quite understand that?

S: What don't you understand?

Atula: How would that be a good thing?

S: Well, you can't really be good at art I would have thought unless all your energies go into it. As though at least for the time being you make it an end in itself. While you're actually say painting a picture, well, all your energies must be into it. This must be an end in itself for the time being, so with drawing, so with any other forms of art that you take up. Even though within a broader perspective you're doing it for the sake of something else, supposing for instance say Chintamani's illustrating, say one of our publications, all right his artwork is geared to the publications but probably his experience when he actually is producing the picture, the illustration itself, is that he is just totally absorbed in that and he's not thinking about the use to which it is going to be put at all, it's become an end in itself, at least for the time being.

Malcolm: I'm sorry are you saying that's not a very good thing?

S: I said from the artistic point of view that is a good thing. I doubt if you can really produce art under any other conditions, without putting yourself totally into it. Well, certainly you can't produce it to the best of your ability, without putting yourself totally into it. That probably applies to a lot of other things. So when you embark on a scheme or plan which suggests something quite elaborate, something quite complex, extending perhaps over a number of years. When you commit yourself to that or decide that that is going to occupy the greater part of your time, you must be quite sure that that is in fact capable of absorbing all your energies and you're going to be happy absorbed in that and in very little else, over quite a number of years.

Like for instance if you're elected chairman of a centre, you've got to be quite sure that that is going to be able to absorb all of your energies, if you want to be a full time art student at the same time well you're probably not going to be very happy being a chairman. Do you see what I mean? Or if you want a very active private life so to speak you're not going to be very happy being a chairman because you won't have time for it.

Malcolm: Do you think it doesn't matter, if you're doing a particular thing within the spiritual community say you're working for a particular business, and you feel like you're just doing that little bit, and you can't see the rest sometimes, but that's not so important. Do you know what I mean, you can't see the objective whole as it were.

S: I think you have to be able to see the objective whole at least from time to time otherwise you'll start wondering why on earth am I packing these peanuts, how did I come to be doing this, here am I maybe, a university graduate with a degree, and I'm packing peanuts, why am I doing it. You can only make sense of that if you take a look at the wider perspective. But on the other hand you mustn't be looking at the wider perspective so much that you forget what you're actually doing, or stop doing it.

Suvajra: This brings up the whole area of, what do people actually want to do.

S: This brings up the whole area of self knowledge. Was it in this group that we had that discussion? We had quite a [27] tremendous discussion about self knowledge and the difficulty of understanding yourself in the other group. And that's what I said say in the case specifically of the new Order Member, it's very difficult to know what line is best for you to follow. Whether to help start up a new centre or commit yourself to a particular co-op, or go from place to place preaching the Dharma, you don't know what you're suited for, you don't know what is the best thing for you to put all your energies into, because you don't know yourself. You don't know what sort of energies you've got, you're not one unified person yet, you are to some extent otherwise you wouldn't have been able to commit yourself at all, but not perhaps sufficiently even yet. So I think one shouldn't make up one's mind too quickly, certainly not on a long term basis, and it would be most unwise say for a mitra or a newly ordained Order Member, definitely to commit himself to something say for the next five years. He doesn't know himself probably well enough to be able to do that.

Adrian: Sometimes you do get distinct feelings about what is your best course though. This seems to have happened to me over the past year or so, that I've got definite feelings about what it's right for me to do.

S: But that is all right, well, that can be on a moment to moment basis or a month to month, but I'm saying that one should be very careful about saying, well, this is going to be the right thing for me to do for the next five years, you don't know yourself probably well enough to be able to say that, quite apart from knowing the situation and the circumstances, say within the Friends. One has to adapt to changing circumstances sometimes.

Suvajra: Is all this tied up in with what you've been speaking about as the myth of your being?

S: The what?

Suvajra: The myth of your being.

S: I don't remember using that expression.

Suvajra: I'd heard from some Order Member that you'd been speaking about the myth of your being, that you had like a, a sort of, a something within you which had to come out in expression.

S: No. No, the report is completely apocryphal.

Clive: It sounds vaguely like the study group where you talked about mythology and expression of gestalt, but certainly I don't remember that particular ...

S: No, I certainly didn't use that particular expression 'myth of your own being.'

Asvajit: There is something I've heard to the effect that the FWBO needs to project a mythical image or a myth of itself, concerning itself.

S: To live out a myth even, yes; oh well it's all down on tape what I actually said so I'm not

going to try to remember what I did say and then repeat it.

Clive: It was the summer order mitra weekend.

Vajradaka: Was that the time when you said we were going to take over the world. (Laughter)

S: I don't remember. (Laughter) I don't remember. I don't [28] remember these minor statements. (Laughter)

But Milarepa says "I am well and happy without plans or schemes, for my mind is free from fraud." So we should certainly be free from, or we should certainly not engage in or indulge in, schemes or plans which are motivated by fraud, by a desire to deceive others. But on the other hand we should be very careful about plans or schemes, even of a positive nature, before committing ourselves to them. We have to be quite sure that well, if we do commit ourselves to them, we shall be able to carry that commitment through, that the plan or the scheme besides being skilful or positive in itself, is of such a nature that we really can put ourselves into it totally, otherwise later on we shall start experiencing some dissatisfaction. Or if we have committed ourselves to something and said that we've committed ourselves, and if other people are relying on our word in that respect, and then we let them down, that would be quite disastrous. This has happened repeatedly by the way, people out of inadequate knowledge of themselves, perhaps with a certain amount of wrong motive, committing themselves to a certain project or a certain responsibility and then not fulfilling it. This has happened repeatedly.

Pete Shann: What about the situation where, with Rechungpa here, who was wandering off, in a way isn't it a good idea for him to sort of as it were throw himself in the hands of Milarepa even if he is going to from time to time not be able to keep up that.

S: Well, it's all right if it's Milarepa, because Milarepa can cope and not be disappointed, but not if it's his fellow disciples. For instance if you say to your fellow disciples or your friends in the spiritual community, "OK I'll do this, you can rely upon me. I'll take it on for the next month", with regards say to a certain piece of work, a certain responsibility and after a week you disappear, they're left holding the baby.

Pete Shann: I was thinking more in terms of, maybe staying in a place for an amount of time, because you really feel that if you don't you'll just wander around. Obviously you do that because you don't know yourself, because you're not ...

S: Well, you see what I was saying was that's all right but don't sort of say, "Oh I'm going to stay here for five years" and then after a month you start wandering off. If you know yourself as well as that, that you're not likely to stay there for five years don't say anything about staying there for five years. Take it as it comes.

Clive: What about the self fulfilling prophecy? Where that you're not able to commit yourself, but you do it because, to make it, that a self fulfilling prophecy?

S: Well, if you know yourself sufficiently well, to know that if you say you're going to do it, that will help you to do it, fair enough.

Pete Shann: Yes, that's what I meant.

S: Yes, but you must really know yourself well enough. Otherwise if you say allegedly with the idea of helping yourself to do it, that you will do such and such a thing and then still you don't do it, well that is worse than ever. But especially it's important not to break one's promises to oneself, but it's no less important and in a way even more important not to break one's promises to other people because they are then let down, they are inconvenienced and as I've said they are left holding the baby. You have acted inconsiderately so far as they were concerned.

[29]

Clive: It's important isn't it to practise doing things which you like doing first of all, if you can't commit yourself let's say, commit yourself to something you like doing and continue to do it, and in that way get used to doing something on a regular basis.

S: Quite, but also of course, apart from all that maybe Milarepa is suggesting, though he doesn't directly say so, that there's no need unless there is some real objective necessity to scheme or plan very much at all, even positively. Do things, arrange things, in a provisional sort of way; not out of sort of a desire to avoid responsibility, or committing oneself but just because one has an open, flexible sort of approach, and one is not committed to a particular way of getting things done, one is more concerned with the eventual results. It might be, for instance, supposing Vajradaka arrives in Boston and finds that Boston is in the throes of a series of riots which are going to probably last for the next two or three years, well it would be very unwise then to sort of say, "Well, I've committed myself ...

[end of tape two tape three]

...to starting a centre in Boston and however unsuitable Boston is I'm going to start it in Boston anyway, that would just be rigidity. You might be better advised to look for another quieter place to start up a centre. Do you see what I mean? In that way schemes and plans should be quite provisional and even though you're quite determined to carry them out, if circumstances don't change; if circumstances change you're quite ready to be flexible and adapt, you don't insist on carrying things through regardless, you don't attach an exaggerated importance to that particular way of doing things.

Clive: In other words it's the end that you are committed to.

S: Yes, yes indeed, and even your conception of the end or the ends may change from time to time, as you yourself grow and develop.

Then again Milarepa says,

"I am well and happy, for I never involve myself in slanderous gossip."

Slanderous gossip, why do you think people involve themselves in slanderous gossip? What is slanderous gossip anyway?

Mangala: An expression of your negative feelings maybe for certain people, or just for anything and everybody.

S: Yes.

Malcolm: It's an indulgence isn't it?

Atula: Building your own ego up, for the sake of ...

S: Yes, it is an indulgence in negativity, "and I desire no fame or glory."

Pete Shann: This is quite connected isn't it?

S: It's as though in the course of slanderous gossip you're trying to put others down, and that is because you yourself desire yet fame or glory .. [gap in recording until...]

S: ... but he sums up the essence of the matter, probably in the words, "Where'er I stay, whatever I wear Or eat, I feel truly happy. At all times I am happy and well." (Pause)

[30]

Malcolm: Would that be the criteria for the spiritually enlightened person?

S: Well, I think it would be very inadvisable to say that anything was the criterion for a spiritually enlightened person, but it would be very surprising if a spiritually enlightened person wasn't truly happy where'er he stayed, or wore, or ate, or didn't eat. (Pause)

Malcolm: What, even if he was ill?

S: Even if he was ill, what does "being ill" mean? (Pause) There's a bodily disturbance but does that mean you can't feel truly happy, in your mind?

Clive: On the other hand it might be skilful to take quite a lot of care of what you eat and what you wear.

S: Well, that's quite another matter.

Clive: I agree with that but it doesn't necessarily mean that an enlightened person is careless.

S: .. careless. Mm. Mm. (Pause) Usually of course, people's mental states are quite seriously affected by the place, where they stay, even the clothes that they wear. One would have thought that that was a comparatively minor matter, but apparently it isn't. I mean sometimes people do say that if they do dress in new smart clothes they feel, psychologically, so much better, more self confident, more able to face people. They wouldn't feel the same if they were wearing old clothes, or if their clothes were ragged or patched, or very obviously from the latest jumble sale.

Malcolm: This conjures up a picture of a yogi to me. He's always on odd character I can never sort of make out - that he's got the noblest character, and the noblest thoughts, and what have you, yet he might be wandering around in old jumble sale clothes.

S: Mm.

Pete Shann: Yeah but he's not necessarily careless. He could go around wearing very smart clothes.

S: Because he may do that as a skilful means. If he is trying to do something for the Dharma, if he knows that people are not going to listen to him at all if he goes around wearing old jumble sale clothes, well, then he won't do that, because he's not attached to just wearing old jumble sale clothes, that's not the purpose of his existence; the purpose of his whole existence is to teach the Dharma, and if wearing old jumble sale clothes, gets in the way, well he'll wear something else. If necessary, he'll wear a smart lounge suit, even evening dress maybe, though, of course, here, you have to be very careful, and to be quite sure that you are actually doing something out of skilful means and not just conforming due to your own mental conditioning. It's not easy to know this.

Malcolm: That's the difference between an enlightened man and an unenlightened man. They might both do the same thing, but for different reasons.

S: Well, I wouldn't say you need even go so far as to say the enlightened man and the unenlightened man, just even the psychologically positive person would be less influenced by what he wears, and would care less what he wears, and adapt more naturally to circumstances. (Pause)

Clive: On the other hand I think you suggested that the more [31] the positive someone becomes, the more they take care with their appearance, the more brighter their clothes, ...

S: Well, that is one purely psychological level one might say. When you are becoming positive after being negative, especially if your negativity included not thinking very well of yourself, or caring for yourself, well, very likely then, when you become more positive and start caring more for yourself, you'll dress better, and try to make yourself look more attractive. That, in relation to your previous attitude toward yourself, will certainly be positive. But again, you may pass through a third stage of again not bothering. Not because you attach any particular importance to clothing at all but maybe all your time and all your energy is going into your meditation and maybe you can't afford to buy any more decent clothes etc. But again (chuckle) things might change, you might come out of your meditation quite successfully, relatively enlightened, and think of teaching the Dharma, so you start wearing better clothes again, this time because you want to make yourself more acceptable to people so that they may listen to you. (Pause)

Clive: What do you mean by "relatively enlightened"?

S: Well, not completely unenlightened but at the same time not fully enlightened: with some degree of insight. For instance, you can be a Stream Entrant without being an Arhant. Or you can be a Bodhisattva of the second stage, without being a Bodhisattva of the fourth stage. You can speak of that as being relatively enlightened. Of course you can weight the whole argument about whether it's possible to be 'relatively enlightened' if that means 'partially enlightened' - either you are enlightened or not enlightened etc. etc. But I think we all know what the expression means. (Chuckles) See what I mean?

Pete Shann: I think this happens on quite an ordinary level, I find some days I feel like wearing bright clothes, and other days I just don't think about it.

S: Mm. (Pause) But anyway, Milarepa is saying that he feels truly happy whatever he wears, and he doesn't wear very much (Chuckles) - if anything at all, sometimes! (Pause) So it is broadly saying, - it doesn't need much explanation I suppose - that external things don't matter very much to him. It's his mental state, his mental state is what ... he's truly happy, not just positive in the psychological sense, he's enlightened, he's realized the self-nature of his own mind. He's not dependent for that kind of happiness on anything external. External things don't matter to him at all! Not so far as he personally is concerned. (Pause)

Mangala: I suppose you have to remember that a lot of the time we are, I suppose, dealing with things on a psychological level, and on that level perhaps a lot of things like this do have a relative importance, maybe as a skilful means just in our own psychological positivity. So like I mean if you really are feeling a bit dull and a bit down, then maybe it would be an idea to do something quite worthwhile ...

S: Yes. It is accepted that for the time being one is dependent upon external factors, but the aim is not to be dependent on those external factors at all; but for the time being you are, and you are dependent on those external factors so that, eventually, you may not be dependent on any external factors at all. I mean, when you go away on retreat it means you are depending on external factors, you are depending on being in a quiet place in the country etc, etc, but you hope that eventually it won't make any difference to you whether you stay in the country or in the city, that you will be able to get on with your meditation just as well wherever you are - that is your hope for the future.

[32]

Suvajra: It's a reasonable dependence.

S: It's a reasonable dependence, yes.

Malcolm: It's good that people know ...

S: Mm. Mm.

Malcolm: I've lived with people who have been really untidy, and ... but, not, ... on the pretence that it's something they shouldn't care about, and really, it's because they're not positive ...

S: Yes. Ah.

Malcolm: They don't shine through all that dirt...

S: Right.

Malcolm: I tend to think that, well, at least, if I can't be mentally shining for people, I'll try to look a bit presentable for people.

S: Yes. Right.

Malcolm: So, hopefully I ... but I notice people are coming out of that in communities.

S: It's, a rationalization: 'it doesn't really matter'. Whereas, actually, it's maybe just laziness that they're rationalizing.

Pete Shann: And a certain amount of dislike for themselves. They don't think anyone else would like them so they wear dirty shirts.

S: Or even the work that they do - they think it doesn't matter if they do it in a sloppy sort of way: what does it matter, after all. (Pause) I mean, if they make a mistake in their work, and you get a bit annoyed about it, they say - "Well, what does it matter? Why are you getting annoyed? It doesn't really matter at all!" But that is a quite negative attitude, really, on their part. It is not a Milarepa-type equanimity or indifference. It is just a quite mundane indifference which is a quite unskilful state. (Pause)

Clive: People find it easy in that situation not to be identified with their work, in the sense that if you criticize their work then they don't feel criticized simply because they're not putting themselves into it.

S: Yes. Right. 'The work doesn't matter'. (Pause) Anyway, he says: "At all times am I happy and well. Son Rechungpa, you are in health on your return?" Mm. That doesn't need explanation, does it? Right. Someone read the next paragraph.

"Whereupon Rechungpa offered the dried meat to all the Repas without discrimination or stinginess. One of them asked Milarepa, Reverend Jetsun, you have just told us that Rechungpa would bring us a big present, larger than the whole valley can contain; but where is it?" With a smile Milarepa replied, "The valley is your stomach, and the meat is that big present - too big to be stuffed into it." Hearing this, the Repas all burst into hearty laughter."

S: (Chuckles) Well, what do you think of Milarepa's little joke?

(Laughter - comments made too low to be audible)

S: Mm?

Asvajit: ... metaphorically and literally true.

[33]

Adrian: He's almost like transcended their whole expectations. They expected some big gift, and he completely blows that.

S: Mm. (Pause) Perhaps it's just a sort of slight knock at their greed. Who knows?

Voices: Mm.

S: ... their big, greedy stomachs?

Aloka: He doesn't go into the things, that you've been talking about it ...

S: No.

Aloka: ... relative size of Rechungpa's gift ...

S: No. Right.

Aloka: ... and his feelings and devotion to Milarepa ...

S: No.

Aloka: ... he just turns it into a joke.

S: Why do you think that is? (Pause)

Clive: It's sort of, ah, in a way, doing this, ah, shows up the folly of, ah, having a fixed idea of something. Just ...

S: Hm.

Clive: ?

S: He might have thought, of course, - might have known that when he told them that Rechungpa is coming and bringing us something, that maybe they did think of something to eat, and all that sort of thing. Maybe they wanted something to eat, so that's why he makes a joke in this sort of way then - or now, rather. We don't really know. In a way, it's a slightly coarse sort of joke isn't it. It's not a very refined or witty kind of joke. (Laughter) It's a rustic sort of joke. (Laughter) Especially if they are hungry. No, not really cruel, because after all, Rechungpa has brought some dried meat. (Pause) You could say that "Rechungpa offered the dried meat to all the Repas without discrimination or stinginess." So he must have offered quite a lot. Maybe they were really stuffing themselves with it. So one of them asked Milarepa, "Revered Jetsun, you have just told us that Rechungpa will bring us a big present larger than the whole valley can contain; but where is it?" So with a smile Milarepa replied, "The valley is your stomach, the meat is that big present, too big to be stuffed into it." (Chuckles) Well, maybe they are trying to stuff it in. Maybe it is a sort of humorous rebuke to their greediness.

Malcolm: What about it being meat, Bhante?

S: Mm?

Malcolm: What about this thing being meat. I mean, it's not a sort of excuse for us to go to mother's and eat roast beef is it?

S: Well, I was wondering whether this question was going to come up.

Voices: (All together) (Laughter)

Malcolm: Well, it's a bit of a daft question in a way but er ...

[34]

S: It is pretty obvious the Tibetans are eating meat, even Milarepa seems to be saying nothing

against it. All right: why is it (wrong?) Mahayanist Buddhists, or of course, they're Vajrayanists, they could believe that the slaughtered sheep would go to Heaven, because they pronounced a few mantras, over it, before slaughtering it, or it could be that there's no vegetables in Tibet so they had to eat meat. Well, these are all the sort of things that one can say, but one has to be careful not to go searching for precedents. I mean, Milarepa might have eaten meat, all right, so what? What we have to decide is whether that is a skilful thing for us to do here and now. Whether that does represent an application, a necessary application, of the first precept, and if necessary, we shouldn't be afraid to say, "Well, Milarepa was wrong."
(Pause)

Atula: Would you say this is the case in Tibet, that there wasn't much vegetation then?

S: Mm.

Atula: Presumably that state wouldn't leave them much choice.

S: Mm. Also, of course, dried meat could be easily transported, and you could put it in a bit of hot water and you had a sort of meat soup, and that would keep you going. It does seem that there wasn't actually much more ... there were vegetables in Tibet, but not in any great quantities, whereas there were plenty of plains and plenty of grass and plenty of livestock grazing and therefore meat. Milk and butter and cheese was very easily available. That was the staple diet with some barley flour, and a little bit of vegetables and fruit occasionally. I remember that Tibetans who came to India from Tibet just couldn't get into the habit of eating vegetables. They ought to have done in the Indian climate, and they used to come out in terrible sorts of rashes and lots of pimples because they wouldn't take vegetables, certainly not fresh vegetables. They'd go on eating this dried meat and barley flour in India, and it just didn't do them any good. You could see they just weren't accustomed to eating vegetables.
(Pause) I mean, one could say well, they ought to be more concerned as Mahayana Buddhists. I met a few vegetarian monks; I remember one in particular who was staying with Dharo Rimpoche, he was an old man in his early seventies, and that's quite an advanced age for a Tibetan, but he was very bright and very sprightly, and even in Tibet he had been a vegetarian apparently since he became a monk, and he certainly didn't seem to be suffering from it, except he was rather thinner than most Tibetans, in fact quite thin, but he seemed very healthy and very bright, both physically and mentally, in a way that wasn't quite usual among Tibetans for such a very old person. In Tibet people of that age hardly exist.

Mangala: Tibetans on the whole (to me?) seem to be on the whole, physically, rather 'beaten', as it were.

S: Rather?

Mangala: 'Beaten', a bit sort of battered ...

S: Yeah.

Mangala: ... and I can remember like, Geshe Rabten for example, like he looked quite a bit older, like he'd had a hard time of it ...?

S: Yes. Right.

Mangala: Most of them do actually.

[35]

S: Yes, that's true. That's very interesting: that old vegetarian monk didn't look like that at all. He looked very sprightly and lively, and he was very cheerful, but he was about seventy-two or seventy-three, and he'd never eaten meat, even in Tibet.

Mangala: Perhaps it's a bit unreasonable to think Tibetan people didn't contemplate not eating meat, on the whole, and then maybe it's just really ... it would be very difficult, perhaps, not to ...

S: Anyway he managed, and seems to have managed quite well. So we can perhaps, if we want to find an excuse for Tibetans who are not vegetarians, it's not very difficult; but on the other hand I used to feel that well, you would have thought that being Mahayana Buddhists on coming to India and finding that there were vegetables and they didn't have to eat meat they would be very happy, but they weren't. It hardly occurred to them!

Clive: I think if you're sensitive to people. If you've been a vegetarian for some years you can sense in people if they've been eating meat ...

S: Oh, yes.

Clive: It's sort of as if they embody part of the dead ? Death is ...

S: The Tibetans, actually, on the whole, are quite a gross people. (Pause) All right, next paragraph.

"The Jetsun then said, "I am going to give you all an Initiation, but according to the Dharma an offering to the Guru is necessary; you may bring anything you have, but Rechungpa is a special case - he can do without one." Hearing this, Rechungpa unhappily joined in the ceremony."

S: Mm! So, " The Jetsun then said I am going to give you all an initiation, but according to the Dharma an offering to the Guru is necessary". Mm. Do you know about this? what sort of initiation is meant? It is of course the Tantric initiation which is usually called, well, the "abisheka" in Sanskrit, the "wongkur" in Tibetan; and it's the initiation into a particular kind of Tantric Sadhana; and it's called "wongkur" in Tibetan, which means "empowerment", or "giving of power", because according to the Tantric tradition, there is an actual transmission of 'power' from the guru to the disciple, at the time of the initiation, and that that transmission "empowers" the disciple to practise that particular sadhana, and, in fact, helps him in that sadhana; or helps him in the practice. Maybe it is a matter for discussion whether something literally is transmitted. That's another point. And also in what sense one can speak of it as "a transmission of power", because if we take the word "power" as contra-distinguished from the word "love", it won't be an "empowerment" in the ordinary sense. Many Tibetans even take it in this way; that you get "power" through the Tantric initiation, even "power" in a quite crude sense, but one has to be careful not to think of it in that way. It is more like a sort of 'sparking off' within the greatly heightened and intensified atmosphere created by the whole initiation ceremony. It's not really a sort of transmission of power, or even of energy, one might say, from the guru to the disciple, even though it may actually seem, or even though one may

actually experience it as though that is in fact what is happening. One must be careful not to interpret it too literally, or too metaphysically.

But anyway this is what Milarepa is proposing to do. He says, "I'm going to give you all an initiation, but according to the Dharma, an offering to the guru is necessary." This is the Tantric [36] tradition that when you get the initiation, you have to make an offering. In principle, you give everything that you have. Well, that is how it started: the disciple had to offer everything that he had, and this is, in principle, still the case. Unfortunately, in a sense, corruption crept in, and, well, one just made an offering in the end. One offered some gold or some money, or even something of a material nature, some food, or some rice, dried meat, or whatever it was. But the original principle was very much that you gave everything that you had including yourself. In other words, in a way the guru was going to give you everything, in a manner of speaking, so in order to receive that you had to give the guru everything. In other words, the guru cannot give unless you are receptive. The guru cannot 'give' - inverted commas - unless you are open to receive, and you cannot be open to receive if you are hanging on to everything that you have got, including yourself. So the Tantric initiation represents a spiritual communication at a very high level of experience indeed, and for that communication to take place there mustn't be any obstacles in the way, there must be complete openness on both sides and so far as the disciple is concerned, he expresses that openness, or manifests that openness just by giving the guru everything that he has got. In other words - in the words of another song, "He puts himself into the hands of the guru" - otherwise he is not able to receive the Tantric initiation.

So one might say there are many Tantric initiations that are not really Tantric initiations. I mean even Tantric initiations take place in this country, allegedly, - Tibetan lamas come along, they give Tantric initiations, and people maybe just give a little money or they just pay for the expenses of the whole thing, but have they really given themselves? Have they really given themselves and everything that they have got? Do they even understand that that is necessary even? If not, how can a Tantric initiation possibly take place? It's not simply that the guru gives instruction. It's not even that he gives inspiration. It's more that the guru gives himself to the disciple. So how can he do that unless the disciple gives himself to the guru? Unless they give themselves, vertically, to each other, in that particular way, no, as it were, "transmission of power" can take place. So it is a very serious business! But unfortunately, even in Tibet, it has been sort of commuted to a sort of substantial offering, usually a money offering. For instance myself when I received certain Tantric initiations from various lamas, I didn't know anything about these things, so I asked, "What do I have to do, what do I have to give?", and it was made quite clear that, well, just some money offering was expected. But about giving yourself, nothing was said about that at all. Maybe one was expected to gather that, or understand that, but it certainly wasn't spelled out, and it certainly didn't happen as far as I could see with the majority of people who took Tantric initiations. It was almost like sort of paying for a blessing. It wasn't really very much more than that.

Mangala: This could be one of the negative aspects of the concrete Vajrayana approach.

S: Oh, yes, one could say that. But in principle one gives everything. You do find that also exemplified in the "Life of Milarepa", Rechung's "Life of Milarepa" you may remember that Marpa, Milarepa's teacher, is giving various initiations, and his chief disciple comes from a great distance, and he brings with him everything that he has got, all his goats especially, to offer to the guru on that occasion, but there's one goat, (I think it's a goat that he hasn't brought) because it's lame; it hasn't been able to walk with the others, so it's been left behind,

and the guru sends him back to get it, and he has to carry it on his back all the way to the guru's house, so that he can offer, literally, everything that he has got. It's not that the guru wants that extra goat, the [37] guru is concerned about the state of mind of the disciple, because unless the state of mind of the disciple is absolutely ... well ... 'correct', so to speak, the Tantric initiation can't be given. Unless the total commitment is total commitment. Even if there is a one millionth part of non-commitment the commitment is not total. A commitment that is one millionth part short is just as much short of total commitment as a commitment that is only half a commitment! So Marpa sends the disciple back for that lame goat so that he will literally offer everything.

Mangala: What do you think a lot of modern Tibetan teachers really think they're doing in giving all these initiations ...

S: (Breaking in) They don't know what they're doing! They don't know what they're doing! If to the extent that they think about it at all they think they are keeping up the Tradition they are spreading Buddhism. A very few know what they are really doing. (Pause)

I mean, obviously, it is not an easy matter. If you think the Hinayana is difficult enough, the Mahayana is a hundred times more difficult, the Vajrayana is a hundred times more difficult still. (Pause) I mean the Hinayana doesn't expect total commitment of the disciple to the guru, no, the Hinayana - I mean certainly as it's generally current, doesn't expect that. It expects the disciple to be disciplined and obedient and to learn his lessons, and to be respectful, but it doesn't speak in terms of total commitment. (Pause) But the Vajrayana does! Because it envisages this very open relationship between guru and disciple. It places that right in the centre of the spiritual life in a way that the Theravada doesn't, or even the Mahayana doesn't. So it insists on all the conditions for that vertical communication being fulfilled. It insists that the guru totally gives himself to the disciple and the disciple totally gives himself to the guru, and that is expressed on the occasion of the Tantric initiation by literally giving everything you've got, not holding anything back. But corruption, as I said very quickly crept in, and all right, you just make a money offering. In modern times if you give twenty rupees on the occasion of Tantric initiation, that is quite acceptable. But it is absurd, isn't it? Twenty rupees is a quid (Chuckles) for a Tantric initiation.

Vajradaka: Maybe they were giving so many Tantric initiations that they ...

S: (Breaking in) Ah! That also! You see people started collecting even among Tibetans - there were Tibetans that I knew when I was in Kalimpong, who would go from one lama to another collecting initiations. They don't practise them usually, they collect them! They feel as though they've got a blessing, and that blessing is going to help them in their worldly life. Mm! In that sort of way the Vajrayana just comes down to the level of what Mr Chen used to call "vulgar magic." Mm! Mm. It's just 'village' magic.

Mangala: It doesn't say very much for Tibetan teachers does it? I mean, that ...

S: Well, yes and no. There are teachers who do understand what it's all about, definitely. A few. But on the other hand when the whole population is Buddhist, virtually there's going to be many levels of understanding, and even lamas are going to operate on many different levels, even to be on many different levels.

Malcolm: Wouldn't the term say "blessing", be more appropriate than an initiation? I remember ...

[38]

S: (Breaking in) Yes, but people always want the best! Only the best is good enough for them. Even an ordinary Tibetan if they are going along to a lama, if he can get a Tantric initiation he won't be satisfied with a blessing. You see. He may not know what a Tantric initiation is, or what it means, but he knows it's "bigger" and it's "better", so that's what he wants. Just as with Western Buddhists, they are not satisfied with practising the five precepts. Supposing they are not practising the five precepts, well, they don't make it their priority to practise the five precepts, no, they want to know about the "One Mind", and "Sunyata", only that is good enough for them. You see what I mean?

So people don't understand where they're really at. It is a form of arrogance, you could say. So they think, well, they almost seem to think they are so highly developed spiritually that they need the top teachings, and the top lamas, and the top gurus. When actually what they need is a bit of ordinary kalyana mitrata and some basic meditation practice and a bit of right livelihood, but they go haring off after Tantric initiations and all that sort of thing! (Pause)

Pete Shann: Just as a matter of interest, Bhante, the visualizations you give at ordination, they are not initiations are they?

S: Well, yes and no. Because you can't label certain initiations as Tantric initiations. I know that that is done. For instance you have visualizations in the Mahayana; you have visualizations in the Theravada, what to speak of the Mahayana? But technically, visualizations with mantras belong more to the Vajrayana more than to the Mahayana. But you can't really say that the visualization as such is Tantric or the visualization as such is Mahayanistic. Whether it is "Tantric" depends upon the degree of rapport between you and the guru. If there is no rapport at all, but you simple label it as a Tantric practice and a Tantric initiation, that's got no meaning at all! That's why you mustn't be misled by all the colourful Tibetan ritual. It may be that nothing truly Vajrayanic has in fact taken place at all! Even though they are blowing their thigh-bone trumpets and all the rest of it. It may, spiritually, be on the level of the Theravada.

Pete Shann: Do I understand then that the Mahayana don't have initiations, but do have visualizations?

S: They do have visualization meditation practices, yes, and you can learn these from a teacher ...

Pete Shann: But they wouldn't be initiations?

S: But they would ... well, they are not called Tantric initiations, but if there was sufficient rapport between the Mahayana teacher and his Mahayana pupil, in effect it would be a Tantric initiation. This is not actually what the Tibetan lamas would usually say, but this is, in fact, the position. (Pause) You need a Tantric mental attitude. The fact that something is Tantric does not reside in the ritual performed, or the implements used and the words spoken. Fundamentally, it's in the mental attitude. Otherwise you get the pseudo-sacramentalism we were talking about yesterday. It was in this group, wasn't it?

___: Bhante, how would you describe the Tantric mental attitude?

S: Well that is quite difficult, because you could say that again, in a sense, it's a Buddhist mental attitude. You can't even, in any real sense, discriminate Theravada from Mahayana from Vajrayana. I mean as I've said, sometime ago, I've met Theravada bhikkhus who were supposedly followers of the [39] Hinayana and the Arhant ideal, but whose attitude was quite Bodhisattva-like. So you've got to see what the real attitude is. So I would say that the real Tantric attitude is an attitude of complete openness, especially the vertical openness. Well, I said, especially the vertical openness but maybe the horizontal openness is no less important, because there is a dakini refuge, as well as a deva refuge and a guru refuge. But that openness characterizes or should characterize Buddhism as a whole. You can't say that the Vajrayana has got the monopoly of it. But inasmuch as the Mahayana arose to some extent by way of a protest against a degenerated Hinayana, and, inasmuch as the Vajrayana arose to a certain extent, as a protest against a degenerated Mahayana, you can regard the Mahayana as being more developed than the Hinayana, and the Vajrayana as being more developed than the Mahayana. But you are not necessarily on a higher path because technically you are practising a higher yana. It depends on your mental attitude. I mean, I've met so-called Mahayana Buddhists whose attitude, far from being altruistic, is quite narrowly Hinayanistic in the sense of being entirely concerned with their own salvation, even though they call themselves Mahayana Buddhists. Many Tibetan Buddhists are like that. They do not take the Bodhisattva vow very seriously at all. I mean, sometimes I say, had a sufficient number of Tibetan Buddhists taken their Mahayana Buddhism and their Bodhisattva Ideal seriously we would not have had to wait for them to come to the West until they were forced to come by the Chinese. [Laughter] Once again, we mustn't have any humbug! They didn't care a damn about what was happening in the West, or what was happening in India. Even now, how many lamas settle in India to teach? Who wants to teach the ex-untouchables? No, they want to teach rich Americans. Well, one can't help noticing these things. I mean, there are hundred of thousands, or even millions, of ex-untouchable Buddhists. Is a single Tibetan monk or lama working among them? Not a single one! Doesn't that seem extraordinary. But hundreds of them stream off to California. So can one ignore these facts? So one must see what is actually happening. What the mental attitude really is, before one decides whether it is really Hinayana, or really Mahayana, or really Vajrayana. I've certainly met, as I've said, Theravada bhikkhus who are far more Mahayanistic in attitude and spirit than some Tibetan lamas, and vice-versa. (Pause)

So one could say the Vajrayana attitude - and that means the Buddhist basically, in the pure sense, the deep sense - is one of complete vertical and horizontal openness - one can only describe it in that sort of way. And your openness is expressed by your attitude of giving. And Rechungpa has given to the beggar - we'll see the significance of that in a minute, the full significance - he's given that lump of jade to the beggar or what he thought was a beggar - and now Milarepa is saying, "I'm going to give you a Tantric initiation so make offerings". He's going to give the Tantric initiation - he's going to give himself, so to speak, so all right, they've got to make the offerings, they've got to give themselves. It's only when Milarepa and the disciples meet in that sort of state, or that situation, of mutual openness that anything can happen; that there can be, so to speak, any transmission.

So he says, "According to the Dharma an offering to the guru is necessary; you may bring anything you have, but Rechungpa is a special case - he can do without one." - (do without an offering). "Hearing this Rechungpa unhappily joined in the ceremony". But why unhappily?

___: Because he wanted to give.

S: Presumably, because he wanted to give. But he hasn't got anything left. He'd given the meat. That was all he had, all he'd [40] brought. He didn't know that there was going to be a Tantric initiation. So he hadn't any offering. But even so, why should he have joined in unhappily? He was willing to give.

Voices: (All together - words jumbled)

Vajradaka: Because if giving is the expression of openness then he couldn't express his openness.

S: Well, it could be that he felt if he didn't actually give technically, maybe he wouldn't get properly initiated. He might have thought that. You see, because that would mean he was still thinking in terms of the external offering which admittedly is important, rather than of the inner attitude. If you've nothing to give, well, so to speak, give yourself. He had himself!

___: Perhaps, also, he, actually, wasn't very easy about Milarepa having had a dig at him.

S: Yes!

Asvajit: He was a bit sensitive.

S: Mm. And also, people have their own sort of funny feelings. Here are all these other people making their offerings, he's not making an offering. So what are the others thinking, perhaps? Even if they've heard what Milarepa said, that Rechungpa need not make an offering, but it's as though he's a bit inferior. They are all making their offerings on this occasion - he isn't offering anything. Maybe he feels a bit left out, even though Milarepa has said, "You need not make an offering." I mean, this is what human nature is like, isn't it?
(Pause)

All right, read the next paragraph.

"When he approached the Mandala he saw the big jade which he had given to the beggar standing right in its centre. He was dumbfounded; then suddenly he realized that the beggar was his Guru's transformation, used to sever the bonds between himself and Lady Dembu. [Reviewing the whole event in retrospect], Rechungpa now felt deeply grateful to the Jetsun."

S: Mm. So what is the significance of this? Rechungpa has made his offering, but he made it to the beggar. He didn't make it to Milarepa, at least he didn't think he had made it to Milarepa - but does it matter? It's as though Milarepa is saying it's the generosity that matters - it's the spirit of giving that matters. It is not that the offering is to be made to the guru in a narrow sense ...

[End of side 1 side 2]

... because it is as though, in the case of the lady, the lady can be the greater hindrance, because the lady is, as it were, a human being. The jade can't speak The jade can't say, "No, don't give me away, that won't be good. Don't give me up." But the lady speaks like that, so

an animate thing that you are attached to is much more dangerous than an inanimate thing.

Malcolm: Yes, it's funny. It's easier to give yourself to a lady something like that, for a short period of time perhaps ...

S: But do you really give yourself? No! It's a bargain that is struck. 'You do this for me, and I'll do that for you. You don't really give yourself. If she goes off with some other bloke, well, how would you feel? You won't say, "Well I'm her faithful servant, I'll just help her to carry on with this affair with the other man. That is not your attitude. More often than not you [41] want to kill her! So have you given yourself to her? No. You're just trying to exchange something.

Asvajit: You can only really give yourself to something that's 'larger' than you are in some sense.

S: Yes! Mm.

___: What? ? (Laughs)

S: I think Asvajit means spiritually bigger. (Loud laughter)

Pete Shann: Do you give yourself up?

S: Yes. Totally!

Pete Shann: Oh, I see, yes, right.

S: Well, you can give yourself to your work, or even the very small job that you are doing.

Pete Shann: Or, or, or to somebody who maybe needs help. You can give yourself in a sense.

S: That's giving of yourself.

Pete Shann: Ah, yes.

S: But you totally sort of surrender, so that you place yourself at their disposal. That you can only to someone who is bigger than you are. (Pause)

Vajradaka: The outward form of actually going through it - like maybe a ceremony of relinquishment, like for example - it was obviously very moving and very powerful for both Purna and Lokamitra to have the anagarika ordination and take the orange robes, as an expression, and even an experience of renunciation. Maybe, that was particularly appropriate to that cultural environment that they were going to. In some way I felt that many of us were missing out - or I felt I was missing out - a way of expressing that ...

S: Ah! (Surprised tone)

Vajradaka: When I actually did feel that too, that I actually did want to do that, actually make that ...

S: What are you actually referring to?

Vajradaka: Well, referring to renunciation.

S: You mean going forth from the household life?

Vajradaka: Yes.

S: Mm. Yeah. (Pause)

Clive: I was just thinking just how much more you can make of that, say, being given a practice or an initiation by literally, say, giving yourself and all your possessions.

S: Mm. Yes. You could bring them all along in a little trunk. Mm.

___: Or a big trunk. (Laughter)

S: Well an envelope will do! (Laughter)

[42]

___: But if you do it ...

S: You could have a big jumble sale immediately afterwards! But then again, you have to be quite careful because, so often, the ceremony can become the reality. I've seen so much of this in the East. Perhaps in a sense, I've gone a bit 'off' ceremonies, even though by temperament I really like them and enjoy them.

Vajradaka: I can see that.

S: Sometimes I even wonder ... I think in terms of cutting them down, and making them simpler etc., etc.

Vajradaka: We haven't got anywhere near that stage ourselves really ...

S: Which stage?

Vajradaka: Well, the stage of having so many ceremonies that they just expand on their own without the spirit ...

S: I think there is a danger still, because people can still recite the sevenfold puja mechanically. You've got a simple example there.

Vajradaka: But the sevenfold puja is an expression of the Bodhisattva vow ...

S: Mm!

Vajradaka: ... it isn't really a simple thing in itself anyway, is it?

S: Certainly not towards the end.

Malcolm: The standard of ordination is getting higher, isn't it? That's something that ...
(Mumble)

S: Well, it's taken very seriously. you can put it that way.

Malcolm: In fact some other initiations which are quite easy to get has debased them, without really (having a hard time yourself?)

S: Well, the example that was mentioned in the Newsletter when one of our Friends realized that without knowing it, she'd been given the Bodhisattva Vow by a Tibetan teacher. It's incredible! The Bodhisattva Vow is such a tremendous thing, and one can just happen to sort of get it in the sense of being asked to repeat it in the course of a ceremony, the significance of which you have not understood, and someone has actually done this, who's suppose to be a responsible teacher. It is really staggering! It's an utter devaluation in fact of the Bodhisattva Vow. All we've taken up talks about the "Going for Refuge", which throughout most of the rest of the Buddhist world is regarded as a simple little matter that anybody can chant and say - "Buddham saranam gachami" - and there you are - you are a good Buddhist! You're an upasaka, that's that, no one thinks anything more about it, except here and there perhaps in Tibet or China. Certainly not in the Theravada - everybody is an upasaka - you're born saying "Buddham saranam gachami"! Anyway, is that the gong? (Pause)

___: Thank you.

S: Right you are.

[Break]

S: All right, someone like to read the first part of that song?

[43]

"Great was the blessing of the Father Guru,
Important was Milarepa's miracle,
Vital were Rechungpa's charity and love!
The jade you gave the beggar
Is with us here this evening.
We may offer it to Dem Chog
At our initiation rite."

S: Mm. "Great was the blessing of the Father guru, Important was Milarepa's miracle, Vital were Rechungpa's charity and love." Who is the Father guru?

___: Marpa?

S: Seems to be Marpa. So what is Milarepa saying here? He is saying, "Great was the blessing of the Father Guru, Important was Milarepa's miracle, Vital were Rechungpa's charity and love." What is he, in effect, saying?

Atula: Everyone's role is important.

S: Yes. Everyone has contributed to the situation. So there is the blessing flowing from Milarepa's own guru, which has inspired Milarepa himself; there is the miracle that Milarepa himself actually worked, and Rechungpa's own charity and love: all these have contributed to bringing about the present situation. So Milarepa is making it very clear that no one, not even his guru, not even himself, can claim sole credit for the positive situation that now has been brought about. I think it is quite important to remember this, especially when someone seems to be playing a relatively unimportant part; it is important to remember that that part also is vital, is necessary. You notice that Milarepa says, "Vital were Rechungpa's charity and love." The blessing of the Father guru was great, Milarepa's miracle was important, but Rechungpa's own charity and love were vital.

So I think it's quite important to remember this sort of thing, especially in connection say with Centre activities. Not everybody can be "up front", so to speak; not everybody can be in the public eye, others are needed in a supportive capacity. You need the spiritual "back-room boys" too. Everybody contributes to the end result. The success of the whole project, the whole venture, is due to everybody's cooperation. I think there needs to be a very strong sense of that. So in that sense no one is more important than another, in the sense that the cooperation of all is required. It may be that someone is more difficult to replace than someone else, but nonetheless all those particular functions have to be fulfilled.

So having mentioned Rechungpa's charity and love, due to which he gave the jade to the supposed beggar, Milarepa goes on to say, "The jade you gave the beggar, Is with us here; this evening We may offer it to Dem Chog At our initiation rite." Dem Chog is a wrathful Buddha-form, it's Samvara in Sanskrit.

So that's, as it were, introductory. Now let's read the main part of the song ... someone like to read that middle part?

"To give alms to the needy with compassion
Is equal to serving Buddhas in the Three Times.
To give with sympathy to beggars is
To make offerings to Milarepa.
Sentient beings are one's parents; to
Discriminate between them is harmful and
Ignorant. True sages and
Scholars are always in accord;
Clinging to one's School and condemning others
Is the certain way to waste one's learning. [44]
Since all Dharmas equally are good,
Those who cling to sectarianism
Degrade Buddhism and sever
Themselves from Liberation.
All the happiness one has
Is derived from others;
All the help one gives to them
In return brings happiness.
One's pernicious deeds
Only harm oneself."

S: Mm. So let us take these points one by one. "To give alms to the needy with compassion Is equal to serving Buddhas in the Three Times." But how literally is one to take this? "Equal" in what sense? In what respect? It's presumably not equal with regard to punya. Um. Because there is a Buddhist teaching, at least in the Hinayana, apparently taken over by the Mahayana, to the effect that, the higher the degree of spiritual attainment in the person to whom you make the offering, the greater the amount of punya which results to you for making that offering.

Vajradaka: Is that true even if you're unaware of that higher attainment?

S: Some texts do seem to suggest that.

Vajradaka: Mm. Do you think that's true?

S: It's difficult to say.

Clive: What is being aware of the attainment (?)

How can you be fully aware of someone's attainments unless you've actually attained to that level yourself?

Vajradaka: Well, precisely.

Mangala: It's a Hinayana teaching did you say?

S: Yes. It's certainly found in the Pali texts. As when the Arya Sangha is said to be "the field of merits."

Asvajit: Isn't it also a Mahayana teaching that all beings are from the very beginning Buddhas?

S: Yes. Yes!

Asvajit: And therefore one really believes that, then ...

S: Yes. Indeed!

Asvajit: ... and the rest ...?

S: Well, it is, so to speak, not open to the Hinayana to believe that, because their approach is rather different, but it is certainly open to the Mahayana to believe that. So if you really see someone as a Buddha, to offer something to him as a Buddha, well, one could say that you are making the offering to a Buddha. It depends on the intensity of your realization. But you notice that Milarepa says: "To give alms to the needy with compassion." Yes, he's not just saying, "To give alms to the needy is equal to serving Buddhas in the Three Times", but "To give alms to the needy, with compassion." So what do you think that means? What do you think that implies?

___: It presupposes quite a high state of attainment.

S: Yes.

[45]

Mangala: You're also not just doing it for your own punya as it were.

S: Right! Indeed! Yes. Yes. Yeah.

Mangala: You're not thinking of yourself.

S: But what sort of compassion is involved here? What sort of compassion do you think Milarepa has in mind? Is it ordinary kindness or feeling sorry for someone, feeling pity for them?

Pete Shann: Well, it's metta looking down, isn't it? True metta, which would be equal to serving a Buddha, which is true worship, as it were.

S: But what is true metta in the Mahayana? In what way does Mahayana metta and karuna differ from, let us say, Hinayana metta and karuna?

Aloka: It's working for the Enlightenment of all.

S: It's working for the Enlightenment of all sentient beings, but even more than that. It's the Maha maitri, and the Maha karuna. So what is it that make it Maha maitri and Maha karuna.

Suvajra: The experience of sunyata.

S: It's the experience of sunyata along with that. Along with that feeling, or emotion of maitri and karuna, there is insight into the truth of voidness. There is a metaphysical dimension, so to speak. So "To give alms to the needy with compassion" - that is to say "to give alms to the needy as a Bodhisattva, as part of your practice of dana paramita in the fullest sense, "this is equal to serving Buddhas in the Three Times." So it isn't just giving alms to a poor person just out of ordinary kindness in a casual sort of way. It's practising the dana paramita as part of your practice of the Bodhisattva path and with compassion which is rooted in, or which is an expression of, at least a partial realization of sunyata. So it is that giving of alms to the needy which is "equal to serving the Buddhas in the Three Times." The Three Times being, of course, the past, present and future.

"To give with sympathy to beggars is To make offerings to Milarepa." Well again, how is one to take that? I mean Rechungpa offered his jade to the beggar, thinking it was a beggar, but it turned out to be Milarepa, so he had offered it to Milarepa. But is giving with sympathy to any beggar equivalent to making offerings to Milarepa? And if so, in what sense? (Pause)

Clive: If you believe that all beings are Buddhas ...

S: Mm.

Clive: ... then it is.

S: It sort of includes Milarepa. I mean, Milarepa is Milarepa because of his spiritual enlightenment; because he is, so to speak, a Buddha. But do you think that is very easy to do?

If you think it's very easy to say - "To give with sympathy to a beggar", really feeling that that beggar has a deep spiritual potential. Is that very easy? (Pause)

Clive: It's easy to give to someone who has realized certain attainments, because you feel as if your action is actually being received in some way ...

S: Mm.

[46]

Clive: ... by the Buddha.

S: Mm. (Pause)

Clive: You see what I mean?

S: Yes. It's being appreciated, so to speak, by him.

Clive: Yes.

Mangala: I wonder if that is how you would actually respond to a beggar, well, in that ... if it would be that sort of ... ah ... let's say, intellectual, ... at least conscious intellectual aspect, well, you wouldn't just see somebody starving, or whatever... You just respond, with your heart, well, let's say, rather than thinking, well this person could be enlightened one day, what I mean?

S: Mm.

Mangala: ... that sounds a bit sort of ... well ...

S: I don't think it is actually that through your act of giving, you add the mental reflection, well, that one day this person will one day a Buddha, it's more that you do actually experience that. You do actually experience that particular person at that very moment as a Buddha. This is actually possible. Not that you just add the reflection to your act of giving.

Clive: Is it that you actually experience them as enlightened?

S: Yes. As a Buddha, so to speak, yes.

Malcolm: You feel quite reverent towards them?

S: Yes, you'd feel all the appropriate emotions.

___: I find that very difficult to ...

S: Well, yes, it is, no doubt! But this is, I think, what Milarepa is talking about.

___: This, surely isn't just confined to beggars? (Loud laughter)

S: Well, we're coming to that. Milarepa comes to that in a minute, in the next couple of lines.

He's speaking about beggars or getting into what he wants to say via beggars, for obvious reasons, because that is how the story went.

Atula: It's as if you really gave to a beggar you wouldn't be content to leave them in that situation - usually we give materials, money, to get rid of them.

S: Well, it depends how long you could keep up that particular way of seeing somebody. You might see it just for an instant and give then, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you could sustain that attitude. It might last just a short time.

Mangala: I suppose you could say who else is there to give to, ...

S: You could say that. You could add any sort of reflection, but the point is what you actually experience at the time. I think Milarepa is envisaging the possibility of actually experiencing something of that sort.

Pete Shann: Is it suggested that you should attempt to sort of develop that quite consciously by, as one would say, reflecting on [47] various things?

S: I think the suggestion is that you should develop that attitude, because the song is clearly a song of exhortation, but I don't think, actually, reflections will help you very much. It's a spontaneous product of the whole course of your spiritual life, your whole spiritual attitude.

Pete Shann: In the same way as say you develop metta, by reflection as it were, in the meditation, would that be similar here?

S: No. This goes a very long way beyond, because in reflections in connection with metta, you call to mind the occasions on which you have had a happy relationship with somebody, or felt good towards them, etc, etc. But here you are concerned with actually seeing or experiencing beggars as Milarepa, or beggars as the Buddha; something of which perhaps you've no previous experience. It relates to a quite different dimension not just a mundane, as it were, psychological, positive feeling but much more of a real insight.

Mangala: You've got to be really careful there. I think there's a danger of romanticising. Well beggars are just human beings in a way. You can say ah well I can see there is there a Buddha there, really, and a kind of pseudo-spiritual ...

S: Well, you have to beware of false feelings as well as of purely theoretical thoughts - it must be an actual experience. You are neither just reflecting in a quite calculating kind of way, Ah, well, this particular person, this particular person, this particular beggar to whom I'm making the offering could become a Buddha one day. On the other hand you are not just romanticising or sentimentalising the beggar, you're not just gushing over him. What Milarepa is talking about, or singing about, is something quite different.

Malcolm: If he didn't have this idea that all beings are Buddhas then is it healthy ... ah ... to positively project this sort of thing, well, have faith in the fact that the person can have more qualities than you can actually see?

S: Mm. Well, of course, it's always advisable to be a bit reserved in one's judgement of other

people, and perhaps it is always just to tell yourself well you don't really know what somebody else is like, they could be more spiritually developed than you, you don't know. But on the other hand, you should really believe that, really genuinely believe that there is that possibility, not just say it, or pretend to say it just as a sort of spiritual good manners, that you have to go through this humble routine.

But again, here, Milarepa is referring to an actual experience not a sort of intellectual gymnastic. (Pause) You must stick actually to your experience: - if you only see a beggar there and you don't see him as a Buddha at all, well, all right, accept that that is your experience. It is not that you must try to negate your experience - saying, "No, no, I'm not really seeing a beggar, it's really a Buddha that I am seeing." It isn't that at all! It must be an actual experience. Just reminding yourself that even the most unpromising looking person has spiritual potential, and recognizing that in an intellectual sort of way; that is a quite different thing, even though it may well be positive and helpful, but it is a different thing from the actual experience.

Mangala: Just going back to the other point about punya, do you think this presumably Hinayana attitude that it is actually more efficacious to give to the more spiritually developed than to say, [48] the needy?

S: Well, I put it ... well, first of all, yes, it is a better investment say to keep alive an enlightened person that to keep alive just a beggar. You'd get more out of the enlightened person. I think you could look at it all in a slightly different way: this idea of getting more punya from offering to the more highly developed person - that it's as though in dealing with a spiritually more developed person, you are dealing, as it were, with someone with, well, let's say, at least, a lot more energy. If the situation involves someone of a higher degree of spiritual development, it becomes a more highly charged situation. Do you see what I mean? Whatever happens, therefore, in that situation, will be more highly charged for better or for worse. Perhaps one should look at it in more general terms, in this sort of way. You may be more attracted to them, because of their greater energy. You also may react against them more violently, for the same reason.

Mangala: To take that to a maybe not a conclusion, but you can't just ignore the beggars and the needy and just concentrate on, let's say, spiritually developed people or people you consider to be spiritually developed. I mean, I would question whether in fact that would be doing anything for your punya or for anything else, in some senses.

S: Well, it would depend on the motive with which you did it. You might feel, well, these people, these more highly developed people, they are more deserving to be looked after because they are doing so much for all living beings, a beggar isn't doing much, I've only a limited amount of time and energy and resources - let me devote them to helping those who really are doing a lot for the world.

Anyway, Milarepa goes on to generalize a bit more, he says, "Sentient beings are one's parents; to discriminate between them is harmful and ignorant." (Pause) Are you familiar with this notion, very strong in Tibetan Buddhism, that all sentient beings were at some time or other, in the past, in previous lives, your own mother and your own father? You must have come across the idea - but anyway it's very strong in Tibetan Buddhism, so therefore it's said that one should view all beings equally, as they have sometime in the past, all been your

mother and your father. So "to discriminate between them is harmful and ignorant. In other words this is a sort of argument which is brought forward to try to help you treat all beings alike. But is this an argument that we would find in the West, even as Buddhists, very easy to accept? I mean, you might accept that, yes, there is such a thing as rebirth, and no doubt in the past, you've met some of the people that you're involved with at present, but do you think you could very seriously believe, in a very real and convinced way, that all the people that you are in contact with now, all the people that you are likely to meet, all the people that you do meet, or are in contact with in any way, at one time or another, in the past, were your own mother and father at different times? Is it possible to be convinced of this in a very real sort of way; so that you can actually treat people more alike?

Asvajit: If your vision is really there, Bhante, you can ... I mean, it's a sort of intuitive thing.

S: Mm.

Asvajit: ... Something that one can appreciate as ... It's not something I think you can think about that much. If you experience people as people, or as potential individuals, then it is possible to sustain that attitude.

S: Mm

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Asvajit: and sometimes, you may actually have a feeling, well, this person has been somewhere in my past, even if you can't actually pinpoint it.

S: But why it is said they have been your mother and your father is so that you should adopt a certain attitude towards them, because your mother and your father have done so much for you, they've brought you up, they've nurtured you, etc, etc. So if you think of all living beings as having been your mother and father it means that you should be very grateful to them. In this way, you would find it easy to develop metta towards them and treat them all alike because you owe a debt of gratitude to them all - they've all been your mother and your father. This of course presupposes a very firm belief in the teaching of karma and rebirth which Western Buddhists, of course, don't always have. If you're not even very sure about karma and rebirth, you can't really develop this sort of attitude, in this sort of way, can you?

Atula: You could perhaps approach it, as an idea, in a sort of humanistic sort of way, and try and get some appreciation of the fact that people ...

S: There is another point also, that nowadays people don't even have very positive impressions about their mothers and fathers (Laughter) - they might have very negative impressions about them. It wouldn't help at all to think of everybody as having been your mother and father, that would make you virtually enemies of the whole human race!

But the purpose of putting things in this way surely is that you should just treat all beings alike: that there is the same positive emotion towards them all, even if you don't find this particular argument convincing, you still need to develop that attitude.

Suvajra: Well, what it is that we could use now, that would help us to develop that attitude?

S: Well.

Suvajra: I don't find that one very ...

S: Well, what do you think?

Mangala: A good friend - just being a good friend.

S: Why should you try to like everybody? Why should you try to feel positive towards everybody? Or how can you do that or - you accept, presumably, that it's a good thing, or a positive thing for you to have thoughts of metta towards all - but if you don't have, well what sort of reflections are going to help you to develop it if this one doesn't help you, uhm?

Clive: At some point or other everyone ... there's a bit of you in everyone.

S: Uh-hum. In what sense?

Clive: ... and a bit of everyone in you.

S: In what sense?

Clive: In that ... you are not the same accumulation of qualities in this life as you have been in other lives ...

S: Mm.

Clive: ... and that in the state before birth that the qualities which [50] go to make up you are ? so that the set of qualities which make up you in this life could well have been distributed among half a dozen people in the last life, different people, so that you could say, you are - in past lives you've been everyone else and everyone else has been you, so that everyone else is you. Uh?

S: Well I understand the conclusion. I'm not quite sure how exactly how you've got there.

Clive: Well, then you could say ... well this presupposes you have good feelings towards yourself, but then if you have good feelings about yourself and consider everyone else is a part of you then you should have good feelings towards them.

Malcolm: You're supposing the whole world is subjective then, isn't it? That's not quite right.

S: But in what sense are you made of the same "pieces", so to speak, that other people are?

___: A common sense, sentience?

Mangala: I suppose inasmuch as we're all human beings and we've all got certain potential, perhaps unlimited potential and we each perhaps manifest and develop certain qualities and aspects, other people will manifest others, so I think through communicating and relating to other people and see something in them which can perhaps start to put you in touch with that in yourself, that becomes a possibility to be you and that ... I think probably that everything

probably that any other human being has got you potentially have, or could have, and vice versa, so I think to that extent there is a ... well, a lot of connections.

S: Mm. Sometimes of course, the argument is used that everybody suffers in the same way, you're all in the same boat, you all have to face the same difficulties, and therefore you should feel a natural solidarity with all other living beings, at least with all other human beings. (Pause) Anyway, an attitude ...

Clive: Sorry. That's seems a bit sort of negative connection.

Malcolm: I don't think that. I think it's more objective myself. (Pause) I mean, the two ... one guy it took him all ... he had to go all the way to the moon before he could see that men were truly brothers? This was the first man on the moon, he said ... he looked down on the earth and he said men were truly brothers (Pause)

Asvajit: (It's also possible among the spiritual community that, certainly, in a metaphorical sense, your spiritual friends have been your parents - in other words they have given birth, or given rise to certain positive attitudes in yourself ...

S: Mm.

Asvajit: ... And that's very real, and very tangible, and doesn't seem to require any difficulty at all, to see. And if you feel that and see that as far as the spiritual community is concerned, it's also true to a lesser extent in other people.

S: You notice, Milarepa actually says, "to discriminate between them" - that is to say, sentient beings - "is harmful and ignorant". Hm! Hm! That's a quite strong statement, isn't it?

___: Yes.

Mangala: I think he probably means on a certain basic existential level, inasmuch as they are human beings. Perhaps it's not referring so much their individual qualities and attainments [51] etc.

S: Mm.

Asvajit: The discrimination as I see it, is not so much between the people that one sees, but in one's attitude. The fact one shouldn't treat people just from a subjective point of view.

S: Oh yes, this is the meaning, surely. Not that one should not recognize their distinctive qualities, but should have the same attitude of metta, of love and goodwill towards them. Yes, this is clearly the meaning.

Malcolm: And nurture inherent qualities within yourself.

S: Well it would seem that if one wants to develop metta towards all living beings, one must essentially be able to see the positive side of all living beings and that can only be by way of seeing their capacity for growth and development, because at present, I mean, quite a lot of sentient beings don't have any very positive qualities, so you have to introduce the thought of

it being possible for them to develop those qualities if you are going to develop any metta towards them at all. You can see them with metta, I think, only to the extent that you can see them positively, and if the positivity isn't already there in them you have to remind yourself, well, it is there potentially.

So you cannot really, I think, realistically develop a positive attitude for all living beings, unless you have some insight into, or understanding of, the potentiality of all living beings to develop; unless you see them in terms of development.

Malcolm: Bhante, can you say that? It must be there - you must know this, because otherwise you wouldn't have the disillusionment in the first place. Won't you sort of somehow ... , as soon as I grew up I began to realize people aren't how I thought they were, kind of thing ... Therefore I must have had an idea of how people should have been.

S: Yes. Well I grew up with the naive idea that people always spoke the truth - (laughter) - that they were quite frank and open and straightforward, and was gradually disappointed and disillusioned. I wonder where that notion of mine came from!

Malcolm: There must have been a natural ...

S: Anyway, I ...

(End of Tape 3 Tape 4)

[Part of discussion missing]

S: What is the significance of the antithesis - what is the point of distinction, do you think, between a true sage and a scholar? (Pause) What is a true sage? What is a scholar?

Suvajra: A true sage is someone who has direct experience.

S: Yes. Direct experience, especially genuine insight. And a scholar?

Suvajra: A scholar has, well knowledge, but ...

Malcolm: Rational.

Suvajra: A 'book' knowledge but ...

[52]

S: Yes. A scholar is someone with "book" knowledge. But Milarepa says, "True sages and scholars are always in accord." It may be that his meaning is true sages and true scholars. It should be. It's more, of course, that the true scholar will be in accord with the true sage - that is to say the true scholar, somebody who is really trying to understand what the books say in a genuine manner, even though his approach is predominantly intellectual. He will know, he will understand the limitations of that sort of approach and though his interpretations and though his understanding may not be as deep as those of the sage, the true sage, they will not contradict them. I think that is quite important: one shouldn't make a false antithesis between spiritual experience and intellectual understanding. Intellectual understanding doesn't go as

far as actual spiritual insight and realization but the two are not therefore contradictory. The conclusions at which a scholar arrives from his intellectual, but still sympathetic, study of the literature, will point in the same direction, broadly speaking, as the spiritual experience of the true sage. So scholarship is not to be despised. One mustn't indulge in a sort of superficial depreciation of scholarship and intellectual understanding in the supposed interests of a spiritual development understood as antithetical, or even opposed, even hostile, to the intellectual understanding - the intellectual understanding also helps, it has its place, the scholar has his place, even though the scholar is not to be confused with the sage. There will not be any disagreement between the true sage and the true scholar. The true sage will not try to hit the scholar over the head with his spiritual experience, neither will the true scholar try to hit the sage over the head with his "book" knowledge.

Malcolm: Was this how Buddhism seemed to be more in accord with science, in a way, than say Christianity which seemed to be at odds with it?

S: I would say that probably is quite an erroneous impression. In its own way Buddhism is just as unscientific. What about traditional Buddhist geography? It's even less scientific than traditional Christian geography! I mean, we sort of ridicule the Christians for their geocentric astronomy, but what about Buddhist geography with its Mount Meru, and its Four Continents, and all that sort of thing; and its seven seas in concentric circles? That isn't very scientific either. You can give an interpretation of that but then the Christians nowadays can give an interpretation of their unscientific geography too. So you're both in the same boat. I think it's quite dangerous to try present Buddhism as more scientific than Christianity. It means you are sort of paying lip-service to science. You are presenting, or accepting, science as the criterion, and trying to prove the superiority of say, Buddhism to Christianity by showing that it is more scientific than Christianity. I think this is a quite dangerous thing to do, and probably based on a misunderstanding of, at least, of Buddhism, possibly of science itself, and even of Christianity.

Mangala: Do you think it is sometimes possible to be both a scholar and a sage?

S: Oh, yes, indeed, yes! I think the question arises especially, when it comes to translating texts - traditionally in Buddhism the scholars and the sages worked together in translating texts. You need the scholar's help, you need the scholar's knowledge, because after all, you are dealing with words, and you need to understand the meaning of those words as words; on the other hand those words relate to profound spiritual experiences and there the sage may be able to help you. So sage and scholar working together produce the best translations of Buddhist scriptures. Sometimes the scholar is a sage, and the sage is a scholar, that's even better, but if some are scholars but not sages, [53] and some are sages but not scholars, then they must work together; they must co-operate in the translating of the scriptures. But the one should not depreciate the other. If the sage is talking about his experience, then there is no point the scholar saying, "Well that's not mentioned in my books." Or if the scholar is pointing out that certain things are found in the scriptures, well the sage shouldn't say, "Ah, well, that's not in accordance with my experience." Not in a dismissive sort of way.

Atula: It does seem as though the scholar has to have some sort of a bit of experience himself.

S: Yes. I think one would say the scholar would need to have a sympathetic understanding of the texts, even in order to be scholarly in them at all, but at the same time the sage would

need to have some understanding of the books, the texts, to be a scholar to some extent, before he could make any sensible statement about them on that level. (Pause) I mean, the sage could not give you, just out of his spiritual experience, much insight into the etymology of a word. I mean there you might need the services of the scholar.

Mangala: Scholarship could be seen as "skilful means".

S: Yes, one could say that - part of one's equipment. (Pause) But perhaps, if you were really into your spiritual life, your spiritual development, you wouldn't have much time for scholarship, you would have to rely perhaps, for information on certain points on those would had specialized in the study of those things, for the whole of their lives.

Asvajit: You seem to be saying, Bhante, that the sage is someone who uses, or who exemplifies "heart wisdom" ...

S: Mm!

Asvajit: ... and the scholar the one who has the "head" wisdom.

S: Yes! One could use those terms here. Yes. Both are a form of wisdom.

Clive: Which is more conducive for enlightenment?

S: Well, of course, the "heart" wisdom one could say, if one has to make a choice between the two, well choose the "heart" wisdom rather than the "book" wisdom, or the "book" knowledge. But, if the sage is to relate his experience, his spiritual experience, to tradition and to literature, he needs some scholarly knowledge too. (Pause)

Clive: It's a sort of seventy/thirty. Like seventy per cent sage and thirty percent scholar.

S: Yes, maybe. Otherwise, a sage may be giving a perfectly good talk about say the Dharma out of his experience, but supposing he mixes up the Four Noble Truths, with the Four Satipatthanas, or something like that, just because he doesn't know the literature. Well, I mean, that ... he could confuse people in that way, or they might not take him seriously thinking he doesn't really know what he's talking about.

So "True sages and scholars are always in accord; Clinging to one's school and condemning others, Is the certain way to waste one's learning." What do you think this means? What is Milarepa talking about? "Clinging to one's School and condemning others Is the certain way to waste one's learning." What is one's School?

Atula: One's sect.

S: Mm? Sect? You mean the "Kagyupa" school, "Nyingmapa" [54]school?

Pete Shann: It's not being open to any other teachings or any other view of things ...

S: Mm. Or any other type of practice.

Pete Shann: Mm. It's just a state of mindless ... ah ... of your own actual (knowing?) if you

can't see the sage from a different angle.

S: Mm. Yes. Right.

Pete Shann: ... then you're obviously not seeing your own - your own - your own teaching.

S: Mm. (Pause) At the same time that seems to be only half of the truth, especially, say, for us, as we are situated in the West, and we come into contact with different forms of Buddhism, different schools, I mean, as those schools actually exist at present, and as we encounter them, our attitude cannot be one of unqualified appreciation, if you see what I mean. We have to discriminate. In fact we have, I would say, not to think in terms of schools at all. But to think in terms of well, what is the Dharma? What is in accordance with the Dharma? What is going to help the individual in the course of his or her own spiritual development? (Pause) In other words one shouldn't have a school at all. Not say have a school but not cling to it - don't even think in those terms. Just think in terms of Buddhism, just think in terms of the Dharma, or even, if you like, don't think in terms of Buddhism, think simply in terms of what is going to help the individual to evolve. If you find a teaching which is helpful, even in the Bible, that most unlikely place, (Laughter) but even if you find it even there, accept it, and put it into practice. (Pause)

Suvajra: You'd really have to be quite honest with yourself, I think ...

S: Yes!

Suvajra: So many people are ... well, they've got all their own ideas ...

S: I think also one does find, sometimes, in the Buddhist world, this sort of teaching used in the wrong sort of way to stifle any sort of honest criticism. That if one criticizes at all, it is not, or should not be, one school criticizing another, it is just the individual speaking up against something which is not in accordance with the Buddha's teaching. That is to say, saying that this does not help the individual to evolve. It is not a question of criticizing or condemning any particular school. Mm! Mm!

Atula: It's sort of criticizing the application of it rather than the principle itself.

S: Well, you might ... maybe you're criticizing the principle itself. Maybe the principle itself is not quite right, or is based on a misunderstanding.

Mangala: ? the idea there shouldn't be any schools at all. Just the individuals trying to evolve.

S: Mm. Well, that in fact, is all that there is, really, but certain individuals may be [55] trying to evolve in much the same sort of way, so there is a natural sort of coherence among them, but they shouldn't lose sight of the fact that other individuals may be trying to evolve in a somewhat different kind of way.

Clive: It's quite important isn't it? It's a bit like the group we were talking about, you see? Buddhism and the FWBO merely as a functioning group which is positive and conducive to growth but essentially all there are is being developing.

S: Yes. That is right. Yeah. (Pause)

Mangala: Just practically speaking the danger with that is that you can get just too sort of ... ah ... bits all over the place, I think ... ah

S: In what way?

Mangala: Um, well, I think maybe, provisionally anyway, at least for a while, one needs a certain kind of limitation of one's outlook, and thought and ideas ...

S: Yes.

Mangala: ... until you can, perhaps, well, learn to do without them.

S: But what should the limitation be? The limitation should not be so much to a particular school, as to those particular practices and teachings which are actually helping you, more perhaps than any others.

Clive: I think what some people mistake is the means for the end. like in the FWBO we've got certain set practices and ideas which are supposed to be conducive to growth and in the main, which are, for most people, but somebody is doing something which is different from that and the people ought to be able to judge what they are doing on its merits, is it actually helping them to grow.

S: Mm. Yeah. It's not just saying, "Well, it's different from what we're doing."

Clive: Yes ...

Malcolm: ? how about a particular teacher then?

S: What do you mean by that?

Malcolm: Well, a sort of, ah ...

Mangala: A guru?

Malcolm: ... follow two teachers at once, or two gurus at once.

S: Well again, it depends on what you mean by "following". You cannot put yourself into the hands of two people at the same time. But you can certainly learn from more than one person. Let us say within the FWBO you have two kalyana mitras say, you learn from both of them. You can go to the study groups of so many different Order members, and you can learn from all of them. So it's possible to learn from quite a number of different people, and even to look up to quite a number of different people, but you can actually put yourself in the hands of, and commit yourself to only one person.

Malcolm: Most of them would have learnt from you, Bhante.

S: Yes!

Vajradaka: We, learn from each other too.

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S: Yes! Well, you can even learn from the people who don't know as much as you do. That is possible too! The overall attitude should really be to learn from everybody that you possibly can on all occasions, in all respects. You can learn from those who know much more than you and who are more spiritually developed than you; you can learn from those who are roughly on the same level; you can even learn some times, under certain circumstances, from those who are not nearly as well developed as you are. So, one shouldn't limit one's learning opportunities. On the other hand, you mustn't try to learn everything all at once, say be going along one evening to someone teaching Zen, another evening to somebody teaching Tibetan Buddhism, another evening to somebody teaching Theravada - you'd just get confused. So therefore say within the FWBO, even if you go along to different people even teaching different things, it's all with the same spirit and within the same general framework. It may be that that is happening with regard to all the different teachers, Theravadin and Tibetan and Zen and so on - those who are genuine - but that requires such a big framework to take it all in, you are not up to that particular framework, and you're not "big" enough to take it in.
(Pause)

Malcolm: So what Mangala was meaning was that a person perhaps who is not quite emotionally stable in himself, it might be a good thing to confine himself to a particular place and just a few people, and a particular type of teacher until he is more stable. Is that ...?

S: I don't think it's a question of stability only. I think everybody has to confine himself at the beginning and for quite a long time to just a few things that really help him. I mean this is in a way, a principle in the FWBO. "More and more of less and less" Not that as you've got one initiation, at once try and get another one even bigger and better! You've got that, and then after, another one! No! You just confine yourself to just a few simple, basic teachings, and try to put them really thoroughly into practice. Take the "Mindfulness of Breathing" or the "Metta bhavana", or principle of "Right Livelihood" or "Dana" really quite seriously. And you'll have your work cut out for the next twenty years trying to put those things really into practice. You don't need to go haring after all sorts of koans and Tantric initiations, and the rest of it!

Clive: Mm. What you're saying is that without the structure the individual can't be creative, in a way.

S: This is true, yes. Yeah.

Clive: And only when he's creative can he then live without the structure.

S: Yes. Yes. Well, in a sense he should aim at living without the structure in the end, but in the meantime he needs it. It is indispensable.

So in the FWBO we are trying to create the sort of structure that will help well at least quite a lot of people, in the West, who become interested in what we may care to call "Buddhism", or what we may call "individual development" and so on: the structure consisting of classes and retreats and right livelihood situations, and personal communication and ordinations, etc., etc.
(Pause) And as far as I have seen, without doing what Milarepa says we mustn't do, that is to

say: condemn other schools, - I don't think that any other Buddhist movement in the West has put together different elements from the Buddhist tradition in quite this same sort of systematic, and I think successful, way. I think we can honestly say that. (Pause)

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You notice that Milarepa says: "Clinging to one's school and condemning others Is the certain way to waste one's learning." He apparently has in mind the scholar who is well-versed in the literature of his particular school, but who simply uses that learning as a means of engaging in controversies with scholars of other schools, and who, perhaps, never get around actually to practising the teachings even of his own school. (Pause)

Clive: I suppose that would be considered, in traditional Buddhist terms, as a form of laziness.

S: Yes. Indeed!

"Since all dharmas equally are good, Those who cling to sectarianism, Degrade Buddhism and sever Themselves from Liberation." - "Dharmas" here meaning "teachings". All teachings are good, they're all helpful, whether they're those of the Theravada, those of Zen, those of the Mahayana schools, Tibetan Buddhism - all these teachings are good. In principle, they are equally good. Whether they are all equally useful to you at this moment of time, that is another matter. So that is why, say, in the FWBO we find some teachings, some meditations, more relevant and more helpful than others. We don't say that those which we haven't selected for our particular synthesis are not good. I mean, that is to say assuming they are genuine Buddhist teachings anyway. We say that they are not particularly useful for us here and now, so we just leave them aside, that's all. An example I have given as between say the FWBO in India, say, and the FWBO in England, is the Buddha's teaching about caste. I made the point that the Buddha's teaching about caste is not particularly relevant to us here, in the West, because we don't have a caste system. It's highly relevant to our friends in the FWBO in India because they are still having to struggle with the caste system, so we don't say that the Buddha's teaching about the caste system is not a good teaching, it's not a good "dharma". No. We just leave it aside because it doesn't concern us in this country, that's all.

Or if we read about some very elaborate Tibetan Tantric visualization practices we don't say that these are not good teachings, we say, well, these visualizations are so elaborate that they are very difficult for us to do. They are too difficult for us to do, and so we leave them aside. That's all that we say. Or we take the principle of 'right livelihood' and we say, "well, this is not very much emphasized in the East, but it is really useful to us, this teaching of right livelihood." So in the West, we emphasize it more and more. (Pause)

So all dharmas are good, all Buddhist teachings are good, of whatsoever school, in Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese scriptures, provided that they really are genuine Buddhist teachings, but they are not all equally relevant to us, though, here and now. (Pause)

Mangala: I suppose though, anyone could be ... you could be condemning teachings or attitudes of other schools, um, which wouldn't be a waste of one's learning.

S: Yes.

Mangala: I was thinking of those like, say, you notice that the () are giving all sorts of initiations or something to people who are actually ...

S: (Breaking in) You are not condemning the practices. You are not condemning those teachings or those initiations, you are condemning the wrong use of them, or the wrong attitude towards them. You are not criticizing the teachings themselves at all! (Pause)

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Suvajra: They're ceasing to be precepts, aren't they?

S: Pardon?

Suvajra: They're ceasing to be precepts that apply to specific situations.

S: Yes. You are saying, "These teachings are wonderful", but the people concerned are not really using them as precepts, they are just indiscriminately broadcasting them without reference to the people to whom they are giving them.

Malcolm: Could you say, Bhante, like some teachings are relevant to some people, and then later you learn that, these things aren't the same, skilful and they really are quite dangerous, and you've left it a bit late then.

S: Well, better late than never!

Malcolm: I remember arguing about some bad points of one of the gurus who was in fashion at the time, and somebody saying, well it may be appropriate for some people, and just leave it at that.

S: Well, this is true.

Malcolm: It could be apathy, couldn't it?

S: Sometimes it is so. A certain guru's methods may not be very useful as far as you're concerned but they, may be of use to certain other people - but if it's pretty obvious that that guru is just out to make money, he's really a pseudo-guru, well you shouldn't hesitate to express that opinion if necessary. (Pause) There is such a thing as a pseudo-guru. So some people say, "Oh, you mustn't criticize gurus." All right, you agree with that: "You mustn't criticize gurus," but they must really be gurus. You're quite at liberty to criticize pseudo-gurus. (Laughter) In fact the more you criticize them the better because they only mislead people.

Mangala: Presumably you'd say the same about Christianity.

S: Oh yes indeed! "Oh! You mustn't criticize other religions." Why not!?! (Pause) There are such things as false and misleading religions, or at least teachings which pass as teachings of religions which are harmful to people.

Mangala: So presumably that isn't what Milarepa has in mind?

S: Well I should jolly well hope not! (Laughter)

Clive: So is Milarepa saying that all these different Schools of Buddhism are of equal worth, or ...?

S: I think one can say that the teachings of all the principal classical Buddhist schools are all good teachings, whether it's the Theravada, whether it's the Zen schools, or the Tibetan Buddhist schools, they are all good and worthy teachings, but they have not always been rightly applied, or rightly understood, nor are they all equally relevant to every individual at every single moment. Well, we ourselves may find in the course of our own spiritual lives that our emphasis shifts from time to time. At one point we might find the Dhammapada really helpful and inspiring, at another time we might find the Bodhicaryavatara much more helpful and inspiring. At one time we might adopt a, so to speak, more Theravada-like approach, more austere, more strict, a bit rigid even, at another time a more free sort of Zen-type approach may seem to be appropriate.

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But in the old days, - I don't know about now - I used to hear people say, "Oh, I'm Zen," or, "I'm Soto Zen" - Oh, not Rinzai - you got the impression from "Soto" people that "Rinzai Zen" wasn't even worth thinking of and vice-versa. (Pause) And as for what the Theravadins used to say about the Mahayana, well that could barely be repeated! And what the Theravadins used to say about Tibetan Buddhism. Or sometimes what Japanese Buddhists used to say about the Theravada. It is mostly based upon misunderstanding. (Pause)

Malcolm: Then it is not identifying with other people.

Mangala: It seems incredible . It's almost like ... well it makes you almost ashamed of Buddhism in a way ...

S: Yes! Indeed!

Mangala: ... if you think of people that actually call themselves Buddhist, and yet that's what they're like.

S: It's really dreadful! If you think of some of the people who not only call themselves Buddhist but who profess to represent Buddhism, to be authorities on Buddhism! It is shocking, and shameful in some cases! One shouldn't allow it to pass, if one is in a position not to allow it to pass.

Clive: I think there is a tendency in the Friends to look down on the Hinayana, maybe not really strong but I feel it's as if it's almost as if it's almost something not to touch with a barge pole; and it's still Buddhism.

Vajradaka: That's the cultural life-style - bhikkhus and robes and sitting on verandas and lying down in armchairs, all day and reading and not meditating.

Clive: Well, what is this associated with?

Vajradaka: With Theravada. I mean it's ...

S: Though on the other hand we do study Pali texts, we do study Theravada literature, or Hinayana literature if you like, we take that seriously as we take any other Buddhist canonical literature. The "Udana", and the "Itivuttaka" and the "Sutta Nipata", these are Theravada texts. It's the Hinayana attitude that we don't appreciate - the rather narrow, rigid attitude which is adopted by some Theravadins, not by all. You can find some Zen people with very narrow, rigid Hinayana-like attitudes. I remember in the early days of the FWBO we used to allow a Zen group to use the Shrine at Sakura on Monday evenings, because we didn't have any class then; and sometimes this group was under the guidance of one teacher, sometimes under the guidance of another, because Japanese and other such Zen teachers used to come and go - spend a few weeks in London and then move on. So I came to understand at one point that there was a serious disagreement between the members of the Zen group using the shrine room on Monday evenings because some had studied with one teacher and some with another; apparently one of the great points of difference was the shape and size of the meditation cushions and I came to understand that this differed according to the particular Zen tradition, and those who belonged to a particular school, or a particular sub-school, absolutely insisted on a particular type of meditation cushion being used, and those who belonged to a different school - they wouldn't sit on that kind of cushion because that would mean almost betraying the principles of their school! And of course some trained - I think it was "Soto" people - sitting and facing the wall, so sometimes you had some people facing the wall and others not facing the wall, and before I twigged to all these sort of things, it so happened that occasionally someone doing Zen meditation asked if they could [60] join in with us and sit with us when we were doing the metta bhavana and if they could carry on with the Zen meditation, so rather naively on one or two occasions I said yes, so when I struck the bell for the meditation to begin someone would turn right round and face the wall - (Laughter) not doing it the way we that were doing it. So in the end I didn't allow that. I said I didn't mind if someone does Zen meditation but at least outwardly do what others are doing. They thought that rather narrow-minded on my part, and I say well No! If one of our FWBO members went along to a Zen 'sesshin' I would expect him to do things the way that you do them out of respect for the teacher who is taking the 'sesshin'. I would not expect him to insist on doing things the FWBO way. I said this is just good manners. But they couldn't agree with that at all. So I thought that rather unfortunate.

And of course there was the famous case when, in the interests or pseudo-interest in an ecumenical attitude some followers of a particular Zen group joined the Aryatara community in the days when it was a mixed community, and there were great difficulties because they refused to do the Sevenfold Puja, because, apparently, so they said, their teacher had told them not to take part in any puja, or chant any mantras, so they would sit outside in the Library while other members of the community were in the shrine room doing the puja, and sometimes they'd do a bit of chanting of their own out in the Library, but they wouldn't join in the Sevenfold Puja because that was the FWBO puja. So in that way it was quite impossible to have a real community. In the end of course, they left. But their attitude was quite narrow.

Vajradaka: I've heard that at that time there was even more than one shrine in the shrine room. You'd get one shrine of stone and another shrine with certain ...

S: Yes! I remember that! That was because certain people wouldn't use a shrine of a certain type. What to speak of cushions!

Mangala: Once in Brighton I was putting up notes for meditation classes and I stopped at this

? plant shop and just put one up and I think I'd left it and went back and it wasn't put up and I asked him why he hadn't put it up and he said it's harmful. He thinks meditation is harmful. And he was actually a Buddhist apparently, but he belonged to the Nichirens, or something like that - some Japanese sect - the only thing he followed was the Lotus Sutra in which apparently the Buddha said, - (so he said) - that meditation isn't useful, or needed, or maybe even harmed - I can't remember which, but he was adamant about this. And there was no way I could convince him otherwise.

S: Mm. Yes.

Mangala: Just putting up the posters so ...

S: When I arrived in England I was warned - I've mentioned this on more than one occasion - by no less a person than Mr Humphreys, not to give people too much meditation. He said, "It sends them right off their rocker." (Loud laughter). He said, "Five minutes at a time is about as much as they can stand." (Laughter) He told me this in all seriousness, and when I started letting people meditate for ten minutes or even twenty, it was as though I was doing something really dangerous and taking tremendous risks. But anyway, even he has come round, because they do meditate for more than five minutes in the Zen class at the Buddhist Society now, not Mr Humphreys' Zen class but Irmgard Schloegl's. She sort of talked him into it - allowing people to meditate for thirty or forty minutes at a time.

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Pete Shann: But in a sense there is a danger in meditating for more than five minutes, that they might actually start to change. (Laughter)

S: Well, I don't think he meant that. But there was a feeling around in London Buddhist circles that meditation was dangerous, and you could go mad. In a way it was understandable, because some very strange people were involved in Buddhism then; people who maybe were latently schizophrenic, and quite a few people who had been involved with meditation had to go into mental hospitals, not because of anything to do with meditation but because that was the way they were anyway; so that was a very convenient rationalization for people who were, for other reasons, afraid of meditation, or not wanting to do it - that meditation was intrinsically dangerous.

Mangala: Is it what this person mentioned say about the Buddha, actually - I think he said the Buddha actually saying that meditation wasn't useful or harmful, - is that actually ...?

S: I don't remember that statement, but it may be that the actual recitation of the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra was emphasized - well, it is emphasized in that Sutra, and it could be, though I don't recollect, that there is some passage where it sort of suggests that you need not bother with other spiritual practices. That is possible. But then that means, well, this concerns your attitude to the whole Buddhist tradition, whether you accept the whole Buddhist tradition, or whether you identify yourself with one sect or one school, or just one sutra, and so on. But if someone does just read the White Lotus sutra and just recites that mantra - "namye ho rengye kyo" Well, if they did recite that mantra sufficiently and did become concentrated, presumably they'd go into a meditative state. I can't think though that the White Lotus Sutra does actually say that meditation is, even, not useful, because there are meditations based on the teachings of The White Lotus Sutra. (Pause)

Anyway, let's go on. "All the happiness one has is derived from others"; so, what does this mean? How literally is one to take this? Is it correct? Can happiness be derived from others? (Pause) Do others really give you happiness? Or what is meant?

Mangala: I think not in ordinary terms. I think it's not that you yourself feel empty and you start going on in a preta-like way, hoping to sort of feed off people, and be happy in that way. (Pause)

S: Others are an occasion of happiness to you.

Asvajit: ? to say that the real happiness is seeing that other people are happy.

S: Mm.

Asvajit: ... and not say that one can't be happy in oneself, by oneself even, but it's much more satisfying to see other people happy.

S: Yes. It does say - "All the happiness one has is derived from others." It does suggest a sort of rejoicing in merits.

___: Mudita.

S: Mudita. Yes. (Pause)

Aloka: It reminds me of something I think you said in a lecture once about "Hell being other people," but that doesn't mean to say ...

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S: I quoted an existentialist writer - don't take that too seriously - or too literally.

Aloka: There is a side that you could say - "Heaven is other people" as well.

S: Yes.

Aloka: Maybe it's something to do with the fact that you can't actually do without other people.

Mangala: Perhaps it also means that if one is really, let's say, a Bodhisattva, one's total attitude would be other regarding.

S: Yes! Right!

Mangala: And that would be the source of one's ... well in a sense, that would be the source of one's overcoming the subject/object dichotomy.

S: Well other people are the occasions of your Bodhisattva Vow. I mean your Bodhisattva Vow is to the effect that you will deliver, or lead to enlightenment, all living beings - so no living beings, no vow; no vow, no Bodhisattva! So you could say that in that sense, all the happiness one has, is derived from others. If you are a Bodhisattva and your entire happiness

is in helping others. Well you're dependant for your happiness, paradoxically speaking, on others.

Adrian: ... what he was saying earlier, when he says sentient beings are one's parents.

S: Yes, he's trying to encourage you to develop a positive attitude towards other living beings.

Vajradaka: An extension of what you were saying is that if you've taken the Vow for the sake of all sentient beings, you can't really be happy until they are.

S: Yes, that's true.

___: But that's not to say that you're not happy all the time. You are happy even if you are alone. You're not actively helping other beings. (very faint)

Malcolm: The Bodhisattva ()

S: Well to the extent that he identifies himself with others, he's happy to the extent that they are happy or he suffers to the extent that they suffer.

Milarepa goes on to say something else. He says, "All the help one gives to them In return brings happiness". It's not that you are unhappy and they are happy, not that in working for their happiness you sacrifice your own. You find your happiness in working for their happiness ...

[End of side 1, side 2]

[A bit missing]

[Tea break discussion?]

___: He talks about nihilism, ()

S: I'm not sure in what sense he uses it.

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(Long pause) (Noise of tapes being changed over)

S: Referring back to what you were saying about the chap in the flower shop, one can meet different Buddhists, even Western Buddhists with such a rigid view of a particular type of Buddhism, it is extraordinary! I mean this is one of the things that shocked me quite early on in my experience of Buddhism in England when I came back, was that how wrong things had gone so quickly.

Mangala: I think the thing is that people thought that I was completely wrong. He thought that I was very limited.

Malcolm: I get disappointed. Some people think that I belong to a particular group, and I want to say, I don't belong to a group, I don't want to belong to a group. I have been living in these

circumstances because these are the people I want to live with, and these are the practices I want to do. It is most convenient to live like that ...

S: Right!

Malcolm: ... but these people who have been quite close to me won't join in especially because it's just like the group, and there's a fear of religious sects and groups.

S: Mm. (Pause)

Malcolm: They feel like they're actually cutting off ... (Long pause)

Mangala: In a way it is unfortunate that there are so many, well, let's say so-called Buddhist groups, that, I think it must just be quite confusing for the public at large apart from anything else, and also there may be some people who call themselves Buddhists, and they might get a bad impression, and they may think that we are the same as them, and may even get a worse impression. They tend to lump you all together and ...

S: Quite apart from the fact that they mix up Hindus with Buddhists. Several newspapers refer to the Hare Krishna people as Buddhists.

Malcolm: Oh, lots of people do that! (Pause)

Vajradaka: (Laughing) In some ways we get caught in a cleft stick, because I heard at the big march for nuclear disarmament the other day with 50,000 people, the Hare Krishna people were going around and a Friend was there and someone said to her "Oh there are those Buddhists" - and she said, "What can I say, what can I do." And then not very long after that the Nichirens came along banging their drums and chanting, and she said, "Oh those people, they're not Buddhists." But then, what's the point? Because ...

S: Yes. (Pause) The fact that Buddhist monks were present was reported in the press.

Vajradaka: Not too bad though, from what I reckon.

S: Ah, I think it was in "The Times", as far as I remember, just mentioned it.

Malcolm: There were pictures of them pushing old ladies in wheelchairs and things like that.

S: Oh. (Pause) I don't think it was an old lady, it must have been () (Laughter)

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Vajradaka: I think it was an MP actually.

S: Ah! I think I know who you mean. Ah. Right. Yes, that was mentioned in one report.

Malcolm: It was an MP that was being pushed was it? All I could see was a picture of a crowd of Buddhists and people in wheelchairs and walking sticks and things like that ...

S: There were some very elderly pacifists who had been disinterred for the occasion.

Asvajit: It seems almost axiomatic that anything that appears in the media about Buddhism is likely to be misleading.

S: Yeah! Mm.

___: ? (Pause)

S: But it is interesting that the Nichiren Buddhists are probably better known to the public, at least by sight, than any other group of Buddhists in the country, even though in the way of teaching and all that sort of thing, they do less than anybody else. I mean, the Zen Buddhists do quite a lot of teaching, meditating, so do the Tibetans, the Theravadins do, Buddhist Society does, we do, but people who are best known are those who do least of that sort; they are well known because they appear on public occasions.

Vajradaka: They walk through the streets.

S: Yes. And take part in processions and demonstrations and so on, and appear in Trafalgar Square, and get on to TV and into newspapers, when actually, apart from building a stupa, they are doing no Buddhist work at all! (Pause)

Vajradaka: It's almost like they've got their "logo" really well worked out - shaved heads, Japanese dress, that's their logo and ...

S: The drum.

Vajradaka: ... and the drum. All you have to do now is ...

S: Well, they're well-known in India, but again, they do no actual teaching. I mean there was a Japanese temple in Worli at one time, but when I am in Bombay they rely on me for talks and lectures. The local Buddhists were complaining bitterly: "We never get any teaching about Buddhism", - that is the ex-untouchables who started going there - "we never get any teaching about Buddhism from these monks, they don't even speak Hindi or English, they only speak Japanese" and they were getting quite frustrated - "All we get from these people is how to beat the drum." And they said, "We've left that sort of thing behind in Hinduism, these practices without any particular meaning, or at least with no meaning we can understand." So whenever I gave a talk there, they were delighted. To give him his due, the old Japanese monk was pleased too, but these people - the ex-untouchable Buddhist people - were going along in their hundreds there every week for absolutely no teaching at all.

Atula: Is that the case everywhere with the Nichiren groups?

S: It seems to be. At least it is in India, and it is, I think, in England.

Suvajra: Do they know Buddhism?

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S: Well they study the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, but yes, I remember that I gave one lecture on the parables of the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra and they'd never had those explained to them! I explained what this 'namye ho rengye kyo' was that was being chanted in

the temple. No one had ever explained it!

Asvajit: What does it mean, Bhante?

S: Well it means - "Salutation to the White Lotus Sutra", in Japanese - "Name Saddharma Pundarikaya Sutraya nama."

Malcolm: Is this a modern sect?

S: It goes back to the thirteenth century. They are a modern off-shoot though.

Asvajit: It's really strange that they are paying respect to the Sutra, and yet not actually giving expression to that in the way which the Sutra does. Sutra means a teaching. (Pause)

S: Mm.

Asvajit: That's very odd. (Said softly). (Pause)

S: I saw this temple on my last visit to Bombay - more than once - I didn't go there. I've mentioned it in my letter. That's the one which is being increasingly squeezed in by enormous billboards and all that sort of thing. I've had, by the way, some slightly upsetting news from Lokamitra. He's been holding meetings in that area in Worli and recently there have been quite a lot of trouble with the Maharathas - caste Hindu people of Maharashtra - and the Buddhist meetings have been broken up, not any of our meetings yet, but other meetings of ex-untouchable Buddhists in that area have been forcibly broken up by the Maharathas, and that has meant that some of Lokamitra's meetings therefore, for that reason - public meetings, - have been less well-attended. People have been afraid to come.

Mangala: I was just going to ask you, Bhante - are the ex-untouchable Buddhists, are they really taken seriously by the Hindus? In other words in changing them from being Hindus, although outside the caste system and becoming Buddhists, I mean, are they therefore taken seriously and actually given a status by the Hindus, or are they still sort of looked upon as ...

S: The Hindus try to look down upon them, but that is becoming more and more difficult, and this is why the caste Hindus are reacting so violently, because actually it is - from what I could gather from my last visit - it is mainly economic: that the status, the economic position of the ex-untouchables has actually improved quite a bit over the last few years, since even I left, and this is something that the caste Hindus find it very difficult to stomach.

Mangala: Why should it improve? Just because of government intervention, or what?

S: Oh no! They feel that according to the Hindu tradition, these people should not have any money, they should be poor, they're not entitled!

Mangala: ? to better themselves.

S: Mm.

Mangala: No encouragement or incentive to ...

[66]

S: ... they've no right to better themselves. They are going against the Hindu religion by bettering themselves. And also that they are refusing, in some of the villages, to do the things that they were traditionally doing. They refuse to allow themselves to be looked down upon. So shortly before I arrived in India, there was a big riot with many people murdered in Maharashtra.

Malcolm: Bhante, do the Hindus all live in individual units, like economically, or do they help each other out?

S: It's mostly in joint families. Property is owned by the joint families.

Malcolm: So people would be ? on a certain level, would be left to fend for themselves?

S: Oh, yes, usually. Yes, usually each family fends for itself. Each extended joint family fends for itself.

Malcolm: So in a sense an individual could make headway in that system.

S: In what way?

Malcolm: Ah, well, somebody could open up a shop, perhaps some ex- untouchable Buddhist, not say, being excluded ...

S: It is difficult for an ex-untouchable to open up a shop because they are poor, so they usually try to get into government service and work in factories.

Mangala: Are the ex-untouchables still, on the whole, still poorer than the lowest caste Hindus?

S: That is very difficult to say, but I would say probably, those who have converted to Buddhism are, actually, marginally better off than those who haven't. (Pause) And of course the police are mainly caste Hindu - the police are prejudiced against the ex-untouchable Buddhists. If a woman goes, say, with a complaint of rape to the police station, it won't be seriously entertained. There's been a lot of this sort of thing lately and Mrs Gandhi is ? ? In many cases the women going to the police station and reporting that they have been raped by caste Hindus are being raped by the police - many such cases. Many murders in the villages, of ex-untouchables by caste Hindus, and the police doing nothing about it because they too are caste Hindus, and sympathize with the other caste Hindus. A lot of this!

Adrian: (How can they actually ?) ... presumably they still see the ex- untouchables as untouchables ...

S: Oh, yes!

Adrian: In that case how can a caste Hindu actually rape a woman - rape an untouchable? ...

S: Well, there are exceptions to all these rules. One of my European friends once said to me in Italy - he said the untouchable men are untouchable by day and by night, but the

untouchable women are untouchable only by day. (Pause)

Mangala: I suppose they're a bit like animals in that they may have their uses.

S: Yes. (Pause) Anyway all women are "shudras" according to Hindu tradition. After intercourse you have to purify yourself.

[67]

Mangala: If you're a Brahmin?

S: Well, yes, inasmuch as they haven't been initiated and given a sacred thread, all women are "shudras" even though they come from Brahmin families.

___: What does "shudra" mean?

S: Belonging to the lowest caste. (Pause)

Malcolm: It's funny how it's fascinating - Hinduism. Sometimes I find it quite fascinating.

S: Go out to India and you'll be really fascinated.

(Tea and coffee being served - general interchange during the serving)

Malcolm: Are there many Hindu yogis out there?

S: Oh yes, many.

Malcolm: Do you feel respect for them?

S: Well, there's so many of them it's very difficult to generalize. (Pause)

(General quiet conversation - long silences - with clattering of cups)

(End of tea break)

S: All right, read that next short prose bit on the bottom of page 639, and then Rechungpa's song.

"Enter this Mandala with benevolent
Mind; confess, repent you of your sins, observe
All precepts with determination.

[Transcriber's note: the above three lines were not studied]

Rechungpa was deeply moved. In remorse, he confessed all his transgressions before his Guru and his brothers-in-the-Dharma in this song:

Yearning for physical enjoyments,
In pursuit of pleasure I indulged.

Falling for temptations, I committed
Debasing deeds that lead to misery.
Before the body of my Father Guru
I now confess them fully.

Craving for talk leads to deceit
And lies, a glib tongue and clever
Words drag one right down to Hell.
Wine and meat that please the mouth
Turn one into a hungry ghost.
All my untrue and shameless talk,
I now confess in full before my Father Guru's mouth.

To crave for pleasure causes evil thoughts,
To yearn for fame creates most filthy acts.
All my sinful deeds, caused by desire and greed,
I now confess in full before
My Father Guru's mind.

Wandering in towns and hamlets,
My practices were interrupted; [68]
Performing many exorcisms,
My Mantra power grew feeble;
Becoming far too active, my good
Samadhi experience faded.
To the Mandala's Gods
I now confess these wrongs.

In a house where many people live
I distinguished between "mine" and "yours."
All my smallness and degradation
I confess to my Dharma-brothers."

S: This is Rechungpa's confession of his transgressions before his Guru and his brothers-in-the-Dharma before the initiation into the Mandala. So this is a sort of general confession. You notice he confesses transgressions of the body, in front of the body of the guru, transgressions of speech in front of the mouth of the guru, and transgressions of mind in front of the mind of the guru. So all this is quite general, and probably doesn't require much in the way of comment, but the last two sections of the song probably require a bit of comment. "Wandering in towns and hamlets My practices were interrupted." What sort of practices do you think are meant?

___: Meditation?

S: Especially, perhaps, meditation practices. So how, and in what way should "wandering in towns and hamlets" interrupt one's meditation practices? Could one not just sit down every time one arrived at a new place, and quietly meditate, and then travel on? (Pause)

Mangala: Theoretically, yes.

S: Yes! Theoretically. I have written something about my own experiences in this connection in "The Thousand Petalled Lotus" haven't I? It sounds quite nice and easy but it is very difficult indeed.

Clive: For what reasons?

S: Well, I think as far as I remember I personally found that one was physically so tired and exhausted. And then there was the actual difficulty of finding a quiet place, and then on your arrival, you had to think in terms of begging your food, or obtaining your food in some way or other, or people would want to talk to you. There were all these sort of factors.

Pete Shann: It seems noticeable that in a general way, nomadic tribes tend to have very little culture, ?

S: Yes. Indeed.

Clive: But this doesn't really apply to the modern traveller if you've got money etc, he can, ah ...

S: Well, no. Supposing you travelled from one decent hotel to another and you have a quiet room, why should you not be able to do your evening meditation as usual, and your morning meditation as usual? No reason at all. Apparently, but I haven't tried it, but one would assume that there would be no difficulty.

Pete Shann: Perhaps you might just have problems just with being in different places all the time.

S: Mm.

Pete Shann: ... Just new to the new places, lack of ?

[69]

Atula: You can usually manage somehow ? It must mean you get up a bit earlier before other people if you are staying ...

S: Well if you have a hotel room to yourself you really should have no difficulty at all, I would have thought.

Vajradaka: The one time I did it in the States, I stayed in a hotel in Chicago after travelling for three days, and it was OK. I got into the meditation straight away.

S: Well, you can, as it were, create you own territory by putting up your Buddha image and maybe a few other little decorations. You must make it your own place.

___: Yes. Right.

S: I remember on quite another level, in the biography of Lawrence, it is mentioned that Lawrence and his wife, Frieda, - D.H. Lawrence that is to say, and his wife, Frieda - were always roaming from place to place in Europe and America and elsewhere, and Frieda,

apparently, had just a few little things with her, a few colourful scarves and shawls and knick-knacks which she put out wherever they were so they carried their home around with them, and could make every place where they stayed feel a bit familiar; so, in the same way, if one has got one's Buddha-image, perhaps, and a few other "shrine" things, and a little meditation carpet, you can create the same environment to a limited extent, wherever you go, and feel quite at home, spiritually, within that, and carry on with your regular practice. Provided you have just a quiet place, a quiet room.

Malcolm: I mean it's been brought home to me how disastrous it can be to have all material possessions gone, or have given them up (Pause) I had a few little bits and pieces when I came up from Cornwall, but not much. I've got, really - (Laughs) really - on (unsteady?) ground. It's funny how familiar things will help.

S: Mm.

Vajradaka: I think in some ways it is better to spend a bit of money on a room where you can actually have a ...

S: Ah! Right.

Vajradaka: ... than trying to find somewhere to stay for free and then have to be entertaining them and talking with them and living in the living-room and not being able to do your practice.

S: Yes.

Vajradaka: ... better to spend a ?

___: A better investment.

S: Yes. Yes.

Clive: I should think it depends how you're travelling, but I tend to ? at least, you can ensure that wherever you are you can actually be alone.

Vajradaka: It depends what kind of travelling you're doing.

Clive: That's why I said ...

___: (Laughter)

Adrian: But then you are concentrating just on your own practice and not really sort of... You don't seem to have the [70] attitude that you can communicate anything to others.

Vajradaka: Oh, there's plenty of time to communicate. You don't have to worry about that. You step out of your hotel door and you have five million people! (Laughter)

S: (Laughing)

Vajradaka: You don't have to worry about that!

S: Anyway, next, he says, "Performing many exorcisms My mantra power grew feeble." Now, what is an exorcism?

Asvajit: Getting rid of unwanted influences.

S: Mm.

Mangala: Black magic rites.

S: Not necessarily black magic, but casting out evil spirits - spirits that harm people. I mean Tibetans believe very much, in evil spirits, so lamas are always being called upon to cast them out. It's almost a full-time occupation for some lamas. Some lamas are, apparently, are particularly good at it. But it requires energy, it requires concentration and it is not a very lofty sort of practice.

___: Why do they do it?

Vajradaka: Is the money good?!

S: How do they do it? Well you just take the evil spirit by the scruff of his neck and you just throw him out. (Laughing) (Laughter)

Malcolm: Is it superstition, largely?

S: Well superstition is just a word, isn't it, eh? Hm - (Chuckling) Anyway ... (Laughter) "My mantra power grew feeble." Mm. "Performing many exorcisms, My mantra power grew feeble." So what is Rechungpa really talking about here?

___: Wasting his energy.

S: In a very general sense.

Vajradaka: ... (Breaking in at same time as Bhante is speaking) ... lost contact with something deeper and more essential.

S: Mm. But you see by virtue of the repetition of the mantra and performing the corresponding visualization exercise and all the associated practices, you generate a certain amount of energy, you can even say, spiritual energy, but then by way of exorcism you are using that energy, that energy is flowing out, and if you continue beyond a certain point then your mantra power grows feeble. The energy which you have accumulated, so to speak, just diminishes. Your spiritual resources are exhausted. You can look at this in a very general way - you may have, as a result of the practice of meditation, have developed a certain amount of calm and a certain amount of positive emotion, and on that account you are able to communicate with people quite well, but if you just go on communicating and communicating, and talking and talking, eventually you will find that your calm and your positive emotion have been exhausted, and if you aren't meditating again and again, in between, you're not replenishing them; so it's this sort of thing that Rechungpa is talking

about.

Clive: So you can think of exorcisms in terms of communication with other people and probably with the intention of trying to [71] sort of relieve them.

S: Yes. You could. Yes. I mean, some ... I mean ... you could say that if you are talking with people, or trying to communicate with people, trying to help them get rid of their negative emotions, trying to help them overcome their depression, well that is a form of exorcism, so it can be very exhausting. You can't do too much of it at a time, and you need to constantly replenish your own resources, either just by being quietly on your own, or by actually meditating, again and again. (Pause)

So this is a very important principle for everybody, or anybody who is engaged in, say, leading classes, giving talks, and organizing things, or working in a co-op. It is very important that such a person keeps in contact with his, well, especially meditation practice. Otherwise you soon lose, or use up whatever resources you have accumulated.

Malcolm: Do you think you ? have a little spell on your own, to at least raise the level of your positivity.

S: Not a little spell, a good month-long solitary retreat from time to time. (Chuckling)

Clive: But there's also that communication can be stimulating, providing it is spiritual communication.

S: Mm. Well one was speaking in terms of that kind of communication which was more of the nature of an exorcism. But even quite good positive communication can easily take a wrong turning if it just turns into sociable talkativeness. (Pause)

All right, then Rechungpa says: "Becoming far too active, my good Samadhi experience faded." So what is happening here?

___: Trying to do too much.

S: It also reminds one of the Buddha's teaching of the Five Spiritual Faculties, that you need to keep in balance not only prajna and sraddha, not only wisdom and faith, but also samadhi and virya, that is to say in the meditative experience and external activity.

So "becoming far too active by good samadhi experience faded", not that activity is to be excluded altogether but that activity is to be balanced by samadhi. Samadhi even to be balanced by activity. You should not have either in excess.

___: That would be mental and physical activity.

S: I think probably physical activity is meant more than mental activity.

___: Oh really! In what way then?

S: Well just bodily activity.

Malcolm: Do you think sometimes we can look at that more closely with regards to right livelihood. Sometimes I feel it might ... a day's work sometimes can be a little bit too much.

S: Well perhaps it means that your day's work has not been sufficiently balanced by your day's meditation. People usually think in terms of an hour's meditation in the morning and an hour's meditation in the evening and eight hours of work in between. It doesn't seem very balanced. Well perhaps two hours of good meditation do balance eight hours of work. One must find out for oneself what constitutes a balance.

[72]

___:

S: What? Two hours of meditation balance eight hours of work.

___: Yes.

Malcolm: I've never looked at it as being a balance.

Clive: It certainly works sometimes if you do a lot of meditation - the other way round - if you do a lot of meditation you feel that you haven't got much of that grosser energy for physical activity. It's not that you can't do it if you have to, but the system isn't really ...

S: It depends on the nature of the activity. Whether it's, say, painting thangkas or smashing down walls.

Clive: Well, that's what I meant - grosser activity.

S: So perhaps, in view of the context, Rechungpa is referring to his activity in roaming about from place to place, and performing exorcism ceremonies, which would involve contact with householders, and talking with them a lot. He seems to be referring to becoming far too active in a very general sense. "Becoming far too active, my good Samadhi experience faded."
(Pause)

"To the Mandala's gods I now confess these wrongs." (Pause) So, "In a house where many people live I distinguished between "mine" and "yours"." Now! What does this involve? What subject are we on to now?

Vajradaka: He's slipped away from a non-dual state of consciousness.

S: (Breaking in) Perhaps we should look at it in terms of the spiritual community and having things of one's own. To what extent should everything be shared within the spiritual community? This is really the question. Should everything be common [73] property? (Pause) - in the spiritual community? This is really the question that is being raised.

Adrian: Well things can only be property of the spiritual community to the extent that people actually see them as the property of the community - accept responsibility as the property of the community. Otherwise it can sort of drift into being some sort of object that doesn't belong to anyone.

Vajradaka: Your ability to be responsible varies according to your own development, but as

your ability to be responsible for a certain kind of thing increases, well then people will then actually trust you with those things. They won't feel that those things are in danger in being with you. Perhaps it can't be equal for everybody.

S: Mm. But I think the real question is whether, within the spiritual community, you should aim at having all things in common. Maybe recognize that for the time being that it isn't possible because people aren't sufficiently responsible, but should that be the aim? I mean, is sort of, private property not ever a sort of means of individual development some might say?

Voices: (All together - words lost)

Atula: ... that really we value stuff ourselves and not even our own stuff enough. It does seem that (in my experience ?) of living in spiritual communities in that way, that usually (when we insist ?) on it being common property it is usually very much abused, and it does seem as though we don't actually value our own stuff that much, otherwise we wouldn't treat common property that way either.

S: I don't think that necessarily follows because sometimes you find that people take very good care of what belongs to them, but the same people don't bother with something which belongs, so to speak, to the community, to everybody.

Malcolm: In our community we are trying to - or ideally - trying to meet what people need. If somebody needs a certain space - he needs (a ??) in their room or a particular (?) for their sanity, as it were, then they have it. Or if they don't need it well obviously they ...

S: What do you mean by "having it"? Because one particular person can make use of the property of the community without it ceasing to be the property of the community.

Malcolm: Uhm. I think there is a general ... ah ... trying to share. I don't think anybody would mind anybody using things in the room, but I mean, ah ... what is the community's? Somebody has got to be responsible for...

S: Yes, but that responsibility is a different thing from ownership. I mean, something can belong to the community - be the collective property of the community, and the community can appoint an individual member of the community to be responsible for the care of that thing. This is what happens in monasteries in the East.

Malcolm: i.e. the Chairman.

S: Well, it could be whoever it is. I mean, for instance, the man in charge of the Shrine is responsible for the care of the images in the shrine, even though they are all the property of the community. The treasurer is responsible for the money that belongs to the community even though that money remains the property of the community, and so on. So what I'm trying to get at is whether one has necessarily to accept that the aim is that everything should be held in common, there should be no private property. Or whether private property is essential to the development of the individual. (Pause)

Mangala: I think it probably isn't.

S: Isn't?

Mangala: Yes.

S: Any reasons for that view?

Mangala: Well, I think someone, perhaps, who holds on to that view, in a sense, is incapable of developing beyond a certain point, because there is attachment which he will have towards certain possessions and to that extent that keeps him incapable of going beyond a certain point of relating and communing with other people.

S: But what about possessions as a means of expression?

Mangala: I think, perhaps, those are necessarily are needed, but I don't think that is necessary that they are actually my possessions. I mean if you need paints or brushes or a musical instrument it would be good if they were available, but it is not like they were "yours" in that very personal sort of way. You can make use of them but they're not your kind of personal thing, in as much as you're making use of the physical body and the senses, but they're not actually yours.

[74]

S: Right.

Mangala: You have to give them back in the end. You are just making use of them for the time being.

S: Of course, the monastic tradition in the East, especially of the bhikkhu, only owns eight things, but everything else that he uses is the property of the ...

[End of tape 4 tape 5]

(A bit missing)

S: ... but do you think one should try to make a positive effort to share things with people. Assuming of course, that they are going to use them responsibly.

Asvajit: It seems to be a good principle of economy.

S: That too! Yes. (Pause)

Clive: That is a bit more complicated.

S: In what way?

Clive: Well, if you're going to be a fully functioning Order Member, then, you're going to need certain things, a bank account for instance, presentable clothes.

Mangala: None of that contradicts anything that I said, I mean, you can have all those things, but they're kind of used in that narrowly possessive...

S: Say someone wanted to borrow your suit for a special occasion, well, you should be happy to lend it to them, assuming that is that they are going to use it responsibly, which is of course, unfortunately, often doubtful. (Pause)

Malcolm: It's a very great challenge.

S: I mean people are very careless when it comes to borrowing anything like books, records, cars, cameras ...

Atula: Tools.

Asvajit: I think that if you do have perhaps a very possessive attitude towards anything, sooner or later you are going to be brought up against it if you live in a spiritual community.

S: Yes, because someone might ask you quite nicely one day, "Would you mind if I borrowed your record?" And, your reaction might be such as made it quite clear you've got a very possessive attitude towards it. Whereas the person asking you for a loan of the record may be a thoroughly responsible person, and you may react quite sharply to being asked to lend your record, and that could say quite a lot about you.

Clive: I've experienced a rationalization for people to say I don't think you are responsible enough to borrow my things.

S: Well, that's a factual statement, so the question is well Are you, really, not sufficiently responsible? I mean, presumably, that will have to be sort of settled by the whole community.

Clive: That isn't really tested first. They say "I believe it to be a rationalization and then be possessive about their equipment.

S: But then, of course, (Chuckling) testing can be a bit expensive [75] - , especially if they ask to borrow your new car, and you might think twice about that!

Vajradaka: I must say, sometimes, it's not just the person, but it's the whole conditions surrounding it - supposing, just as an example, like - I thought of borrowing a camera to go round the world, but I really gave it a second thought when Vajradipa offered me one of his professional cameras with his three lenses and I thought, the responsibility! Even though I personally might really be meticulous, and really been careful, it could have been whipped, stolen anywhere, and so it's like there's an overall condition which you have to take into consideration as well.

S: Right.

Clive: Not just your personal responsibility but the (overview?).

S: No, but the conditions under which you will be trying to discharge that responsibility.

Vajradaka: Right!

S: ... perhaps with not very much success.

Vajradaka: Right!

Asvajit: I mean part of accepting responsibility for something is the consideration - "Can I replace it"?

Vajradaka: Yeah! Right! That was especially a consideration with his camera. (Laughing)

S: This question arose in connection with, I think, someone, I think it must have been in Glasgow, who drove somebody's car without a license I think it was, smashed it up and therefore insurance couldn't be claimed because he had no driving license when he was driving it. I think that was the situation, and therefore he had to get a job in order to repay all the money that was lost.

Vajradaka: And that really took it away from the spiritual community.

S: Well that particular spiritual community, anyway. (Pause)

Brian: Was that just due to carelessness on his part?

S: This I don't know because I didn't look into the matter closely. I would assume it was some kind of unmindfulness, because, in any case - well, yes, because one shouldn't, in any case, drive a car without a driving license - that is asking for trouble; but I don't want to make any specific criticism on this particular matter because I don't know all the factors.

Malcolm: Somebody once said to me once that to the extent that you keep hold of your possessions - thinking of money at the time - it shows to that extent your commitment. It was a very painful sort of truth. Would you comment on that? Do you not feel, that sometimes, sometimes I've felt it's skilful to hang on to something because it might just be dissipated.

S: Well, that is true. This is in connection with what I was saying that you may be very willing to share your possessions with others, but sometimes the question arises, "Are others fit to be entrusted with them?"

Malcolm: I have seen people be silly with money.

[76]

S: Yeah.

Malcolm: When it's been quite a lot of money, and to just create goodwill. I've sure they've given quite a lot of money in sort of places where it could have been ... better

S: Obviously rationalizations are possible in both cases. Someone saying well, no, you should be giving your money because it'll help you overcome your attachment, and somebody else saying, no, I'm not going to give it because I don't want it to be wasted. Both could be rationalizations.

Vajradaka: There seems to be a short-term answer, and a long-term answer, in a way. In the short term you might see that certain valuable possessions are useful to you, like your rupa, your camera, whatever, and you use them for the spiritual community, and in a sense, you

don't want to lose them, - you are, in a sense, attached to them, but in the long-term you have to overcome that attachment.

Clive: You're attached to the use that they can be to you because you are attached to the fact that they can be useful to you, and in that sense you're attached to them, but you're not attached in the sense that if you lost them then it would be like part of your personality, or your security.

Vajradaka: But that is, again, is quite advanced, is quite ultimate, because in the beginning it might well be, certain people ?

Clive: That's true. You allowed certain objective positivity. (Pause) Again I can't work out exactly if it's the thing itself that I'm attached to or the usefulness and value I obtain from it which I'm attached to - not anything specific. I don't think it's feeling for the thing itself usually - it's more the value you can get from it. Like a camera, you can take pictures of places, and give a slide show, and when you get back, give others some idea of what it's like. But the actual thing in itself, and being attached to that ...

Vajradaka: I know speaking personally, it's the thing itself, mainly.

Atula: Perhaps we can go back to reasonable attachment and unreasonable attachment.

Vajradaka: Right. (Pause) It's a bit of both. I think, like again, that can be a rationalization, you say, "Of course the camera is going to be a benefit to the spiritual community, because photographs are going to be used in Newsletter and slideshows and centres like that and people will grow, but actually I think, very often, there is an aesthetic appreciation of something which is really well-made which is just fascinating - the bloom on the lens - or whatever.

___: You can just enjoy the quality of the whole thing.

Clive: You can really be attached to a flower but you know it is going to die so when it goes you're not going to miss because you still have the experience.

Vajradaka: Maybe a flower is so obviously short term anyway, that you actually can override your sense of attachment. (Some side conversation)
... tangible - it was less easy to override that sense of attachment.

Clive: ... one or two things that I thought I was going to be attached to and for some reason or another they'd gone ???

[77]

S: So, Rechungpa says: "In a house where many people live I distinguished between "mine" and "yours" All my smallness and degradation I confess to my Dharma-brothers." Perhaps he's been really mean, not even wanting to lend his toothpaste, or something like that (Slight laughter). Anyway, would somebody like to carry on reading? That prose portion and the following song.

"Thereupon the Jetsun initiated the Repas with the "Pointing-out" exercise in an elaborate

manner. After the ceremony, Repa Shiwa Aui arose from the assembly and asked, "Rechungpa is a yogi who has completely mastered the Prana-Mind. Why should a man such as he still need the Jetsun's protection and care when he takes a lady for Tantric practice? And why should such a man still repent before you for this act?" The Jetsun replied, "This is because [in order to practise the secret action], one must know the right time and the right conditions." Whereupon he sang:

I bow down to my gracious Guru Marpa ...
Pray lead me with your blessing to the Path,
Help me to understand the mind-state of my disciples!

Knowing not the right time to
Practice, one's Yoga will stray;
Knowing not the right time to
Speak, the elders will go astray;
Knowing not the right time to give
Food, the good housewife will go astray;
Knowing not the right time to perform
Their duties, the servants will go astray;
Knowing not the right time to meet
The foe, the fighters will go astray;
Knowing not the right time to meet
Conditions, noble monks will stray;
Knowing not the right time to help others,
Altruistic deeds will go astray.

Without perseverance and determination,
To stay in the mountains will be a waste of time.
If men consider not nor help each other,
Companionship and brotherhood are lost.
If a disciple does not keep his Guru's rules,
The relationship with him will soon be broken.
Boundless, alas, are errors and deviations,
How can one list them all?
Dear sons, you should practice
In accordance with my words!

Hearing this song, all the disciples gained a decisive understanding. Rechungpa then made a solemn vow before the Jetsun that he would observe and obey all his instructions. Thereafter he served Milarepa [even more] earnestly than before."

S: Mm. So, "Thereupon the Jetsun initiated the Repas with the "Pointing out" exercise in an elaborate manner." This "pointing out" exercise is a sort of - to speak very generally - a sort of pointing out or indication of the truth by means of gesture, that is to say it is a non-conceptual, non-verbal communication, and it pertains to the transmission of the Mahamudra. More than that perhaps, one cannot say. Perhaps one has said already too much. (Laughter) Anyway - "After the ceremony Repa Shiwa Aui arose from the assembly and asked, "Rechungpa is a yogi who has completely mastered the Prana Mind, why should a man such as he still need the Jetsun's protection and care when he takes a lady for Tantric practice?"

And why should such a man [78] still repent before you for this act?" Do you understand the purport of the question? Is it clear? What is he actually asking? What is he actually saying? Does there not seem to be some misunderstanding? What do you think that is?

Malcolm: Milarepa already had quite a high regard for Rechungpa ...

S: Yes.

Malcolm: ... and they should think that he, a man who is esteemed, should know what's right and wrong with regards to taking a lady for Tantric practice.

S: Mm! We haven't heard anything before about taking the lady for Tantric practice, not in this chapter. If we go back to the beginning we find that it reads: "Because of his affiliation with the noble woman, Lady Dembu - yes - Rechungpa had difficulty because of his affiliation with the noble lady Dembu, and after being freed from her by Milarepa in the guise of the beggar, Rechungpa separated from the Lady Dembu. Disheartened and wearied of her, he left and returned to the Jetsun." So it is as though the fellow practitioners were under the impression that Rechungpa has taken a lady for Tantric practice. But Milarepa, and presumably the compiler of these chapters, understood very well that it was a different matter. So after all Rechungpa has just made an elaborate confession, so this particular Repa seems rather surprised. He's saying, "Rechungpa is a yogi who has completely mastered the "Prana Mind" - this is his assumption - "why should a man such as he still need the Jetsun's protection and care when he takes a lady for Tantric practices. Why should such a man still repent before you for this act?"- In other words he hasn't understood what is really happening. Perhaps it's just as well. Perhaps it isn't a bad thing that he has perhaps understood what was going on in a positive rather than a negative manner. At least he isn't very willing to believe evil of Rechungpa, but it seems the facts of the case are different from what he thinks. And this is why he asks the question. So it does suggest that even among Tibetan yogis there can be quite a bit of misunderstanding and people can be under the impression that you are practising the Dharma, practising the Tantra, with a lady partner, when actually you've just got entangled in a relationship.

So the Jetsun replies, "This is because (in order to practise the secret action) one must know the right time and the right conditions." The secret action, in brackets, presumably refers to actual Tantric practice with a lady, so Milarepa isn't saying that isn't in fact what Rechungpa was doing, he's not denying it's possible to do such a thing, to have Tantric practice with a lady, but please don't ask me too eagerly how one does that (Laughter). But he wants to make it clear that there is a right time, and a right place and a right person, so to speak. So this is the gist of his answer. (Pause) It is as though there's a right time for everything, so he suggests that for Rechungpa it hadn't been the right time for that sort of practice, because it wasn't, in fact, that sort of practice, it was something quite different.

Asvajit: He does seem to be sort of, in a way, lending credence to the idea that the practice that Repa Shiwa Aui is suggesting is actually a real practice.

S: It's not completely clear that he is referring to. This "secret action" - whether it does, in fact, involve a natural specifically sexual relationship or not. I remember in this connections one of my own teachers, a Tibetan lama, had, or kept with him, a Dakini, - he was the a quite elderly man - he was in his middle fifties and she was in her early twenties, but I was assured

by the [79] chief disciple that it was not a question of any sexual relationship at all, that the significance of his keeping a dakini with him, what shall I say, in his vicinage was quite different. What it really was - or perhaps he didn't feel in a position to go on to explain - but he said it was certainly not that, and I could believe him in view of what I knew of the guru, and what I saw of the dakini, who seemed a quite exceptional sort of young woman, and when she was with the guru her attitude seemed to be that of a very devoted disciple, not that of a pseudo-spiritual girlfriend, or pseudo-spiritual wife, or anything of that sort at all! One could well believe that the relationship between them was of a different kind, whatever it was.

Mangala: There's another point here, Bhante, and that is - "Why should such a man still repent before you for this act?" I mean, it seems ...

S: Well, he hasn't done anything wrong in having a Tantric lady, why should he repent?

Mangala: The point I was going to make - I think it was that he never had been wrong, saying - "Why should such a man repent in any case?"

S: Mm. It's almost like that. Yeah.

Mangala: Even if the action hadn't been an unskilful one. Almost as if Rechungpa is well, maybe not Milarepa's equal, but at least his ...

S: Mm. It could be that in view of the contents of some other chapters where people do start saying that Rechungpa is a greater man than his guru, sort of thing. Yes. Maybe they like, perhaps, Rechungpa's rather flashy personality more than they like Milarepa's. Who knows?

Mangala: It sound sort of like Rechungpa's repentance they find is a bit, um ... well ... not in keeping with the way they like to see him or ...

S: Yes!

Mangala: ... or not their image of him. It's a bit of a comedown.

S: Mm. Mm. Yes. (Pause) Anyway let's go into what Milarepa tells them: "I bow down to my gracious Guru Marpa - Pray lead me with your blessing to the Path, Help me to understand the mind-state of my disciples!" - Now this is very significant because, after all, here is Milarepa, a highly developed person - an enlightened teacher one could say, but he is praying to his own guru: "Help me to understand the mind-state of my disciples!" Well, first of all what is the relevance, what is the connection with what has gone before? (Pause) Well, it is not easy to understand the mind-state of disciples. It would seem that the Repa Shiwa Aui has misunderstood the mind-state of his fellow disciple Rechung. Milarepa has correctly understood it. But it isn't an easy thing to understand the mind-state of disciples. Repa Shiwa Aui apparently thinks that Rechungpa is a yogi who has completely mastered Prana Mind and that therefore there is nothing wrong, in his case, in taking a lady for Tantric practices, but Milarepa knows Rechungpa's mind better than that. He knows, in fact, that he has done wrong, he has given way to the pursuit of pleasure, as he, himself, has confessed.

So Milarepa, it seems, is just taking the opportunity of pointing out that it isn't easy to

understand the mind-state of disciples, it isn't easy to understand anybody's mind-state. This is something we were talking about earlier on, I'm not sure whether in this [80] group or the other: it is therefore difficult, therefore, to give advice. So unless you really know somebody's mind-state, either directly or indirectly, you certainly shouldn't give them any serious or far-reaching advice.

I mean people give advice very, very readily, very freely, very easily, without even being asked sometimes. Well, it might be all right where very small matters are concerned but when it's a question of your whole life, what you are going to do with your life, one should be very very careful about giving advice to other people, however good your intentions may be. But the fact that you give advice means that you understand their mind-state, whether they are your disciple or whether they are a fellow-disciple or a just a kalyana-mitra, or mitra of yours, or just a friend.

Mangala: There's a technique, Bhante, you might of heard of, it's called "co-counselling", it's been around for quite a few years now, but the idea is that two people, well, it's a relationship which has built up over a period time, but they meet sort of, and sit down and maybe half-an-hour of making time - one of them talks and the other listens, and the idea is not one of necessarily to give advice to the one who's talking, but just occasionally ...

S: Mm!

Mangala: ... to maybe, just to try to get a "feel" of the person, maybe the feeling is that they're blocking somewhere, and just to try to get them to go into a certain area so that ... and just giving them the space to talk and something really receptive, so they can provide their own conclusions ...

S: Yes.

Mangala: ... and answers, without you having to give them any advice.

S: Yes.

Mangala: ... just somehow your being there giving that kind of feed-back attention, they can find out their own advice.

S: Well that is probably a much more useful, and much more skilful approach. You just help people to see things for themselves. You don't impose advice upon them. Unfortunately some people do have a tendency to do that. They go around giving good advice and telling other people what to do, and even trying to manager their lives for them. But no one can really tell you what to do. (Pause)

So "Help me to understand the mind-state of my disciples." (Pause) "Knowing not the right time to Practise, one's Yoga will stray." One would have thought that as far as the practice of yoga was concerned, well, any time would be all right, but apparently, it isn't so: there's a right time and a wrong time to practise one's yoga, one's meditation. Do you think that this is so? Could there be a wrong time to practise one's yoga, or one's meditation?

Atula: If it could be of detriment to other people, if it's possible to do that. If you're supposed

to be doing that - you've committed yourself to doing something for someone else and you've said, "No, I want to practise" then that would be presumably...

S: Yes. (Pause) Any other way in you could practise at the wrong time?

Malcolm: Before you've fulfilled other obligations like you said, [81] but to a greater degree, actually.

Vajradaka: Where a greater degree of intellectual clarity is needed and conceptualization, where, having just come out of deep dhyana states you can hardly talk sometimes.

S: Yes. (Pause) Or in a quite simple respect, immediately after a big, heavy meal.

Vajradaka: Ah!

S: That is the wrong time to practise.

Vajradaka: Yeah!

S: ... or where you may be unduly interrupted. That is the wrong time to practise.

Vajradaka: Yeah.

Clive: Or where it isn't quiet enough for you to practise, so you try and practise but ...

S: Yes, and you just become mentally irritated. So I think that is quite straightforward, really. "Knowing not the right time to Practise your yoga will stray;" - "Knowing not the right time to Speak, the elders will go astray" - "The elders" are typically, or characteristically, those who give advice because they are more experienced. So: "Knowing not the right time to Speak, the elders will go astray." - One must know the right time to speak, the right time perhaps, to give advice, if one gives it at all. This is very important. One must be able to choose the right psychological moment for speaking to somebody. Can you think of any examples of this?

Pete Shann: Perhaps you choose the time when the other person's in a receptive frame of mind.

S: Yes. You shouldn't choose a time when they are perhaps, in a negative mental state, or when there's no time, - you try to discuss something of importance with them when you've just got a few minutes and it has to be hurried, you can't get down to it properly.

Mangala: Or when their mouth's full of food!

S: Or when their mouth's full of food, yes.

Clive: It's true that a lot of people try to get really deep, just sort of right off the cuff, like when you're walking from A to B and they say something really quite meaningful and then you just can't sort of carry it through.

S: Well, sometimes, there's a time and a place for that sort of thing too, but I think that is not

necessarily excluded by this statement. You may try to catch somebody "on the hop" for instance just to get a completely spontaneous reply from him, but if you try to do this, well, you must be prepared for any particular manifestation of his spontaneity; (Laughter) and if you try to catch the guru with questions about Nirvana when his mouth is full of food, you mustn't be surprised if he just says, in Zen fashion, "Moo!" (Laughter)

___: ???

S: Even that! (Pause) So it's important to know the right time to speak when someone is likely to be receptive, when there's time, when there's leisure. (Pause) It's amazing the number of people who try to catch hold of you to talk with you about [82] something just as you are about to go out or something of that sort. But anyway, perhaps we've discussed that enough.

"Knowing not the right time to give Food, the good housewife will go astray." Well, can you elaborate upon this.

Pete Shann: You can overfeed a husband perhaps. (Laughter)

S: Well, it says "right time" it doesn't refer so much to quantity.

Clive: Does "the good housewife" mean the part of yourself that looks after the domestic arrangements?

S: Well perhaps we could take it quite literally first. "The good housewife" - well it's a very ordinary simple example. The food needs to be ready when her husband comes in. She shouldn't have it ready about two hours before so that it's cold when he comes in. Or she shouldn't have to start cooking when he arrives etc, etc. It seems quite simple and straightforward to me. (Pause) I expect we could squeeze an esoteric meaning out of it if we wanted to. (Loud laughter) - but I'm trying to finish the song before the session ends. (Pause)

"Knowing not the right time to perform their duties, the servants will go astray". Any example?

Asvajit: Putting out the rubbish bin.

S: On the wrong day! That's not much use is it.

All right leave it at that shall we. "Knowing not the right time to meet the foe, the fighters will go astray." You might go and fight them at the time you know they're not going to be there! [Laughter] That wouldn't help very much.

"Knowing not the right time to meet conditions, noble monks will stray". What's the meaning of this? What sort of conditions?

Suvajra: Those best for their practice.

S: Presumably what is best for their practice. And "Knowing not the right time to help others, altruistic deeds will go astray". It's like this rather threadbare example that I usually give about the boy scout trying to do his good deed for the day and reporting in to the troop leader

at the end of the day saying that he'd actually helped an old lady across the road. So his scoutmaster said well that wasn't much of a good deed, that's pretty easy to do. So he said no it was really difficult. So the scoutmaster said well how do you make that out. He said oh, she didn't want to cross the road! [Laughter]

So knowing not the right time to help others, altruistic deeds will go astray.

Anyway he goes on then to strike a more serious note after these few rather homely sort of examples: - "Without perseverance and determination To stay in the mountains will be a waste of time." He's referring especially, I assume, to perseverance and determination in meditation. What's the use of going off into the mountains; what's the use of staying in a mountain cave, what's the use of being on your own unless you make proper use of that opportunity; unless you persevere, unless you are determined.

Malcolm: What's the use of being in a community if you're not going to make use of it?

S: Yes. What's the use of being in a spiritual community if you're not going to try to communicate! What's the use of going to a lecture on the Dharma if you're not going to listen! So - [83] "Without perseverance and determination To stay in the mountains will be a waste of time." "If men consider not nor help each other, Companionship and brotherhood are lost." (Pause). So this suggests that companionship and brotherhood, depend on, or even consist of, acts of help. (Pause). You do actually find this, that if you live in a spiritual community, it isn't enough, really, just to have a general feeling of goodwill towards people, that needs to be expressed and embodied in specific acts.

Pete Shann: ? communication depends very much on sensitivity ...

S: Yes.

Atula: Really caring for each other.

S: Not just caring but caring in a very specific way, and expressing that in all sorts of practical ways. (Pause) You are not necessarily companions and brothers just because you live under the same roof. It requires more than that; or because you just gather together and all eat at the same time, in the same place each day.

Malcolm: It helps if the community is not too transient in that way. If you're there for quite a while, a number of people get to know you and relationships build it's easier then to have proper feelings, real feelings.

S: Feelings take time to develop.

Malcolm: Yes.

S: They have to be cultivated. (Pause) It's as though companionship and brotherhood must be lived out. (Pause)

Clive: I realize the need for the expression of certain feelings, but ... some people do express certain things in different ways.

S: Oh, yes!

Clive: ... than others and sometimes people express things in ways in which other people don't accept as an expression.

S: You have to learn the other person's "language" as it were, so that you understand what it is they are trying to express or to communicate.

Vajradaka: Mm. That sometimes takes a really long time. (Pause) Difference in temperaments. (Pause)

S: So: "If men consider not nor help each other Companionship and brotherhood are lost." "If a disciple does not keep his Guru's rules The relationship with him will soon be broken." What about this business of "the Guru's rules"? Do we in fact, find Milarepa laying down rules for Rechungpa? What is meant by "rules" here?

___: Precepts.

Mangala: Advice?

S: Well, it does say "rules", so I think something different from 'precepts' is meant, because the word for "precept" was available.

Pete Shann: Specific exhortations to ?

S: Mm. (Rising tone) Do you think it means even that?

Asvajit: ... a guru, surely, can give a definite instruction to [84] a disciple, saying, "Don't do that. I strongly advise you not to do that."

S: Yes. (Pause)

Asvajit: And maybe if you persist in doing that, well, it makes things very, very difficult.

S: Mm. But what I have in mind is that the word "guru" is used. It's used in a Tantric context. So surely, the Tantric guru, let us say, someone like Milarepa, does more than just telling the disciple not to do this and to do that? So could not the word "rules" denote something more than that, do you think?

Adrian: Sort of ... the way he sort of radiates his actual experience.

S: Yes, perhaps it's more like that. Perhaps, it's more that if the disciple does not keep in harmony with the guru's whole mode of being. After all what is a rule? Let's try to understand that.

Asvajit: A sense of direction and purpose.

S: No. I don't mean in quite in that sort of way, but ah - why do you have rules?

Atula: As guidelines.

S: Guidelines! But are they sort of arbitrary? Suppose you have the rule - let's call it a rule - that you shouldn't tell lies. That is one of the precepts. Let's take that as a rule - there is a rule that you should not tell lies, so what does that mean?

Atula: Well, dishonesty is harmful to you.

Pete Shann: It's solidified expression.

S: Ah! A kind of solidified expression, that is to say, the enlightened person, the person really on the spiritual path, would not tell a lie, would speak the truth, so inasmuch as you want to be enlightened, want to be on the spiritual path, - don't tell lies; speak the truth. So the rule is to give you a guideline so that you can try to be what you want to be. So it's as though the guru doesn't need to speak rules, really, or to give you rules or lay down rules, the guru is being in a particular way, the rule represents only the concretization of that particular way he is being, which you would also like to be, and which he also would like you to be, so, 'keeping the guru's rules' basically means, becoming what the guru is. This is what it really means. So it's as if he's saying: "If you do not try, at least, to be or to become what the guru is, the relationship between you will soon be broken." It isn't just a matter of keeping rules in the strict or literal sense. It's very much more than that. It's more a question of your mode of being being in harmony with that of the guru, certainly within the Tantric context - within the Tantric context, the Vajrayana context, you should have transcended the keeping of rules in the ordinary sense, quite a long time before.

Vajradaka: Mm. More like the process of emulation.

S: Yes. But even that is too general I would say. Not sufficiently existential. (Pause) It's not just a question of the disciple being a good boy, and faithfully observing all of the rules that the guru has laid down. (Pause)

Clive: Not serving the letter.

S: Not serving the letter. Mm. (Pause) And I mean, Milarepa gives a hint to that effect immediately: "Boundless, alas, are [85] errors and deviations, How can one list them all?" It's not possible to draw up an exhaustive list of do's and don't. Though that's what the Theravada, to some extent, tries to do - draw up a very long list of rules for the bhikkhus, two hundred and twenty-seven altogether, as if to say if you could only be sure of observing those two hundred and twenty-seven then you really will be on the right path; but it is possible to observe all those two hundred and twenty-seven and still be on the wrong path. Really!

Clive: In other words it's easier to say what the right thing to do is, than to say what the wrong things are. In a sense there's only one right thing to do, but there are many wrong things to do.

S: Well there are also many right things to do in the sense of the expression. I mean the right thing to do is one thing as a principle, but many as regards the possible applications of that principle. (Pause) The important thing is to understand the principle. You can't be quite sure that you are keeping the principle or not breaking it, simply by making an exhaustive list of applications of the principle and then checking up on yourself with regard to each one, either

that you don't break it, or that you do carry it out.

Mangala: It seems to depend, again, on knowing the guru, in a sense, in quite a deep sort of way.

S: Mm.

Mangala: I mean, just knowing his teachings and rules, but just have a feeling for his kind of being and the kind of way he operates spiritually.

S: In the end Milarepa says: "Dear sons, you should practise In accordance with my words." He makes it very sort of general, because, you can't ...

[End of side 1, Side 2]

(A little bit missing)

S: ... whether Order Members should have long hair, or whether they should shave their heads, we say: - "There is no such rule!" Whether Order Members should be married, or unmarried, there is no rule! Whether they should be celibate or non-celibate:- there is no rule! Whether they should live in communities or not live in communities - "There is no rule."

Pete Shann: In a sense it detracts from individuality.

S: Indeed! It detracts from the responsibility of the individual to understand and apply the principles. And then somebody can fall back on the rules and observe the rules and consider himself a very good Order Member when perhaps he is completely remote from the spirit of the whole thing. (Pause)

Mangala: You said, sometimes rules might be necessary, um ... perhaps in the positive group?

S: I think in the case of the positive group rules are definitely necessary. Just as laws are necessary in the state.

Mangala: I thought maybe like in a co-op or something rules might be necessary.

S: Yes, indeed. But not within the Order as such. No.

Pete Shann: Shouldn't rules in co-ops be applied only to the [86] degree that people that work in them aren't individuals.

S: But also we mustn't forget that say in the co-op, though we call them "rules" they are of a rather different nature - they aren't rules with regard to individual behaviour, but they simply represent agreed ways of doing things. For instance: that you should have an Annual General Meeting once a year - that is a rule in a quite different sense. (Pause)

Clive: In a sense you can make sort of rules depending on the situation amongst you, in your weekly meeting, you might agree to have a particular rule because something isn't getting done, and you need to have a rule about it.

S: Yeah.

Clive: ... and you agree mutually on that. It would very much be on a level which is ...

S: But even so it would be a different kind of rule from say the 'vinaya' rule, because most of the 'vinaya' rules, - not all but most of them - refer to things which the individual bhikkhu or bhikkhuni is to do or not to do, as it were, regardless of circumstances. For instance that bhikkhunis should not eat garlic, that is a rule for individual nuns to observe - that they should not eat garlic - I won't go into the history about that - but there is that rule. That is quite different from, say, having a rule to the effect that seven members present constitute a quorum. You see what I mean? That is a quite different sort of rule. That is a rule to facilitate the orderly functioning of the group, it is not a rule governing individual ethical behaviour. (Pause)

So we have some, in the FWBO, certain recognized procedures as for becoming a mitra, but these are just sort of steps that are gone through so as to ensure that something is done properly, but these are not rules, that is to say ethical rules, for the individual to observe.

Malcolm: Somebody noticed at the last mitra ordination or whatever you call it, that somebody quoted you as saying there were certain things a mitra should do. It did offend one person - and I was quite surprised. I wasn't looking for anything to pick on but I could see that some people could pick up on it.

S: Well it is a question of how one puts it. If you say "should do" it suggests well, it's something you've got to do whether you like it or not, but that isn't the situation at all. It's what being a mitra means. Being a mitra means that you just want a deeper and closer involvement, and that will normally find expression in a particular way. You are not laying down rules for anybody ...

Malcolm: It wasn't exactly expressed like that.

S: Or even saying what a mitra should do. (Pause) Because it would be very odd if, having become a mitra, you should not be seen around the centre, nor should you do anything for the centre, nor should you have any communication with Order members. It might then be wondered what significance has your being a mitra had. One is only trying to indicate what would be the usual pattern of behaviour under normal conditions for someone who did become, and consider himself to be a mitra. It isn't a question of observing rules.

Malcolm: Or obligations.

S: So it is, as I said, it comes to this that, I feel we should not have any more rules, say, within the Order, than are already given by the Ten Precepts. And these in any case, lay down [87] principles. For instance the first precept, that is to say: "I undertake the training-principle," let us say, sikkhapadam, "of abstaining from injuring living-beings." It is very general, it is very broad. It is a principle, it is not a rule. It doesn't say whether you should eat meat or not eat meat for instance. It doesn't speak in terms of killing even or not killing - its the general principle of non-injury. "I undertake to observe the principle of non-injury." (Pause)

Clive: It's open to quite a high degree of individual interpretation, because ...

S: Or application rather.

Clive: And sensitivity.

S: Yes. For some people it might involve not even wearing leather shoes, they just couldn't do it. They just feel they shouldn't injure living beings even to that extent. Not even to the extent of making use of their skins or hides in this way. It could, it might be that the animal is slaughtered specifically for that purpose. Some people might be so sensitive that they apply the principle to that extent. But that is for them to determine. (Pause)

So therefore Milarepa sums it up by saying: "Dear sons, you should practise In accordance with my words."

Suvajra: Is there another tape?

I think you (can?) leave it there because we have in fact finished.

End of Session

[End of tape 5 Tape 6]

Next Session

S: I'll just mention a little point - it 's not really a little point, but it is, in a way, quite important, though one can't do anything about it at the moment, which arises out of the post I received this morning. It is not unconnected with some of things that we've been talking about - another letter from Lokamitra - I won't go into the whole background of it, but he has been acting on my behalf in India with regard to certain matters involving certain old friends of mine in India - in fact in Kalimpong - but from the letter I received this morning it transpires that there has been a serious misunderstanding between him and them - as far as I can make out, the fault is entirely on their side - so this led me to sort of reflect that it isn't easy to sort of keep in contact, and keep abreast. These old friends of mine were quite good friends of mine at one time and I consider that they have been good friends since then, but actually it does seem as though they have got quite out of touch - that is to say, quite out of touch with me, quite out of touch with what - well - they weren't ever in touch with what I was doing either in India in Poona or in England with the FWBO - and it's as though they've become almost alienated - the misunderstanding that has arisen between them and Lokamitra is sort of indicative of that. So this seemed to illustrate the general point that people can get left behind even within the Movement in England. If you don't keep up, you'll get left behind, and eventually you'll feel very much out of contact, and even feel sort of alienated, and even develop a sort of resentment towards those that formerly you were "with", but who are now, in fact, way ahead of you. You see what I mean? So this means two things: First of all, you yourself must be careful that you don't get left behind - you get left behind when you just settle down on one particular level, at one particular [88] stage; and also, if you see that others are beginning to get left behind be extra careful to keep up your contact with them and make sure that you encourage them to keep up, because if the gap becomes too big it's as though it can't be bridged any more. It's as though in the case of these friends I'm thinking of, well, I haven't had personal contact with them for many years, that was unavoidable, but I can't help thinking that, had I been in personal contact with them that sort of breach might not have

occurred. It isn't a breach directly with me, it's a breach more with Lokamitra, but in a sense, being a breach with Lokamitra and all that he stands for at present, it is at least indirectly or vicariously a breach with me. Do you see what I mean? So it's not only incumbent on one to keep up oneself, and not get left behind, but to be very careful to keep up friendly relations with those who it seems are slipping behind a bit,

I'm not saying you shouldn't go forward, but try and keep in touch with those who seem to be slipping back, otherwise if the gap becomes too big, well it'll never be bridged and perhaps they'll never catch up again and will eventually drop out, which of course would be a pity. So this little point emerged - in some ways it is quite a big point, from this morning's correspondence.

Asvajit: Do you mean slipping behind Bhante, in terms of one's practice.

S: Well, everything really!

Clive: In its essence doesn't that mean getting further away from the centre of their mandala?

S: Well, yes, it involves all these things.

Clive: But if someone is keeping up a practice and staying in touch, that then ... I mean, isn't that what the Movement is, sort of getting closer to the "Centre"?

S: But supposing they don't do that, supposing they just fall ... when I say "fall behind" I don't mean that they're not involved in Council Meetings and all that sort of thing, though their dropping out of that may also be a symbol of falling back. As I said, it's everything - getting out of touch with their own meditation practice, not seeing other Order Members, or other mitras, getting involved in unskilful activities, etc, etc. It's everything. So if you allow the gap to become too great, or if you aren't careful to keep up contact with those who seem to be drifting away, well, after a couple of years, nothing can be done about it as far as one can see. So from both sides, as it were, one should be careful to see that that doesn't happen. (Pause)

S: All right, page 641. So what has happened is that Rechungpa has arrived, he has rejoined Milarepa and the other disciples after his liaison with that particular lady; he's confessed all his transgressions; they have all been initiated by Milarepa; Milarepa has given them advice; the disciples gained a "decisive understanding" and Rechungpa made a solemn vow that he would observe and obey all Milarepa's instructions. Then there is a bit of a jump. We don't know whether the events which are described now, follow directly on from those which we have just been dealing with or whether they happened at some other time, anyway, we get them here in this chapter, and they are all concerned with dreams. They are all concerned, well, several episodes are concerned with Rechungpa's dreams, and the interpretations of the dreams that Milarepa gives. So let's have the first of the dreams and we'll consider it in detail and perhaps consider it from a more general point of view. Would someone like to read that prose section and then Milarepa's interpretation in verse?

[89]

"One night Rechungpa dreamt that he put a load of wool on [the back of] a dog, and shouted, "Write the words! Write the words!" Then they set out, and reached a mountain pass. From one side of the mountain came eighty-eight people to escort them, and from the other came

another eighty-eight people to welcome them. Rechungpa asked the Jetsun to interpret this dream for him. In answer, Milarepa sang:

The dog shows that you will have
A friend, the wool that your mind
Will be benign and gentle. "
Write the words" means that
You will be well-learned.
The shouting shows you will sing
From wonderful Experience.
The two groups of Eighty-eight
Means that so many people
Will escort and welcome you."

S: Mm. Well that's the dream and that's the interpretation. But the general point is, at least as related in this chapter - the dream, in fact the series of dreams, comes at a particular point; that is to say: after Rechungpa and the other disciples have been initiated into the Dem-Chog Mandala by Milarepa and given spiritual instructions. Do you think there is any particular significance in that? (Pause)

Atula: He's been moved, very much affected, deep, deep, deep down by the initiation.

S: Right! It means that the initiation and all that it involves, has affected them not just rationally, and not just intellectually, but that it has stirred them up, so to speak, on a quite deep level. It has penetrated beyond the conscious mind, and produced all sorts of repercussions and reverberations which manifest in dreams. Probably that is the significance of the fact that the dreams come at this point. So what is the first dream? - "One night Rechungpa dreamt that he put a load of wool on the back of a dog and shouted, "Write the words! Write the words!" Then they set out and reached a mountain pass. From one side of the mountain came eighty-eight people to escort them," that is to say accompany them - "and from the other came another eighty-eight people to welcome them. Rechungpa asked the Jetsun to interpret this dream for him. In answer, Milarepa sang:..."

What do you think about interpretation of dreams? Do dreams have a meaning? What does one mean by "the meaning" of the dream?

Atula: Symbolical.

Suvajra: Sometimes dreams have a meaning, they seem to be saying something to you. At other times they don't seem to ... you can't seem to make sense of them. (S: Mm) On an intellectual level anyway.

Adrian: Some dreams stand out for more than others.

S: Mm! Yes! (Pause) Despite Milarepa's interpretation, the meaning of a dream, or explaining the meaning of a dream doesn't mean so much saying that well, such-and-such incident in the dream corresponds to such-and-such matter, and giving it a detailed interpretation along those lines. It is something much more than that, especially with regard to those dreams that affect us emotionally very strongly. One might even say that, from a certain point of view there's is

no need to interpret dreams. (Pause)

[90]

Vajradaka: You just feel how you feel afterwards?

S: Yes, that is very important. In a way, that gives you the main clue perhaps. If you try and interpret dreams too much, it's almost as though the language of the dream, say the language of symbols, is not an adequate language in itself ...

Vajradaka: Yeah. Right.

S: It's as though the message hasn't come across unless it's translated into another language. That is not necessarily so.

Vajradaka: Yeah. Right!

S: So you don't necessarily understand a dream better because you have translated it into some sort of conceptual terms. It may mean that you are keeping the dream at a distance. Keeping it at arms' length - "Well, that's what it means", and thinking therefore that you have assimilated the meaning rationally and therefore dismissing the dream. One might say that a better way of interpreting a dream, if one wants to do that, is to use it as a starting-point of a whole series of free associations of the same symbolical nature.

Supposing, Rechungpa's dream is let us say, well, a dog is part of the dream, well it isn't a question of - again despite Milarepa's interpretation - it isn't a question of saying well, "I dreamt about a dog. Right. A dog stands for friend or friendliness, that's what it means, and confining it to that. It's a question of saying to yourself "Dog, dog, what sort of association do I attach to that? All right, warm, friendly, furry, barking, snarling, envious, dirty, mean, low. So "dog" means all of that to you perhaps or signifies all of that to you, perhaps. Not just "friendliness", or "a friend". So I think one has to sort of try to evoke all the sort of associated "feeling-tones" of the symbol in order to 'understand', so to speak, what the dream is all about, and what it is trying to tell you. Not try to sort of just limit it to one particular point-by-point resemblance or correspondence.

Mangala: It's akin to like almost fortune-telling isn't it?

S: Yes. Yes.

Mangala: Tell them your dream and they tell you what's going to happen to you. It's very simplistic isn't it.

S: Yes. I have sometimes said that the meaning of the dream is simply the dream itself. It is like trying to explain a poem:- what does the poem really mean? It means what it says, no less and no more. For instance if you give a paraphrase of a poem you haven't got any closer to the meaning. In fact you've got further away from it because you've moved more in the direction of the abstract and the general. I have been writing about this in my memoirs recently, that is why it's rather fresh in my mind; because when I was teaching English poems to students in Kalimpong, one of the things I was having to do was dictate the paraphrases of the English poems that they were supposed to be studying, and they'd learn these paraphrases by heart,

unfortunately, and then just write them down at examination time, when the examination paper gave them a certain poem and said - "Give the meaning of the poem in your own words." So I remember all sorts of extraordinary examples. For instance supposing it was Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale", which begins - "My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains" ... - the paraphrase goes like this - "The poet says, or announces, that he feels a pain in his heart." So this would be the meaning of the poem in your own words. But have you really got any nearer to the meaning of the poem by debasing it in that way; reducing it [91] to those general terms? Well, not at all! Or if for instance you read Blake's "Tyger, Tyger burning bright". If you say, well, here you say Blake is addressing his own wild, untamed nature, which he is personifying as the tiger. Well that sort of mentalizes and intellectualizes to a point where you just don't feel the impact of the poem any more. So perhaps you just have to feel, or try to experience what Blake meant by "Tyger", "burning" - a very powerful word - "in the night". "Tyger, Tyger, burning bright" what is it? "In the ...

___: .. in the forests of the night."

S: "In the forest of the night." They are very powerful images so you mustn't try to lessen the impact, or in effect lessen the impact, by giving them a very limited, conceptual meaning which is accessible to the rational mind. So I think, therefore, we have to be very careful about interpreting dreams. It's more a question of extending the dream. For instance, as I took up that figure of the dog, and sort of not just say: well the dog in the dream means a, b, or c, but sort of continuing the dream process and seeing what happens. Well, the dog might turn into a wolf, the wolf might turn into a werewolf, the werewolf might turn into a murderer, or a thief. The dog might have all those sort of associations for you. That is what you may be experiencing when you call up the image of "dog" in your dream.

Mangala: It's like we've almost got a compulsive need to make everything comprehensible to our intellect, and we can't just sort of accept things as they are,

Asvajit: In a way, the intellect seems to me, quite sort of two-dimensional. I was just sort of trying to see the process of the intellect side by side with the images while you were speaking, and it's as if one was following a series of lines when you're just following concepts, but the image just makes the whole thing ... I mean, it's much more "true".

S: Yes.

Asvajit: I mean it is actually what happens to that kind of psychic energy which the image embodies.

S: That's why I sometimes I feel it very limiting when people, talking about Bodhisattvas say, "Well, what does Avalokiteshvara mean?" So they say, "Well, it's the embodiment of compassion." So they write it all down, Avalokiteshvara equals compassion - it's compassion personified, as though, well that's it! You see what I mean? But this is really very limiting. I mean, just regarding say Avalokiteshvara as being the personification of a particular spiritual quality.

Atula: Isn't there a sort of process that you need to go through all that. That it seems you need for a start a sort of conceptual framework, and then later on you need that no longer - you don't respond to that so much, so you need something stronger.

S: Mm. In the case of the dream, or rather the fact that you dream at all, I mean this sort of, as it were, significant or meaningful or emotionally charged dream - the fact that you dream in that sort of way at all, suggests that you are getting a bit fed-up with the conceptual framework. It needs expanding a bit or it's become too narrow, too rigid, but instead of accepting it what do you do, you clamp down on the dream and you try to fit it within the preexisting framework, whereas perhaps it should be taken as a sign that the existing framework, needs expansion. (Pause)

Suvajra: Do you think it is an important practice for us, Bhante, [92] to try and keep in contact with our dreams all the time?

S: Well, yes and no. As Adrian mentioned, there are different kinds of dreams. Sometimes dreams are just trivia, things left over from the day. But I think if one has a dream which has a very powerful emotional impact, you should try to retain some sort of contact with that - that is to say remembering the dream itself, and trying to keep in contact with the feeling or the experience that it gave you, and asking yourself what the significance of that is. Which doesn't mean trying to slap an explanation on it too quickly, but just recognizing the fact that it is the dream that you have dreamed, and therefore it is of some importance in your psychical life.

Adrian: I've got a quite good example, that really brings that out. Several months ago I had a recurring dream, something that happened two or three times. In the dream I got badly beaten up and in the dream I just couldn't understand why I was getting beaten up, and when I woke up that stayed with me quite a lot. I couldn't work out what it was all about, and some time later I was meditating one day, I got a sort of feeling coming up inside me and I started doing something which I'd done before - what it was - I felt as if a block was actually developing inside me, some sort of emotional block, and I thought I was being quite clever, what I was doing was actually trying to imagine myself trying to break the block with any means at my disposal, so I was trying to visualize breaking the block, and on one particular occasion I started getting this sort of blocked feeling coming up again, so I started imagining myself breaking this block and all of sudden something happened, and I relayed it straight back to this recurring dream. I suddenly thought, "What are you doing?" And I realized I was being quite narrow in my attitude towards myself, that what was happening inside me was not necessarily something bad. I had put this interpretation on the feelings as being a sort of block, something that had to be broken and moved, whereas in fact, it might have been something completely different and so I thought - "Well maybe it's something quite positive happening, and I regarded it as being like a sort of flower bud inside me, and as soon as I started to look at it in that respect, the whole thing just completely changed and it became quite a positive feeling inside.

It was as if what I had been doing was the dream was telling me that you, sort of, "You are destroying yourself, you are hurting yourself." And consciously I was just not aware of that.

S: Mm. This also raises the question of the recurrent dream. Because if you have the same dream, or the same kind of dream, over and over again, it is as though, well, for want of a better term, your unconscious mind is trying to say something to the conscious mind, something which perhaps the conscious mind is finding difficult to accept; so you should pay particular attention perhaps to these recurrent dreams - dreams that you have over and over again. (Pause)

Milarepa does give a rather clear explanation but it may not be the only one possible so to speak - "The dog shows that you will have A friend, the wool that your mind Will be benign and gentle." - Because the wool is ... where does "the wool" come from?

Malcolm: A lamb or a sheep.

S: Sheep, so - I mean, sheep are supposed to be benign and gentle - "Write the words!" means that "You will be well-learned. The shouting shows you will sing From wonderful Experience." This is Milarepa himself saying this. "The two groups of eighty-eight Means that so many people Will escort and welcome [93] you." It's as though (Chuckling) Milarepa doesn't even bother to give an interpretation there, he says in the dream people welcoming means people welcoming you, (Chuckling) and people escorting you, well means people escorting you. (Chuckling) The interpretation doesn't really go very far, does it?

Clive: Maybe that's not such a bad thing. He's more or less saying take it for what it is without going into some sort of analytical ...

S: Though he does give an explanation. He does give a point-by-point interpretation.

Vajradaka: Perhaps Milarepa is in a position to.

S: Well is even Milarepa in a position to say that a particular object in a dream means just one particular thing in 'real life', so to speak? Is even Milarepa in that position, do you think?

Peter Shann: Well, possibly, if he knows the disciple well enough.

S: But is that really the point? Because if somebody knows somebody else well they can surely see all sorts of implications and ramifications say, from this image of the dog. I mean, surely, for Rechungpa "dog" doesn't just stand for friendliness? If so it suggests that Rechungpa's mind would be very limited. (Pause) So perhaps Milarepa's interpretation is not to be taken too seriously. Maybe Milarepa himself, doesn't intend it too seriously. After all, Rechungpa has asked Milarepa to interpret the dream, so all right, he's asked for an interpretation and he gives one. It's just an opportunity perhaps to sing another song (Laughter) and give some more good advice. (Pause)

I mean after all the question is answered the way you put it. You see what I mean? Left to his own devices Milarepa might not want to give interpretations of dreams at all, but the disciple has asked him to interpret the dream, so OK he obliges. Perhaps he doesn't take it all that seriously, but anyway, it's an opportunity to give some good advice, but as an interpretation of the dream perhaps it doesn't amount to much. Perhaps it doesn't need to.

Clive: On the other hand you're not saying that dreams aren't to be taken seriously?

S: No. I'm not saying that, no. (Pause) Well, again, depending on the sort of dream. (Pause) But if you think about it, dreams are very strange things. They are very real, and sometimes one gets the impression that one has a whole sort of secret life quite separate from one's conscious waking life, and that that sort of secret life is just as real and just as important as the conscious waking life. To some people it seems almost more alive in their dreams than they are in their waking state. At least one hopes so. (Laughter) And maybe those people who

seem rather dull and drowsy and a bit aloof and abstracted, maybe they are just living their real lives at night in their dreams. Perhaps all their interest and energy is going there. It's quite a thought, isn't it?

Vajradaka: I think there are people like that within the "Friends".

S: Mm.

Suvajra: That brings up the question of how do you bring the energy and creativity from the dream state into the waking state.

S: Well, one might ask oneself why does this sort of thing [94] happen? Why does it come about that people invest more of their energy in, say, their dream life and their dream experiences than they do in their waking life, their waking experience? What is happening?

Atula: One doesn't want much involvement with that?

S: But how has that come about? How has it come about that they have a greater emotional involvement with their dreams than with things that are happening in the waking state?

Adrian: Because there are no constraints in a dream.

S: Yes!

Adrian: You have much more of a free hand.

S: Right! Yes.

Clive: They're not as involved in objective activities outside, all their energy is sort of inside.

S: Mm.

Clive: It's not objectified.

S: It could also be that the events of their waking life don't provide them with an adequate framework for their emotional life, so their emotional life finds its outlet in dreams. Sometimes people can have even profound spiritual experiences in dreams, but if one wants to develop as an individual, obviously, an important part of that, or an important aspect of that is integration. This would be an aspect of even vertical integration; bringing the conscious and the unconscious mind together, which means not just sort of bringing up the dreams into the conscious mind and giving a sort of theoretically acceptable interpretation of them, but it means opening up, genuinely opening up, the conscious mind to the experience, well to the dream experience, and the conscious mind really listening to what the unconscious mind, so to speak, is having to say through the dream. (Pause)

Atula: Is that why Rechungpa is asking Milarepa? He feels the importance of bringing that into his waking life?

S: It could be. It could be. Maybe he is asking Milarepa to make some sort of connection for

him.

Atula: Because he can't see himself.

S: Yes. (Pause) Because it isn't really a very positive state of affairs if you have a conscious waking life of a particular kind, going in a particular direction, and a sort of dream life of a quite different kind, sometimes even of a compensatory kind. You're almost a sort of split personality then. If the one is too different from the other. Ideally there should be a sort of dialectical relationship between them - the waking state giving form to the dream state, and the dream state giving, or enriching, the content of the waking state. (Pause) Anyway, go on to the next dream.

"Another night Rechungpa dreamt that he threw off his clothes and washed his body with water, then became a bird that flew away and alighted on a tree. Then he saw a mirror and looked into it. In explaining this dream, Milarepa sang:

Throwing off your clothes implies
Relinquishment of all desires.
Washing your body with clean water means [95]
Purification through the Instructions.
[Transforming into] a bird implies
Kindness and compassion. The bird's
Two wings are the Two Provisions.
Alighting on the branch reveals
That in the Bodhi Tree you'll sit.
The mirror you saw implies
Revelations by Dakinis."

S: It does sound a bit cut-and-dried doesn't it? (Laughter)

Atula: Is he just pointing him in the direction he should be ...

S: It's very good advice, of course. (Laughs) "Throwing off your clothes implies Relinquishment of all desires. Washing your body with clean water means Purification through the Instructions." All this is pretty clear and obvious, in a way, isn't it? "[Transforming into] a bird implies Kindness and compassion" - That's not quite so obvious, is it? What's the connection? Is there a connection? (Pause)

Clive: You could say that they are very high emotions, and a bird flies high.

S: But why kindness and compassion? What particular connection is there between kindness and compassion and a bird?

Clive: Soft feathers ...

S: Soft feathers?

Mangala: A dove is supposed to be gentle, isn't it?

S: The bird's two wings are the Two Provisions - you know what those are?

___: No.

S: Usually translated as the two accumulations - the accumulation of knowledge or awareness, jnanasamvara and the accumulation of merits, punyasamvara. Sometimes it is said the bird's two wings are compassion on the one hand, and wisdom on the other, with both of which the Bodhisattva "flies". But here the bird itself is kindness and compassion. So, "Alighting on the branch reveals That in the Bodhi tree you'll sit." Overlooking the fact that the Buddha sits at the foot of the Bodhi tree, not exactly in the branches. "The mirror you saw implies Revelations by the Dakinis." How does looking in a mirror imply revelation by dakinis?

Clive: Looking in a mirror you see yourself and it reveals the dakinis which are within.

S: Mm.

Pete Shann: In communication with someone else perhaps you can see yourself better.

S: Yes. Yes. Yeah! (Pause) When you look into a mirror it's you and it's not you.

Aloka: Don't Dakinis wear mirrors?

S: Ah?

Aloka: ... something like a mirror

[96].

S: Quite a few figures in the Vajrayana wear mirrors. It often symbolizes the "Mirror-like Wisdom" - the wisdom that reflects all things impartially.

[End of side 1 side 2]

[Part of song seems to be missing including the verses:

"Again one night Rechungpa dreamt that he rode backward on a donkey, and wore a robe called "Hope!" The Jetsun explained the dream in this song:

Turning your back toward Samsara
You ride the Mahayana's ass.
When Nirvana's welcome comes
You will fulfil the hopes of all."]

S: (Pause) It also draws attention to the fact that as we pointed out earlier on, that there are dreams and dreams. Perhaps it means that actually Rechungpa's dreams aren't going very deep yet. Perhaps they are just sort of reflections of things which are occurring nearer the level of his conscious mind. Do you see what I mean? Sometimes you can sort of see the meaning of your own dreams quite easily. But you could almost say those sort of dreams aren't really dreams. They haven't really come from deep in the unconscious mind. They are sort of

reflections in a slightly different form of thoughts and experiences on the conscious level. For instance, in this instance, Rechungpa dreamt that he rode backwards on a donkey and wore a robe called Hope. This dream could very well be a reflection of Rechungpa's own conscious thoughts and aspirations - he's riding backwards - well of course that means he's turning his back on samsara - in other words he could be thinking in his own conscious mind, almost deliberately, well "I've turned my back on the samsara, I've left all that behind me." And that comes out in his dream, not on a very deep level that he has literally turned his back on the "samsara". You see what I mean?

Mangala: I was going to say, actually, if you're riding backwards it's almost as if he's riding towards "samsara". He'd have to be sitting backwards on the donkey.

Adrian: He's got his eye on it hasn't he?

Clive: He's looking at samsara but he's moving away from it.

S: "He rode backward on a donkey".

Clive: That is with his back to the head of the donkey which is presumably he's going forward towards Nirvana.

S: Yes.

Clive: So he's facing samsara.

S: But going away from it.

Malcolm: Looking at it but going away from it.

S: But the point I'm making is that a dream does not necessarily come from a deep unconscious level with a deep significance and message. It is more like a reflection of your conscious thoughts and activities on to a comparatively superficial level of the unconscious so not much interpretation is called for. I mean, the meaning is pretty obvious so maybe so far Rechungpa has been dreaming these sort of dreams and Milarepa is giving pretty obvious interpretations, because well, the meaning is more or less on the surface, but it does seem with the next dream we come to [97] something more profound. So let's go into that.

"Another night Rechungpa dreamt that he put a jewel upon his head and donned an immaculate robe. Then he looked into a bright mirror having no stain upon it. In the right hand he held a Vajra, in the left a human skull full of blood. He also dreamt that he sat cross-legged on a lotus seat; his back radiated beams of light and his body was ablaze with a great fire. He saw a fountain springing up before him, and the sun and moon shone from his heart. On his left stood men and women in even number; on his right, a child was herding a kid, which then multiplied into many goats. Rechungpa went to the Jetsun and asked him to interpret the dream. The Jetsun replied, "The meaning of the dream is this":

S: Do you get the difference of the impression from this dream?

Voices: Mm.

S: In what sort of way?

Clive: It's highly symbolic.

S: Symbolic in a way that the other dreams weren't?

Clive: Yes.

S: But in, in ... what?

Malcolm: It's a bit more emotional.

S: A bit more emotional, yes. There's a stronger emotional quality to it all.

___: Blood and fire.

S: Yes.

Suvajra: It's like a visualization.

S: Yes. Mm. (Pause) So, perhaps, we could say that this dream appears to come from a deeper level. And it is perhaps significant that Milarepa gives a lengthier interpretation of the dream. All right, let's go on. Like to read the interpretation?

"The jewel means that you should always
Think of your Guru upon your head;
The pure white robe implies the Whispered
Lineage; looking into the mirror means
The "Pointing-out" Performance; holding
The Vajra in the right hand indicates
The destruction of all wandering thoughts.
The skull in your left hand is a symbol
Of your Bliss-Void Experience; the lotus
Seat implies your freedom from all faults;
Your sitting cross-legged indicates
You will be in Samadhi long;
The light radiating from your back
Means that you will realize aright.
The fountain that gushes forth before you means
That you will have Signs and Experiences;
The fire that from your body flames
Is the burning of Dumo heat;
The sun and moon are proof
Of your illumination.
The men and women standing on your left
Means that Bha Wos and Mos will welcome you;
On your right the kid and goats are proof [98]
That you will protect your disciples;
The multiplying of the kids foretells

The spreading of the Whispered Lineage."

S: Mm! So we seem to be on a rather different level here, don't we? On a really, sort of spiritual level as distinct from, perhaps, a moral level. So - "The jewel means that you should always Think of your Guru upon your head." Didn't we go into this some time ago? Was it in this group, or in some other?

Vajradaka: It was in some other.

S: Rechungpa dreamt he had put a jewel upon his head and Milarepa says - "The jewel means that you should always Think of your Guru upon your head." There is what is called in ? the "Tudamani", the crest jewel. You know that in India in ancient times, kings and princes and wealthy people used to dress their hair quite elaborately and even put jewels in their hair, so the "Tudamani" was the jewel, the crest jewel, was the jewel that they affixed to the very top - you sometimes see it in Bodhisattva images, so usually what sort of jewel, do you think would you put at your crest?

___: The largest.

S: The largest and the largest would also be the most precious. Also bear in mind, - and there's a lot of associated symbolism here, - that, in India to put something on the head, or touch it with the head was a sign of respect. Just as if you touched something with your feet it's a sign of disrespect. So if you put something on your head it shows that you value it very highly. You look up to it. So the crest-jewel has all those sort of connotations, and treating something as a crest jewel, has all those sort of connotations; so that the guru is often referred to in these sort of terms: that the disciple keeps him on his head as his crest jewel, signifying that the disciple regards him as the most precious thing, and looks up to him as the most precious thing. Also, of course, again it connects with the visualization practice, in which you actually visualize the guru as seated immediately above the crown of the head.

So in the dream, Rechungpa dreamt that he put a jewel upon his head. So the jewel means, or putting the jewel on your head, means that you should always think of your guru upon your head. That is to say that you should always regard the guru as the most precious, the most valuable, always respect him, always look up to him, always visualize him, so to speak, above your head, which also suggests always remain in contact with the guru, always be receptive to the influence of the guru etc. So that part of the dream means all of this. (Pause) And then - "The pure white robe implies the Whispered Lineage" - what is the Whispered Lineage?

___: Oral tradition.

S: Yes, it's the Kagyupa lineage itself, which is the lineage of the Oral transmission, the oral teaching from teacher to disciple. You probably know that that Kagyupa yogis wear a white cotton robe because they particularly practise the "psychic heat" - they need no other clothing than that. It seems as though Milarepa and his own immediate disciples just wore this single, very light, cotton robe. I've met Kagyupa lamas, Kagyupa monks, in India, in Kalimpong especially, there aren't too many of them, but there are some - they still wear this white cotton robe, though they wear it over the ordinary monk's robes. So you can see the significance of it has become, so to speak, purely symbolical.

Vajradaka: Have you ever met any of them that actually [99] practised the "Tumo"?

S: Yes. Well, at least two of my own teachers have practised this.

___: What is it?

S: Well, it's "psychic heat", so to speak. It is based around the fact that, in - well this is how it's usually translated - that "tumo" really translates "chandali", the Sanskrit word "chandali" which is "fiery" or "blazing" simply. In English one has used the term "psychic heat" - that in the course of meditation it sometimes happens quite spontaneously, that you experience an intense inner heat, which is actually an objective fact - it can be perceived not only by you, but by other people, they can put their hand on you and actually feel it, so the significance of this is, so to speak, purely physiological - I mean it signifies changes taking place in the whole organism as a result of meditation practice, so it doesn't have of itself, any great significance but it can be used as the basis of a sort of symbolism, because you can think in terms of burning up impurities, so in the "Tumo" practice, the "chandali" practice you, as it were, you deliberately generate this psychic heat, this as it were, physiological heat, which can be experienced tangibly and physically, but it also becomes the symbol for you of the fire of wisdom burning up all impurities, so you make it the basis, so to speak, of a sort of vipassana practice. I mean that is the essence of the matter, and the Kagyupas especially, practise this, both the generation of the psychic heat in the literal sense, also the using of that experience as a basis for developing the corresponding "vipassana" one could say.

One can of course simply experience 'psychic heat' without making it the basis for development of that particular form of 'vipassana', but then that is not "Tumo" in the full sense. There are quite a number of elaborate practices in this connection, but this is their general significance.

Vajradaka: Do you think it's a pretty way out sort of practice or that it in some way is quite central and that eventually perhaps, we could actually incorporate it for those who are at that stage within the movement?

S: I don't think it's all that "way out", because that kind of heat does develop spontaneously sometimes, as people meditate.

Atula: I have experienced something mildly like that.

S: Yeah. In the actual practice you experience first of all the heat just like a fiery thread, and then you practise widening it and widening it until it feels like a sort of tube - it widens out to at least two or three inches and that is the starting-point of the practice. (Pause) So in a way, it isn't a very "way-out" sort of thing, so to speak. I mean, the basis of it is quite normal and factual. It is a sort of psycho-physical experience endowed with a purely spiritual, even transcendental significance, and becomes the starting-point of a transcendental experience corresponding to the psycho-physical experience. You see what I mean?

Adrian: And that is said to denote purity?

S: Yes, inasmuch as fire purifies.

Brian: Is that linked up with the metta bhavana - the metta bhavana being just a sort of the basis for developing that sort of ...

S: No. It is not especially linked up with the metta bhavana, because any concentration in any form can have this sort of [100] effect.

Clive: Is it purely physical, - on the physical level. Is it physical or is it emotional?

S: Well, it is both. It is a physical experience, even as experienced spontaneously, that there is the actual experience of physical heat within the body as though you have fever, but on the other hand there is a corresponding emotional experience. And you can describe that emotional experience as being one of warmth. Because we use the term "warmth" for a particular kind of feeling, a particular kind of emotion. So it's as though, in this connection, you experience both. You experience a definite sort of physical heat, a physical warmth, quite an intense warmth, and also the corresponding emotional "warmth", in 'inverted commas'. So that it is a psycho-physical experience; and therefore one speaks of psycho-physical heat or warmth. So it's as though one experiences this psycho-physical warmth, or heat, as sort of dissolving things - dissolving sort of knots and tensions, and then one can make that the starting-point of a further development of a more, so to speak, genuinely spiritual nature. You think of, or you experience the fire of wisdom as burning up all impurities, all ignorance, and so on, and in that way you develop actual insight, or wisdom.

Pete Shann: I've just thought of something - is the head of this lineage, Vajradhara?

S: Yes.

Pete Shann: Isn't that the Bodhisattva of purity?

S: No.

Pete Shann: No?

S: You're thinking of Vajrasattva.

Pete Shann: I thought they were linked in a some way.

S: No. They are different.

Vajradaka: So you think you can go quite a long way with this sort of rather organic approach, if it begins to develop - this psycho-physical heat - and then transposing it, or experiencing it more and not just dissolving knots and tensions but in symbolic terms of wisdom, or do you think that it actually needs to be done in a particular way according to a practice.

S: Yes, it does need to be done in a particular way according to a practice, and that way is given in the Kagyupa, as well as in the Nyingmapa tradition.

Vajradaka: So for us, then, how would we, if eventually some of us felt that we wanted to take on this practice, what procedure do you think we would need to adopt? Seeing that we've

always been very careful about going to other ...

S: Yes, well that is quite difficult to say at the moment. I mean, the explanations that I got with regard to this came mainly from Dhardo Rimpoche who had done it some years previously and who had various charts and diagrams and so on which he showed me at the time. But there are quite a number of different traditions of this, even yes, within the Gelugpas, also, they have these traditions. It is a very widespread practice. But it does seem to be especially associated with the Kagyupas, they seem, as it were, to have specialized in this and taken it quite literally and given it a quite prominent place in their tradition.

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Vajradaka: Did you practise it yourself, at all?

S: I can't say that I practised it, but it did at one stage happen spontaneously, so in this way I developed some interest in it. I think it must have been partly because of that that Dhardo Rimpoche explained it to me on one occasion. As far as I remember he explained it to me quite spontaneously. I did not ask him to do so, and that didn't happen on many occasions, with any of my teachers. So I tended to attach particular significance to those things where they took the initiative, or when they just spontaneously told, or taught me something rather than me having to ask, and this was one of those. It occurred fairly early in the course of my connection with him. But I can't say anything definitely at the moment but it might be a course of practice that some people could pursue. As you know I'm quite reluctant to say well, follow another course of practice because there's so many quite important and basic practices that people almost have neglected - the foundation must be very strong before one goes into things of this sort.

But who knows, maybe, some time, people in Tyn-y-ddol might find it a useful practice.
(Laughter)

Suvajra: Even in the caravans here, Bhante.

Vajradaka: Ha! Ha! Ha!

Atula: You talked about that in your book, "The Thousand Petalled Lotus".

S: Yes. I thought I could recollect that. Yes. Mm. I mentioned it briefly. I haven't described it in very great detail, but the reference is there. (Pause)

So, "The pure white robe implies the Whispered Lineage ..." There's a female Buddha figure who wears a pure white robe. Do you remember that?

___: Yes.

S: In fact her name means that - "The wearer of the pure white robe - "Pandaravasini" - consort of ...

Suvajra: Amitabha.

S: Amitabha.

Clive: She's also on fire.

S: Mm?

Clive: Her robe is on fire.

S: According to some accounts her it's also on fire. "Fire" meaning the purifying element. It could mean that she's constantly practising this "Tumo" practice. It could have that significance, couldn't it? (Pause) In some English books it's spelt "Dumo" - I think it's spelt "Dumo" in "___" (pronouncing the sound) - half-way between "d" and "t". "T-U-M-O" or "D-U-M-O".

"Looking into the mirror means The "Pointing-Out Performance". What is this "Pointing Out Performance"? I have mentioned it once or twice in very general, not to say, vague, terms. (Pause) Why does 'looking into the mirror' mean this? The 'pointing-out performance'. Well, what do you see when you look into a mirror?

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Vajradaka: A reflection.

S: When you look into a mirror, what do you see?

___: Yourself.

Asvajit: You see your physical self, your physical form.

S: Mm. So what is the connection between looking into the mirror and the 'pointing-out performance'?

Mangala: If somebody points out your faults presumably they are a bit like a mirror, or they just reflect exactly what's there.

S: It's much more than that. It's really that ...

___: Sort of reflections.

S: ... Mm ... because the Mahamudra which is associated with this is of a much higher level, so it is not as though the guru is pointing out your faults. He's holding up a mirror to you, so you can see your own true nature and not in words or concepts, but, so to speak, in gesture. So it's as though when he makes a certain gesture, it points out to you your own true nature. It shows you - it enables you to see your own true nature. So this implies of course a very high level of communication which has gone beyond words, which has gone beyond concepts. It's easy enough to perform a ritual and for the guru to hold up a mirror and say, well, this represents me pointing-out your own true nature, it's much much more than that! (Pause) I think I have referred to this before - that if you are in very intense communication with somebody, well, what actually happens?

Asvajit: You bring out the best in them.

S: Mm?! You not only bring out the best in them, and they bring out the best in you, but you begin to see yourself in them. Because you understand them better, you understand yourself better. Through knowing them you know yourself, so it's something more like that on a purely spiritual level. (Pause) - going beyond words and beyond concepts. (Pause)

Suvajra: Is mudra used quite commonly to point-out your own true nature? Like between guru and disciple?

S: It's very difficult to generalize. One can only say there is a quite close connection between the Mahamudra teaching in general, and "the pointing-out" procedure. Probably one can't really say much more than that. (Pause)

Right. "...holding the vajra in the right hand indicates The destruction of all wandering thoughts." What does it usually represent? If you see pictures of Padmasambhava with his - as it is in that one there's the skull-cup in the left hand, and the ... usually the vajra - sometimes the dagger - in the right hand. What does it represent?

Asvajit: Dispelling demons.

S: Dispelling demons, the destruction of all negative forces, and influences. (Pause) And: "The skull in your left hand is a symbol Of your Bliss-void experience." It's not so much the skull, but the skull filled with, well, blood or wine. That is, the blood or the wine, especially wine, let us say, or wine as symbolizing blood, represents the intoxicating happiness, and the skull, the void, Sunyata. So it's a union of the mundane and the Transcendental, the mundane at the highest point of positivity united with the Transcendental experience - so the "Bliss-Void" experience.

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"The lotus Seat implies your freedom from all faults." Why is that, particularly?

Pete Shann: It separates you from the mundane.

S: So if you go back to the symbolism of the lotus, well the lotus blooms in the mire, and all that, so it becomes a similar purity. So you find figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas seated on the lotus, which means they have risen above the mundane, they are separated from the mundane; they have become transformed into something purely spiritual, purely Transcendental. (Pause)

So - "Your sitting cross-legged indicates You will be in samadhi long." Because the cross-legged position, of course, is associated with the practise of meditation. If you adopt the cross-legged posture well, then you can go on sitting and meditating indefinitely, because that is the easiest, and simplest, and most natural posture in which to meditate. (Pause)

"The light radiating from your back Means that you will realize aright." Mm. What do you think that means? - "the light radiating from your back."?

Mangala: A kind of aura?

S: Yes. Mm. Presumably it means that. From your back. As though you've got the light

behind you, you're backed by, supported by that. (Pause)

"The fountain that gushes forth before you means That you will have Signs and Experiences."
Well, signs and experiences of what? (Pause)

Asvajit: Attainments?

S: Attainments - spiritual progress. They will gush forth, like a fountain. So what does that suggest? (Pause) , a very abundant spiritual experience indeed; a very rich and full experience. (Pause)

"The fire that from your body flames Is the burning of the "Dumo" heat." Well, this is the "psychic heat" - the "chandali". (Pause)

Asvajit: Nietzsche is quite hard on "chandali" isn't he? He despises the "chandali". But I wonder whether he thinks of them in the same way? He, ah ...

S: Are you thinking of "chandala" - the chandalas are the outcastes.

Asvajit: Ah!

S: "Chandali", here means - it's a slightly different word - the 'blazing' or 'fiery' one, feminine gender.

Asvajit: Ah, yes. I see.

S: The "chandali" is the Buddhist term, for what in Hinduism is called the "Kundalini" - "Kundalini" means "the coiled-up one". In Buddhism it is the "fiery one", the fiery energy. (Pause)

So: "The sun and moon are proof Of your Illumination." What is the association or connection here? Is it just "light" - sun and moon represent light? So, light in a metaphorical sense is Illumination - En-light-en-ment?

Atula: Wisdom and Compassion.

[104]

S: Wisdom and compassion, yes. (Pause)

"The men and women standing on your left Means that Bla Wos and Mos will welcome you."
What are these 'Bla Wos' and 'Mos'?

___: ??

S: They are spirits of various kinds; you have the spirits, the demons under your control, just as Padmasambhava did. (Pause)

"On your right the kid and goats are proof That you will protect your disciples - (Pause) - because ... luckily they are not sheep. (Laughter)

Vajradaka: Ha! Ha! Ha!

S: It's a kid and goats. Well, they need herding and disciplining etc., so they represent the disciples. "The multiplying of the kids foretells The spreading of the Whispered Lineage." That is the Kagyupa Tradition. So what do you think of this dream and its interpretation?
(Pause)

Brian: It's a lot more involved than the last one.

___: It's more expansive.

S: It seems to represent the whole spiritual life.

Vajradaka: Yeah.

S: So why do you think Rechungpa dreamt of himself in this sort of way. What do you think it's significance is?

Pete Shann: His aspiration.

S: Don't you think it's more than aspiration?

___: Commitment.

Asvajit: (Words blurred)

S: Commitment.

Suvajra: He's actually developing.

S: He's actually developing.

Adrian: He's had some sort of experience of it.

S: He's had some sort of experience. Mm.

Asvajit: Realization.

S: Realization. (Pause) Do you think it is possible to have actual realization in a dream?

___: Mm (assenting).

S: What makes you think that? Surely a dream is just a dream.

___: It's an experience as well.

S: It's an experience, but an actual experience of realization? Can you develop insight in a dream do you think?

Clive: Yes.

[105]

S: Yes?

Asvajit: If you can integrate it with your conscious mind.

S: Mm! Mm! Mm.

Malcolm: If you can concentrate it I imagine.

S: Mm. Is it possible to be conscious in dreams?

Voices: Mm. Yeah.

S: In what sense? In one sense one is always conscious in dreams, otherwise there wouldn't be a dream, but in another sense one isn't conscious in dreams.

Asvajit: There isn't an objective consciousness, there isn't a sense-consciousness.

S: Mm! Yes. There isn't a sense-consciousness, that is to say from the standpoint of the waking consciousness, but in a dream say you can dream that you are drinking a glass of water, so what is the difference between that sense experience in the dream-state and what we would describe as a real sense experience in the waking state.

Asvajit: The, ah, there is a kind of subtle sense system at work, but there isn't any contact of the usual sense organs with the usual sense object.

S: For instance supposing in a dream you drank a glass of water, well supposing you had fallen asleep feeling thirsty, really in need of water, and you dreamt that you drank a glass of water in the dream, so when you woke up would you feel satisfied? Would your thirst be satisfied, and would you not need to drink water?

Asvajit: Not necessarily, it doesn't follow.

S: No. So in the same way you could develop insight in a dream, presumably, but when you, as it were, woke up would it still be insight in the waking state?

Vajradaka: No. Not necessarily, but perhaps it would depend on whether there was a kind of a consciousness that had 'moved', as it were, from your conscious to the unconscious, which I think is possible: that you can actually experience yourself in the dream with things actually happening. It doesn't often happen but I think it's possible.

S: Mm.

Vajradaka: Do you think so?

S: Mm. Well what would be the test?

Asvajit: Whether the development of insight actually corresponded with Reality.

S: One could say that the test is practical. If you found on waking up that certain cravings had permanently disappeared, well, one could assume that the insight developed in the dream was real insight, just as if when you woke up after dreaming you had drunk that water, and your thirst was really satisfied, and you didn't need a drink, well, you could assume, that in a sense, you had actually drunk water in your dream. You see what I mean?

Asvajit: You are speaking symbolically and not literally, though?

[106]

S: Mm?

Asvajit: I mean in the case of drinking water.

S: Ah! But in that case if the drinking of water in the dream is only symbolic, well, it would suggest that the development of insight in the dream is also only symbolic: that it has an effect, as it were, only on the dream level; that the effect doesn't carry over into the waking state, which is, so to speak, where it really counts.

Malcolm: Well, what ... with desire ? function both in the waking state and in the dream state, so desires could be actually fulfilled in dreams.

S: Yes.

Malcolm: ..but not perhaps.

S: A bodily desire cannot be fulfilled in a dream, can it? For instance, the desire of the body for water? (Pause)

Clive: Psychological desires can.

S: Psychological desires can be, yes. Certainly. So can, as it were, spiritual desires be satisfied in dreams? (Pause)

___: Yes.

S: Presumably they can be. Mm. (Pause) So in that sense, can insight be developed in the dream? Well, insight doesn't necessarily involve any degree of bodily consciousness.

Vajradaka: Right.

S: Otherwise you couldn't develop insight in a meditation state in which you were not conscious of the physical body. But in the meditation state, as distinct from the dream-state, usually, you are conscious of yourself, so to speak, you have a sort of degree of self-recollection. So if you can have that sort of degree of self-recollection in the dream state as in the waking state then it's possible for you to develop insight, insight which has an effect on the whole personality. But what has in fact happened then? You have actually turned the dream-state into a meditation state.

Vajradaka: Yeah.

S: The common factor, being, between the two, that there is no sense-consciousness. I mean, in a deep meditation there is no sense-consciousness. You don't see anything, you don't hear anything, and you can develop insight. So if, in the dream-state, you can, as it were, recapture your state of self-recollection, well, the fact that you are not in contact with the physical senses, or the fact that the physical sense-consciousnesses are not functioning, does not mean that you cannot develop insight, and the repercussions of that development of insight will be felt, will be experienced, in the waking state when you return to it, just as they would have been experienced if you had returned to the waking state from the meditation state. That would seem to be the position. (Pause)

Anyway don't go off to sleep and try to find out, not just yet! (Laughter) In fact I get the impression that some of you need a good strong cup of coffee at this point! All right, let us stop and have one coffee.

(Coffee break - break in recording until)

Malcolm: Do you think it just means in your one small circle?

[107]

S: Well the contact essentially is contact with people, and its intensity of contact which is important, so in practice that means concentrating on a relatively small circle.

Malcolm: So in that sense, you are keeping it up?

S: Yes.

Malcolm: Does that mean your communication will be good if say I'm keeping up with my people in West London, and somebody's keeping up with people in Glasgow.

S: Well, if you are really keeping up contact with people, say, in West London, and someone, say, in Glasgow is really keeping up contact with people there, when the two of you happen to meet you'll be able to communicate with each other.

Malcolm: Yes, of course.

S: It's like if you are doing karate in West London, and he's doing it in Glasgow, and you become a black belt in West London, and he becomes a black belt in Glasgow, well, when you meet you will be able to do whatever karate people do on that level! I was going to say fight but that's probably the wrong word. Communication is communication.

Clive: This is what I was getting at before, though I realize that the expression of that staying in touch is being involved with the FWBO in some way or another, but if a person presumably is just keeping up his meditation practice and is genuinely keeping it up, then in a sense he's in touch, though he may be completely out of touch in the physical sense.

S: Yes because the potentiality of being in touch is there.

Clive: What ? is actually keeping up his practice.

S: Yes, because the basis of being in touch with other people is being in touch with yourself, and if you meditating and meditating successfully, you are in touch with yourself in a deeper sense, so therefore if you meet somebody else and you are in touch with yourself, the possibility of communication is there, provided, of course, that person is in touch with himself. So, by being by yourself and meditating successfully, you are keeping alive the possibility of communication. If you come into contact with others on a corresponding level, communication will take place.

Clive: And it's conceivable to think of somebody being fully involved and being less in touch than somebody who isn't (? ...)

S: Again, it depends on what you mean by "involved". Somebody can be around a Centre and meeting lots of people, but nonetheless be completely out of touch in any real sense. Have no real communication with anybody. That is possible.

Malcolm: So the person we think of as "out of touch" is "out of touch" with himself on a deeper level.

S: Yes. To be "out of touch" means primarily to be out of touch with yourself. (Pause) You can't be out of touch with other people without first being out of touch with yourself. (Pause) Of course depending on what you are like, keeping in touch with other people, can sometimes, if they are the right sort, help you in keeping in touch with your ...

[End of tape 6, tape 7]

(Continuation of coffee-break)

[108]

Adrian: Do you think it is actually possible to go wrong in a meditation practice? To actually keep persistently going in the wrong direction?

S: Well what does one mean by that? (Pause)

Adrian: I think there are one or two people about who seem to virtually physically harm themselves with their (Clattering of cups blots out words). It's as if they are not open to themselves. They see things in a very definite way, which is very narrow. They won't change that way.

S: But how is that connected with their meditation?

Adrian: (Pause) It's as if they're meditating towards a certain end, to that end.

S: Mm. (Said thoughtfully with a question in the sound) But that is what one usually does, in connection with meditation, isn't it? One thinks of it that one is aiming at peace of mind, concentration, integration, even to provide a basis for the development of insight. There's usually is an end in mind, isn't there?

Adrian: (Pause) It just seems to be just seeing things in a ... it's quite difficult to express ... In just a very rigid sort of way - the way I saw it in describing earlier - I was experiencing something in myself and attributed to it certain qualities and only saw it in those terms.

S: Well that isn't anything directly to do with the meditation. That means you've had a certain experience but you are interpreting it incorrectly. One can't really speak of that presumably as meditating wrongly. You are not interpreting your own experience correctly. Or you're insisting on interpreting your own experience in a particular way, which is not, perhaps, justified.

Atula: Some people, well, most of us I suppose go into ... like taking up a practice, have an actual image of what the spiritual life is, and it seems that most of us are fighting that, for a long, long time.

S: Yes. Well sometimes it happens. I've known in the past, that people start practising meditation and they start feeling quite blissful and free, and they say, "Oh, I must be going mad" (Laughter) because of this particular kind of idea that they've got about sanity and insanity and so on. "Something is going wrong with me. I'm feeling so happy." (Pause)

So I think, there, it means simply that we have to be careful about superimposing interpretations on our own experience and, of course, still more careful about imposing or superimposing interpretations on other people's experience. (Loud static and interference) ... Again that's something we touched on in the other group yesterday... very careful simply to describe what is happening to other people rather than prematurely evaluating as when for instance suppose you haven't seen someone for a few weeks - you say, well, he's out of touch, using the expression in a quite loaded sort of way. Or if someone is () speaking for some time (A lot of crackling) he's very withdrawn, he's blocked, but he may simply be more into his meditation than usual, and be experiencing it in a quite positive way, and just not feel like disturbing it by talking, but others, just judging quite superficially might interpret that as being, well he's blocked, or he's out of communication, or "out of touch", etc. etc.

Clive: Or ... suddenly he thinks he's more spiritual.

[109]

S: Yes. People think he's being more spiritual. (Pause) So I think one shouldn't be in a hurry to offer an explanation either about what is happening to oneself or what seems to be happening to other people, especially not to interpret dreams.

Clive: ? (Obscured by interference on the tape)

S: Or they might think that you're angry. This is a quite common one.

Clive: ?????? ... and viewing that change negatively.

S: But even more basically than that, it boils down to just actually knowing what is really going on, and realizing as I've said more than once this week, that it isn't easy to understand another person; and not jumping to conclusions, thinking that you understand the other person, when in fact, you don't, because you haven't made allowance perhaps for a certain change taking place in them.

Atula: So perhaps you're not ... you can't always tell what is happening, but there is usually an experience that you're feeling from someone else, and you can usually interpret them in either positive or negative, but if someone is quite quiet and there's a ... you feel an uneasiness around them, then there is usually something in that sort of experience that you are having of that person. I can also see that sometimes some people are quiet and you get a very, very warm feeling towards them so there's no need to sort of ...

S: Mm. This reminds me of the sort of party game people used to play - I think it was called "Conjugations". - "I appreciate good food", um - "You are too fond of the table", "He's a greedy pig". You see what I mean? So, as you go further away from ... - well, you see yourself in more favourable terms, the person that you are speaking to, in less favourable terms and the third party about whom you're both speaking, in least favourable terms, but actually what each of you are doing is exactly the same. So you might say, "I'm quiet and meditative, you are a bit withdrawn, he's completely out of touch!" (Loud laughter) (Chuckling) Or - "I'm rather good at communicating, you're a bit talkative ...

Asvajit: (Interrupting) ... he's a gas-bag ...

S: "He's a real gas-bag." (Pause) But isn't that so? This is the sort of thing that happens. (Pause) (Chuckling)

Anyway let's go back to the text. (Pause) Someone like to read that little prose bit and then the whole of that song, and that's probably going to be all that we're going to be able to do this morning. ? We'll find quite a bit there, anyway.

"The Jetsun continued, "Since you have reached this state, it will not be necessary for you to stay with me any longer. You should leave, now that the right time has come for you to benefit sentient beings on a grand scale."

S: Mm. This may be, of course, years and years on, we don't know - there's no indication of chronology. But anyway - "The Jetsun continued - "Since you have reached this state" - the state which has been indicated by the dream - "it will not be necessary for you to stay with me any longer. You should leave, now that the right time has come for you to benefit sentient beings on a grand scale." So, at one time, of course, Milarepa is very anxious that Rechungpa should stay with him and Rechungpa isn't willing to stay with him, he goes off to India, he goes off to stay with this lady, etc., etc. But he's been now with Milarepa for some time; he's attained a certain level of spiritual experience, and now [110] Milarepa says: "It's time for you to go." Now the time has come for you to, as it were, set up independently to start your own teaching work.

So, again, it's an illustration of something which I think, yes, we touched upon yesterday: about knowing the right time - it's important to know the right time - it's important that Rechungpa should know the right time to stay with Milarepa, and also the right time to go. It depends on what is appropriate in any given circumstances. Now he is able to go. There's no danger, he's not going to get distracted. So, far from allowing him to go Milarepa actually sends him - tells him it's time to go. And of course he sends him with some advice. So read that song.

"Harken, my son Rechungpa! Knowing
The dependent origination

Of Samsara and Nirvana, if
You can rely on a holy Guru,
To you will come the Pith-Instructions
Without effort and search.

Listen, my son Rechungpa! If you
Can conquer the desire for city
Life and remain in the hermitage,
The Accomplishment will come of itself
Without effort and striving.
If you can forego evil deeds and clinging
And can renounce all your wants and cravings,
Quietly will you tread the Path of Joy
Without attachment or desires.

Listen, oh my son, the root
Of Samsara is to bear;
If you can cut off the clinging-love
For sons and live in solitude,
Quietly will you enter Buddha's Land.

Listen, my son, though through
Tibet the Dharma spreads, many
Adulterate it. People call
Themselves Gurus and disciples,
But with their clever tongues
They indulge in obscene talk.
Go, my son, go and teach them,
Show them the right teachings
Of the pure Lineage!

Listen, my son Rechungpa,
If from your heart you want
To practise holy Dharma,
Remember that Buddhism should
Make one conquer one's desires.
Try to renounce all greed,
Refrain from talking much.

Listen, son Rechungpa,
If you want Buddhahood
Forget all pleasures of this life, strive
For Realization stabilized within,
And never from the base of your Self-mind depart."

S: Mm! Yes! So "Harken my son Rechungpa! Knowing The dependent origination Of Samsara and Nirvana if You can rely on a holy guru, To you will come the Pith-Instructions Without effort and search." You will notice later on, there's a sort of common thread or theme running through the whole song. Anyway you are familiar with "Dependent Origination" I

take it - "conditioned co-production."

[111]

Voices: Mm.

S: But here it says - "the dependent origination of Samsara and Nirvana." Doesn't dependent origination usually, apply only to Samsara?

Vajradaka: Yes.

S: So? What does Milarepa mean by saying - "The dependent origination of Samsara and Nirvana"?

Asvajit: That Nirvana depends on, or the realization of it, depends on your practice.

S: Ye-e-s.

Mangala: You have to go beyond concepts.

S: Ye-e-s.

Vajradaka: It could relate to sunyata, being an aspect of dependent origination, sunyata actually being samsara and nirvana?

S: No. Actually you are all rather wide of the mark.

Suvajra: Seems it's the twenty-four links.

S: Yes. It's the twenty-four links, yes, this is what it's really all about. Usually, as explained by most modern authors, dependent origination is simply the series of twelve nidanas from "ignorance" to "birth, old age, disease and death." There is a progressive order in which one arises in dependence on the other, when the other is present, and then a reverse order in which in the absence of one the other does not arise, and this is the one which is usually explained and taught but there is in the Pali texts another series, of what I call the "positive" links, that is to say, - in dependence on suffering arises faith, right up to independence on - what is it?

Asvajit: "Knowledge and vision of things as they really are."

S: Yes, - arises the destruction of the "asravas". So you've got a series of twenty-four links covering between them, samsara and nirvana and in the appropriate chapter of "the Survey" I've pointed out how the question has been raised whether the process of dependent origination includes Nirvana, or does not include it, because if it does not include it then it is not an all inclusive Reality, as apparently the Buddha taught it. But the answer is: Yes, it is an all inclusive Reality, provided we understand it correctly and fully as consisting of these twenty-four links. One: consisting of what I call the reactive process; the other: what I call the creative process; and "nirvana" is, if we use that term, is the culmination - of the creative process as far as we can see it. But the mode of the reactive process is oscillation between pairs of opposites. The mode of the creative process is a sort of dialectical movement between factors which progressively augment each other so that the succeeding factor augments the

effects of the preceding factor, instead of reacting away from it in the opposite direction.

Voices: Mm.

S: You see what I mean? So the whole purpose of the spiritual life is to move from the reactive to the creative mode of functioning. This is the sort of real basis of the whole Buddhist philosophy, if you use that word, in a sort of practical sense. So it is very important to have these sort of things at one's fingertips. [112] It's explained, well it's explained in some chapters of "The Survey", and also, of course, in the lecture on "Mind Reactive and Creative" and then again, the stages of the creative process are explained in detail in "The Three Jewels" under the heading - "The Stages of the Path". So one has got to have these things very clearly in mind: - First of all dependent origination as a general principle. Then the two kinds of dependent origination: the reactive covered by the term "samsara", the creative covered by the term "nirvana". If you know these things, and the Four Noble Truths are also included here, you know in principle and essence the whole of Buddhism; the whole rationale of Buddhism. That is probably why it's mentioned here: "Harken, my son Rechungpa Knowing the dependent origination Of Samsara and Nirvana" - having this broad, general but at the same time quite deep understanding of Buddhism, in principle, if then - "you can rely on the holy Guru To you will come the Pith-Instructions Without effort and search."

Asvajit: Why does he say, "If you can rely on a holy Guru"? (Pause) I mean ...

S: I think it's "if" in the sense of "then". It's more like saying: "All right, supposing, first of all you become well-versed in the broad, general principles of Buddhism, you understand those clearly, and then you come in contact with a Guru on whom you can rely - as if to say, even a good, even a thorough understanding of the principles of the Dharma isn't enough, you must come into personal contact with someone who has some experience and realization of them, then "to you will come the Pith-Instructions Without effort and search."

Voices: Mm.

S: So why is this? Why should the Pith-Instructions come to you without effort and search, if those two factors are fulfilled? (Pause)

___: When you're reliant on the Guru.

Brian: You are operating in a sort of positive mode.

S: It's more than that. Let us imagine what happens if only one factor is fulfilled. Supposing you come into contact with the Guru, and he tries to give you Pith-Instructions but you don't know anything about the Dharma. What then? What happens?

___: You wouldn't be able to relate it to you.

S: Mm. No. The Pith-Instruction would be wasted! Mm. The ground would not have been sufficiently prepared. There would be no medium of communication, no conceptual framework that the Guru could make use of. You see what I mean? You know from your own experience probably, it's very difficult to explain things to someone who doesn't know anything about Buddhism. Supposing they ask you - "What is Nirvana?" You can't just say

straight off what Nirvana is, because there are so many misunderstandings that have to be got out of the way first. You can only explain, really, about any particular aspect of Buddhism, when the person has got at least a broad, general idea about the whole thing. And that is what you're, all the time, really working towards.

So unless the disciple has got a broad, general understanding of the principles of Buddhism, and broad general understanding of how it is practised, then even if he comes into contact with the Guru, the guru will not, in fact, be able to teach him in the absence of a ... well, - not to give him Pith-Instructions, - he'd have to start teaching him the ABC of Buddhism, which will be [113] rather a waste of time for the Guru. You see what I mean? So this understanding of "dependent origination" is necessary first, and then if you come into contact with the guru. But supposing, of course, you have a good understanding of Buddhism - all about dependent origination but you never come into contact with the guru - you get no Pith-Instructions, then, what happens?

Pete Shann: You may be up to translating it in the wrong sort of way.

S: Mm. But even if not translating in the wrong sort of way, you are not able to make the application of those general teachings to your specific situation, your specific needs in the way that the guru does when he gives you Pith-Instructions, which are a little bit like precepts. You see what I mean? So the two things are necessary. The two things must come together. Then, supposing (Chuckling) you have got a broad general understanding of the Dharma and you come into contact with a guru, "Pith-Instructions will come without effort or search". So what does that mean? How is this? How does this come about?

Asvajit: Just in the ordinary course of communication.

S: Yes. Because, after all, you are both speaking the same language. You are in contact with the guru so "Pith-Instructions will come without effort or search." This is what it means.

So, in the same way, Milarepa goes on - "Listen, my son Rechungpa If you Can conquer the desire for city Life and remain in the hermitage, The Accomplishment will come of itself Without effort and striving." Accomplishment, here, is "siddhi", which means higher, supernormal attainments, as well as Enlightenment itself. So do you think that this is true? That "if you conquer the desire for city life and remain in the hermitage, accomplishments - "siddhi", higher spiritual realization, will come of itself without effort and striving? How is that?

Pete Shann: The term city means just general samsaric desire or something - desire for the mundane.

S: No. "Siddhi", here, definitely means "higher supernormal powers and faculties", gained through meditation, plus enlightenment. These will come - or this will come of itself, "siddhi" in this sense, will come of itself, if you just conquer the desire for city life, and stay in the hermitage. So how literally is that to be taken?

Pete Shann: What I meant was city, city life, ...?

S: Mm?

Pete Shann: ... city life, a general meaning for mundane life? (Pause) Um, if you've got the desire for that mundane life, then ...

S: It may be but ...

Pete Shann: ... your energies will naturally go in the direction of the accomplishment.

S: It could be that, but it isn't what it actually says, so take the literal meaning first.

Mangala: Presumably by staying in "a hermitage", it doesn't just mean that you just sort of stay there, just lock yourself up, it means you're actually practising.

S: Yes - Mm. [114]

Mangala: ... after ?

S: So what it really means is that if you are following a certain skilful way of life, you don't even have to think about the results. (Pause) I mean the important thing is to get yourself into a certain skilful way of life, so if you get over the desire for city life, if you just stay in your hermitage, which of course, doesn't mean that you're simply living there, it means you are proceeding with all the appropriate activities - you are meditating, you are leading a simple life, you don't need to make a special effort then, in terms of "siddhis" or "Enlightenment", or to think about it especially - that the momentum that you build up by that whole way of life will ensure that you get there. Do you see what I mean?

Otherwise you can get people going away to a hermitage and meditating and doing all the other things, but in addition, they are always worrying and fussing - how am I getting on? What sort of progress am I making? Am I any nearer to Enlightenment? So, it's as though Milarepa is saying, "Well, look, just conquer your desire for city life. Just leave the city. Just stay in the hermitage; get on with your meditation, you don't need to bother when the "siddhis" are going to come, or when you're going to gain Enlightenment, it'll come sooner or later, if you just carry on in that way." Though it does say, even, "Without effort and striving". But perhaps one should take that as "without any extra effort or striving", other than the way of life you are following. So this draws attention to the great importance of way of life or even if you like, life-style. It has a tremendous effect upon the mind. (Pause)

Mangala: Yes. I know just from my own experience, well, rightly or wrongly, I think it's rightly, I don't really very much stop and question any more what I'm doing. I just sort of carry on, just be more and more confident that I'm going in the right direction ...

S: Right.

Mangala: ... I don't have to worry too much about things.

S: I mean, there you are in Brighton, and that's that!

Mangala: Sort of, yeah, ... (Laughs)

Suvajra: For the next thirty years.

S: Well, he doesn't even think, well, it might be thirty, if it might be three, you are just carrying on. (Pause)

But then Milarepa says, "If you can forego evil deeds and clinging And can renounce all your wants and cravings Quietly will you tread the Path of Joy Without attachment or desires." So what does that suggest? (Pause)

Asvajit: I like the word "Quietly". It suggests that you don't have to blow a trumpet when you really begin to experience happiness.

S: Mm. (Pause) Well it suggests that - "If you can just give up evil deeds and clinging and get rid of all your wants and cravings", joy will spontaneously arise within you. It's not that, first of all you get rid of all your desires and clingings and then you go after joy. No. It's the desires and clingings that are getting in the way of your being joyful. You are naturally joyful, but you just prevent yourself from being joyful by indulging in all these, evil deeds and clingings and so on. So you don't have to make a separate effort to be joyful, just give up all these unskillful [115] things.

Pete Shann: In a sense it's the clinging to the joy that prevents you from experiencing joy.

S: Yes, except that, of course, the joy to which you cling is very different from the joy which you experience by giving up that clinging. (Pause)

So you begin to see the sort of thread that is emerging in these verses, because Milarepa says that you will come to the Pith-Instructions without effort and search, ... "the Accomplishment will come of itself, without effort and striving." (Pause) "Quietly will you tread the Path of Joy Without attachment or desires." (Pause) So what is the sort of suggestion running through these verses?

Mangala: It's as if it's a kind of natural kind of spiritual life which should be something which you make a special effort to do as it were apart from your other life.

S: Mm.

Mangala: It's just like your whole mode of being and living ...

S: Mm. Just make sure you're not doing the wrong things. It's as though there is, well, yes, a stream of natural spiritual life within you which is just being obscured and obliterated at present on account of the various unskillful things you are doing. It's not as though, when you give up your desires and clingings, all that will be left is a sort of void, just a vacuum. (Pause)

Aloka: There does tend to be a generally accepted thing that people do feel, um, you are going to be left with nothing in particular, and you wait round for a few years, and maybe, with a bit of luck, maybe something will start happening.

S: Mm. Well that's true isn't it? Provided you "wait around" in the right sort of way. (Pause) It therefore suggests it's really important that you should just establish yourself in the right way of life; the right life-style; the right circumstances and just leave it at that, just continue

indefinitely, in that way. (Pause) Allow yourself to build up momentum. Allow the skilful life-style to have its own effect over a number of years. (Pause) This of course assumes that the particular life-style is one that really does suit you and is conducive to your growth and development.

Pete Shann: I can't quite interpret that sort of thing. (Pause) I get very inspired by, the heroic, dramatic side to things, and this - "quietly" - hermitage-like existence sound not exactly very inspiring to me.

S: Mm. (Pause) (Laughter)

S: Well, life in the Army is a life-style. Perhaps one should think of joining "the spiritual army", or something like that.

Pete Shann: Well, yeah, that is what I'm thinking, perhaps it doesn't apply to everybody across the board as it were.

Mangala: I think "quietly"! ... (Laughter)

___: It's really good?

___: The "samadhi army"!

___: Oh dear. (Laughter)

[116]

Mangala: I think "quietly" shouldn't be taken too literally.

S: Mm!

Pete Shann: ... the general feel, the thread of it, this sort of settling into a sort of, um, it's more like ...

S: Yes, but look! ... if you can conquer the desire for city life, well, that's where all the effort and struggle and heroism comes in - to conquer your desire for city life (Chuckling as he speaks) - you have to drag yourself to the hermitage to begin with - that's quite an effort. (Chuckling)

Pete Shann: Yeah. (Doubtfully) It just seems to be the general thread, that seems to be slightly on the passive rather than the active.

S: Mm.

Clive: It's not the traditional sort of swashbuckling sort of activity, but it certainly requires an enormous amount of energy.

Pete Shann: I've no doubt he's talking about exactly... ?

S: It requires an enormous amount of energy to stay in one place! (Laughs)

___: It does.

___: That's true - (Laughter)

S: ... Especially if you're meditating. (Chuckling) (Pause) But perhaps Milarepa is referring to quite a high level of spiritual life where conscious, deliberate, especially willed, effort is no longer required. So much momentum has been built up it's as though you are carried along of your own accord.

Aloka: Isn't this a sort of characteristic of the Mahamudra Teachings?

S: It is, in fact!

Aloka: It comes up a lot in "The Songs".

S: Yes. Mm. But you'd have to make quite a strong effort to get to that level. (Pause)

Anyway let's go on to the next verse, which is ah, quite meaningful - "Listen, oh my son, the root Of samsara is to bear; If you can cut off the clinging love For sons, and live in solitude Quietly will you enter Buddha's Land." (Pause) Perhaps I should say "QUIETLY!" (shouting) (lots of loud laughter) you will enter Buddha's Land." (Laughter)

But Milarepa says, "Listen, oh my son, the root Of Samsara is to bear." Now, what on earth does he mean by that? This is very important actually.

Pete Shann: Procreation?

S: ... and it ties up with something that we've discussed - I'm not sure if it was with this study group or the other one but we'll see. Ah - let me just make one point first, which is that our particular corner of the Universe, of the Samsara, this particular world system, is known as "the Saha World". You might have encountered that in some Mahayana sutras, which means "The World of Endurance" - the world where you have to put up with things - the world where you have to bear things. That might [117] give you a little clue. So Milarepa says - "The root Of Samsara is to bear." Now what does he mean by that?

___: Forbearance?

S: No.

Asvajit: So long as you feel you have to put with things you are still in Samsara.

S: That's quite brilliant actually! (Laughter) Yes! Yes. A little more, please. (Laughter)

Suvajra: Is it when you start developing, you are also taking Samsara with you, and you have to bear it with you all the way?

S: (Pause) No - when it says, "the root of Samsara is to bear" - "the root" means "the cause", the real cause of Samsara is "to bear". Asvajit started getting very near it.

Adrian: It ties up with dissatisfaction and disillusionment.

S: No.

Malcolm: There was a song, "Boy, you're gonna carry that weight - carry that weight a long time."

S: Mm?

Malcolm: You get to a certain age and you feel you're starting to carry a weight and it gets heavier and heavier. Is it like that?

S: Yes, you're right, though you're not exactly answering the question.

Clive: There's the sort of Christian thing, what's it? The Rock? ...

S: "Rock of Ages"? - Cleft for me" - No. God is just part of the burden you have to bear. (Laughter)

Suvajra: What did Asvajit say?

Asvajit: I said: so long as you feel that you have to put up with things you're still in Samsara.

S: Yes. Yes. You are very close to it.

Pete Shann: In a way, you haven't got to accept, you haven't got to just bear with it, you've got to actually fight against it ...

S: Translate it into slightly different terms using a word that we've been using a lot lately ...

___: ?

S: No.

___: ?

S: No.

Atula: As long as you feel that you have to work with something rather than create ...

S: You're getting pretty near too ...

Atula: ... that you are creating your own world rather than living in the one that's there.

[118]

S: Translate Milarepa's statement into our own jargon, so to speak.

Mangala: The root of Samsara is our own passive attitude perhaps.

S: Ah! Yes! That's it - passivity!

___: Oh! Yes!

S: The root of Samsara is passivity. Samsara is passivity essentially. Eh! Eh! (Laughter) Any further comment? Why is samsara passivity? In what sense is samsara passivity?

Atula: You just accept everything, and you don't take responsibility for your own life.

S: Mm.

Atula: And you project on to ...

S: ... you're just on the receiving end of things.

Atula: ... therefore you perceive everything as given to you.

S: Yes. (Pause) You don't originate anything. That means you don't perform any skilful action, you are not creative so you never get out of Samsara.

Atula: It's a bit like a "death" philosophy - you don't live.

S: "So the root of Samsara is "to bear" - just to bear things; to go on bearing things; to be passive - never to rebel, as it were; never to adopt a positive attitude; never to initiate anything; never to be creative.

Clive: I suppose an extreme of this is masochism.

S: Yes.

Clive: You actually begin to dislike yourself.

S: And you also, yes, if you're asked what is hell, what would be your definition or description? What is the hell-state?

Clive: Completely at the mercy of ?

S: No. In one word - hell is the state of ...

___: Suffering?

S: ... suffering. Suffering. And what is suffering? Suffering is passivity which is absolutely painful.

___: Yeah.

S: It is passivity in it's most unpleasant form.

Atula: And Christianity ...

S: ... the only possible ... the only sort of happiness that you get in hell is what? (Pause) Just think in purely mythological terms, as it were, for a change: - you're in Hell who else is in Hell?

Suvajra: The people who are torturing you.

S: The people who torture you. The only pleasure you can get in Hell is by torturing other people, because to the extent that [119] you torture them at least you are being a bit active, so ... (Laughter) So how unpleasant that is! The only way in which you can be, as it were, "positive", is by inflicting pain on other people. That's really dreadful, isn't it? So that is Hell:- the state in which pain is suffered, and the only escape from that state of passivity within those confines, is by just inflicting pain on other people - making other people suffer.

Clive: Yeah. That's right. But then the positive side of that is not to inflict pain upon them but actually try and help them.

S: Yes, indeed! And of course Heaven is the opposite state, where you are still passive, but it is a passivity that is completely pleasant. Or at least for a while it's pleasant, and then after a time it can get boring, after all those flowers and trees and nothing to do! You are just sort of sitting there and being waited on hand and foot, the fairies and houris all around you bringing you plates of fruit and fanning you. (Laughter) Well it's all right for the first few hundred years (Loud laughter) but after that it can get very dull and boring and you feel like throwing the fruit at the attendant houri.

Malcolm: Bhante? Do you think there is a crucial stage where you go through, where Samsara isn't like Samsara?

S: Well, yes, in dependence upon suffering arises faith. Faith is the first movement of creativity. And of course faith is an emotion. That's where the process starts being reversed. Of course, in purely "negative" terms, in terms of the twelve, well negative links, you could call them, in dependence upon feeling (vedana) craving no longer arises. Because when you give way to craving, when you respond to a pleasant sensation, with the craving, you are just being completely passive. You are just at the receiving end; you are acting mechanically. But when you respond say, to suffering, the extreme state of passivity, with a positive emotional state involving at least some feeling for some higher spiritual realities then that is a positive, active movement, therefore in dependence upon suffering - typifying the passive state - arises faith - typifying the active state. Faith is active in other words. It's not like belief which is merely passive. (Pause)

So you could almost take this as your criterion - ask yourself at any given moment of the day, "Am I being active, or am I being passive?"

Clive: What about 'activity' and 'receptivity'?

S: Mm? Yeah?

Clive: You have implied that being receptive is an active state ...

S: I think it would be wiser to think of receptivity as an active state, rather than to think of it

as a passive state. Mm. (Pause) Maybe it is not a state of gross activity, so to speak, but it is certainly not a state of passivity.

___: Can you describe it then?

S: We can give an analogy:- supposing you are listening to someone, well, you could say, that yes if you are listening you are receptive, but you are not just passive. In order to just really listen, and take in what is being said to you, you must be very alert, very tuned in. So your listening is an active state. Hearing is a passive state - "listening" is an active state. Yes, listening is an active state and therefore when you listen you are being receptive. You are not necessarily being receptive when you are just hearing. You can be just hearing somebody speak but may [120] not be taking in what they are saying at all. That is passive. The sense organs by themselves it seems are passive, at least in mental terms, rather than active.

Malcolm: I find that much more appealing than my previous interpretation of being receptive, which used to mean just sitting down and listening to anybody who felt like getting up and saying something. (Laughter) I'm sorry but that's how I felt sometimes.

S: And also, being receptive means being receptive to something skilful, something which is higher; not just taking in any old impressions from any particular source.

Atula: I have found recently - I've been listening to talks by other people in the Order, that actually what happens now, there is actually a response ?? to them picking up where before it was just a matter of hearing what they were saying and not really putting ... and now, sometimes, there seems to be an actual response there.

S: Mm. Yeah.

[End of side 1, side 2]

(Some missing)

S: You see what I mean?

Clive: I don't want you to have any thoughts of your own. (Laughter) I want you to do what I say.

S: So to be receptive to somebody does not necessarily mean you are going to agree with everything that they say. You can really listen, and be really receptive, which means you are listening in an active way rather than a passive way, and you can genuinely understand what they are saying, even sympathize with it, but it doesn't necessarily mean that you are going to necessarily accept it. And if you don't, you cannot be accused of lack of receptivity. Because if you were it would suggest that the other person, the person at the other end, is confusing "receptivity" with passivity.

Malcolm: That's very interesting. I found with some people who are going through a difficult stage, and perhaps they are quite passive, and I've been talking, saying something, and I've noticed that there has been no vigorous communication - they're just sort of listening, and I think, maybe that person's going to build up, he's not really taking it in, and I start to feel that

I want to be just a little bit rough, just ... ?? to bring something up, a quality.

S: Yes. Because after all, somebody cannot agree with you unless he has at least the potential to disagree with you. If he is just limp and passive, there is no satisfaction even in convincing him because it isn't real conviction. Anybody can come along and say anything and he'll just sort of agree with it. So sometimes you do have to stir people up a bit and maybe challenge them or annoy them a bit, so that you get a genuine feedback, so that they can actually listen to you, in a genuine receptive way instead of just being passive.

Adrian: To the extent that someone vehemently reacts to something you say to them is an indication that they have actually been quite receptive. What you've said to them has actually hit home somewhere.

S: Yes, in a sense, they have been receptive - in a sense.

Clive: It's almost as if you've got to switch somebody before you [121] can communicate with them, sometimes.

S: Yes.

Clive: If you know them, you know how to switch them on.

S: (Chuckles) You know which toe to tread on! (Laughter)

Clive: For what effect!

S: You tread on their toes like playing on the piano. (Laughter)

So, "Listen, oh my son, the root Of Samsara is to bear." (Pause)

"If you can cut off the clinging-love For sons and live in solitude Quietly will you enter Buddha's Land." 'Buddha's Land', presumably, being a sort of symbol for Enlightenment itself. The suggestion is that living with sons is a sort of passive state - in other words family life is a 'passive' state. "Living in a hermitage" is an active state, and also a receptive state. In what way do you think ordinary, say, domestic family life is a passive state? Because, usually, people would think of themselves as being very busy and active, but do you think that is really so?

Atula: People just drift into it.

S: Yes. It doesn't represent a real decision.

Vajradaka: Right!

Clive: It happens to you.

S: It just happens to you.

Vajradaka: Right!

Aloka: It's very, very limited. It's got very definite restrictions.

S: Yes. (Pause) Well even if it's restrictions that you have consciously and deliberately chosen, fair enough. A hermitage also has its restrictions and limitations, if not, more so in some ways ...

Pete Shann: Can it be said that, um, you could go into the household life, um, quite deliberately ...

S: You could do. You could do, though that almost suggests that there are various alternatives and that you take your choice quite deliberately. That is a possibility - certainly. Well, presumably, it was the case with Marpa. He chose to function in that particular way as a householder; but is it what usually happens? (Pause)

Vajradaka: People just seem to fall into it.

S: Or sometimes they are given a slight push.

Pete Shann: But the common denominator of this then, isn't necessarily that of being passive.

S: Mm. The common denominator of what? (Pause)

Mangala: Family life isn't bad 'per se', ...

S: Ah, yes, this is what you're saying actually, I think. Mm.

Mangala: In other words, ah, it is possible for some people to live in that life-style ...

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S: In other words, just putting it the other way around, "Life in a hermitage" isn't active per se, because in the East we find that there are some young men who automatically go into the monastery and become 'bhikkhus' as part of the social set-up, . They expect it. Their parents send them. (Pause)

But nonetheless, I think, in practice it holds good that most people drift into ordinary domestic life because they are just being passive to circumstances. It happens to them. Well, I mean, in India, you get this very clearly. For instance, if you talk to young men about marriage, what sort of impression will you get? You get the impression that marriage is something they just don't want - they don't want to get married, because that means as soon as they get married the children will start coming, and that means a big responsibility - they will have to earn more and more money. They don't want to get married! But suppose you say to them, "Well, why do you get married then?" Well, it's inevitable, it happens to everybody. Our parents are arranging it." They think of marriage as a sort of natural disaster! (Laughter) that happens to you and there is nothing you can do about it. It happens to everybody! Well, it's like death or like birth, or like the monsoon. Marriage happens to everybody and there is nothing you can do about it, so they are completely passive as regards to it, even though they desperately, in some cases, don't want to get married, but they just submit. They don't think it depends upon their will. It's something that happens to them.

So we could say, well, young men in this country, "Well we're not like that we are free. Our parents don't arrange our marriages, we arrange them ourselves, but are they really so free? You go along say to the disco, just because your mates are going, you start to dance with some pretty girls, and one of them sort of catches your eye in particular, and takes your fancy, and you start going out with her, and then all the other things happen, and in the end you get married. Can you say that you have really been a free agent and active at every stage?. It has all been happening to you! It's only an illusion of freedom!

Clive: It's a well, well-trod, trodden path, that. You can look at any young man involved in it, and you can predict what his life style is going to be.

S: And you can certainly predict with regard to the young women with even greater certainty perhaps. She may be sort of running around quite freely, and kicking her little heels this year, but in a year's time, or certainly two years' time you can guess what she'll be doing - she'll be pushing a pram!

Vajradaka: You see that amazingly quickly around Bethnal Green.

S: Ah!

Vajradaka: One year they are little scoundrels, little girls.

S: Right.

Vajradaka: ... little scoundrels annoying you on the scaffolding and next year they are all tarted up, and the next year they are all pushing a pram - literally.

S: I've seen that actually. I remember two little girls used to knock on the door of Sukhavati asking for Subhuti, for some reason or other - (Laughter) and they always called him "Bootsie". "Bootsie" was their favourite. I've seen them pushing prams now. (Laughter)

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___: It's nothing to do with "Bootsie". (Loud laughter)

S: It's nothing whatever to do with "Bootsie"! (Laughter)

Mangala: "Bootsie"s been very "active". (Loud laughter)

S: No. No. (With calming tones) The alleged activity is actually purely passive. It's an automatic reflex action - there is no "activity" there - no action there. So what people think of as "activity" is very often just "passivity".

Pete Shann: So it comes back to Samsara being passive and ...

S: Yes. So the spiritual life is the active life. Not necessarily in the ordinary sense of the term. But truly, it is that. And the non spiritual life is really the passive life. I mean, that's perhaps, why Milarepa says elsewhere - I forget where - No, maybe it's Gampopa, Milarepa's disciple that people who are busy with politics and business are lazy - in other words they are passive, they are not really being active. It is all just happening to them, and they are just reacting

quite blindly and mechanically.

Clive: It shows the sickness of Christianity also, in their attitude towards this, this sort of "turning the other cheek".

S: To encourage it. Well, it's not only "turning the other cheek", you are supposed to be sheep. In Buddhism, at least you are goats! (Laughter) In Christianity the goats represent those who go to Hell. "Dividing the sheep from the goats" - that expression is used in the Bible - sorting out those who are going to go to Heaven, who are the sheep; and those who are going to go to Hell - the goats! (Laughter)

Clive: Does that have any ... do goats have a particular characteristic which is more active?

S: Well, the goats are more likely to butt you.

Voices: Yeah.

S: But if you think what was the primal sin in Christianity, due to which Adam "fell"? (Pause)

___: Lust.

S: No. Not lust.

Vajradaka: To go against the word ...

S: It was disobedience! Not obeying God ...

Clive: Not being passive.

S: Not being passive. Yeah. (Pause)

Malcolm: The Jews were passive during the war, weren't they?

S: Yes. That's true. That is a point that has been made more recently when the wholesale massacre of the Jews is being studied - it's the passivity with which they went to their deaths, when they outnumbered the guards a hundred to one, even a thousand to one! Even if they had their bare hands they could have defended themselves - but, no, they went in their hundreds and thousands to their deaths, apparently completely passive. And of course, this is something which young Jews, Israelis, nowadays are not just willing to do. Maybe they have gone to the other extreme a bit, but you can understand it.

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Vajradaka: Yes.

S: Because through sheer passivity - or sheer passivity was quite a large part of it - so many millions of them were massacred.

Pete Shann: I wonder whether this new age of active ... of activity will improve their religion?

S: Well, of course it must be genuine activity, and not a merely sort of restless passivity, if you see what I mean? There must be a creative development not just a mechanical reaction to external circumstances.

Clive: There is this illusion of activity, isn't there?

S: Yes. Right.

Clive: Is that how you would describe it?

S: Yes, this is what I am getting at.

Clive: The "active passivity".

S: Yes. Yes.

Clive: ... the illusion you are ...

S: You are basically passive, you are being acted upon. (Pause) You are not acting, you are simply reacting. Reacting is "passive". (Pause) So Buddhism says:- Act, don't react - or don't simply react. Act! (Pause)

Malcolm: There is a tremendous feeling isn't there with "activity". It's quite intangible - for me it's not easy to put my finger on it in the spiritual life, I've had to find it in my work, and see that I'm working at such and such - it's getting up in the morning and meditating, it feels like you're sort of preparing yourself - like you are actually coming to action.

S: Mm. Well, when you are meditating, when you are really meditating, you are being active. (Pause)

Brian: It's the only time we're really truly dynamic, isn't it?

S: Well, in some cases, yes. (Pause)

Malcolm: Some people still interpret that as a horrible form of passivity, don't they?

S: What? Meditation?

Malcolm: Yes.

S: Yes. Some people think of meditation in terms of passivity rather than activity.

Vajradaka: Kidding themselves. (Pause)

S: But you also notice that you can certainly experience pleasure when you are passive, but you can only experience happiness and joy when you are being "active". (Pause) You can really only ever experience yourself at all deeply in action. And I include, of course, meditation in action.

Voice: Mm. Yes.

S: You don't really experience yourself when you're just being passive. You are experiencing others, and you are experiencing [125] their effect on you. Maybe you are experiencing them much more than you are experiencing yourself. You could even say you can't be happy unless you are active. (Pause) Passivity is at best just a pleasurable state.

Clive: Passivity, if you are in pleasant surroundings, can be pleasurable?

S: Yes, it assumes you are in pleasant surroundings. (Pause)

Mangala: You say you can't experience yourself just through pleasure?

S: No. In a sense of being the recipient, so to speak, of pleasurable sensations. (Pause) This is the whole difference, I think, between pleasure and happiness.

Mangala: Happiness doesn't depend on outside, external stimuli.

S: No! No. It can be sort of started off by external stimuli, but then go beyond that.

Mangala: And the extent to which it is external stimuli, to that extent you do not attach it to yourself. Is that what you are saying?

S: I'd say you experience yourself in action, or in action rather than in non-action, or passivity. This of course suggests that you are essentially active, rather than passive. But when you experience yourself in action you are experiencing yourself so to speak, as you really are. (Pause) You can have some experience of yourself, being passive, but it is a rather dim, vague, experience, not very intense. You experience yourself most intensely when you're being most active, which doesn't of course mean just rushing around. That must be clearly understood too.

Clive: This is a mental activity, a sort of ... I suppose you'd say a spiritual activity ...

S: Mm. I mean the essence of it is skilful volition. Skilful volition, you could say, is of the essence of happiness.

Mangala: I'm still not clear what is the difference between happiness and pleasure.

S: I think you have to try to imagine it to yourself: sort of feeling that you're lying back just enjoying pleasures, just having pleasures, things happening to you:- food being put into your mouth, someone rubbing your feet and all that sort of thing. (Laughter) And then experience a state of, happiness like when you're giving a lecture and you're really into it, and people are really listening to you, and energy is really flowing - that is a quite different sort of experience, and you're experiencing yourself then, very, very much more. More than you could possibly experience yourself just lying back on a feather bed and opening your mouth for another grape, - (Laughter)

Malcolm: I found that as I was growing up. I had a quite comfortable sort of life - mother always made it sort of warm - nice thick carpets, and then television and things like that.

S: Mm. Just like a cocoon or a womb.

Malcolm: Oh! I couldn't wait to break out!

S: That is the feeling that you get, certainly the feeling that I get when I visit people who are living in a domestic sort of way, even if I visit my own relations. This is how you feel. It's a passive [126] life, rather than an active life, even if they are going out to work everyday.

Malcolm: I thought actually that I could create my own marriage without doing that, but the same thing sort of happened.

S: Well you would have to marry a dakini in that case.

Clive: There aren't many of those around! [Pause] It's like in nature, animals are never really passive. You see the little birds, they may not be active, but they are certainly alert and awake. They can't afford not to be, if they're passive for a minute they ... ?

Vajradaka: Again, that's just a conditioned reflex.

Mangala: I think this is maybe, where one could show a distinction between say the aims of a lot of growth groups as opposed to say, our Movement, that they seem very much concerned with seeing pleasure as being the object of all the therapies etc, etc, and just having a good time in a rather passive way. If this ...

S: Yes. They may not have thought it out in this way, or may not be conscious of the fact, but in placing such an emphasis on pleasure they are in fact encouraging people to be passive. (Pause)

Malcolm: Could it be taken as like a training - activity, ... I'm thinking ...

S: There's no training without activity, surely. You can't train by being in a passive state.

Pete Shann: Is pleasure and passivity ? ... Is it possible to have one without the other?

S: Well, you cannot have pleasure without passivity, but you can have happiness without passivity. Perhaps to some extent, maybe there's a certain ambiguity because we have to use the same term in different senses. We need another word. We need, in fact, three words. Suppose we say that pleasure is essentially passive, and happiness is essentially active, we need a third word for the common positive term in both. In Pali - in the Abhidharma, I think, if I've got it right - the word "sukha" is used in this way, but "sukha" is used for a sensation, that is "sukha" as "pleasure"; and it is used as a samskara or a volition, which is, of course, 'sukha' as "happiness". (Pause)

Brian: Could you use "consciousness" as "happiness". You would experience "consciousness" as "happiness".

S: (Pause) That is rather different, because consciousness you could say is primary or basic, and happiness or unhappiness and pleasure or pain: these are sort of qualities of that, one could say.

Asvajit: If you're really happy you can actually experience pain and not be at all worried by it.

S: Yes. Indeed! Yes. Right!

Asvajit: You can still be happy.

S: That is to say painful bodily sensation can be almost swallowed up into your state of intense activity, mental activity, i.e. happiness. As when you get really deeply into your meditation, and are really meditating, you don't feel little ... well mosquito bites, or sore knees, in the same sort of way, as when [127] you are not able to meditate. So that's why you sometimes get the experience of "Oh well, it's stopped now", "I'm not feeling the pain in my knees any longer." But actually it isn't so much that it's stopped, but the sensation of pain has been sort of swallowed up in your positive mental state.

Mangala: You have said though, Bhante, that pleasure is ... that we need pleasure.

S: Mm. Well that's where we need this common term.

Mangala: You're saying we need a kind of skilful pleasure, or active pleasure, or something like that ...

S: Yes. Perhaps it would be better to say we need happiness.

Pete Shann: Is there a distinct difference between this "happiness" and this "skilful pleasure"? Can you give an example of "skilful pleasure" as opposed to "happiness". I'm not quite sure.

S: Well, pleasure is neither skilful or unskilful. Pleasure is only a sensation, but it can become the occasion of a skilful or an unskilful mental state. If the pleasurable sensation becomes the occasion of craving, well, that is unskilful.

Pete Shann: But isn't pleasure when it is the occasion of a skilful mental state just happiness? Isn't that the same thing?

S: No. Because happiness can go beyond the response to the sensation of pleasure, as a sense phenomenon.

Mangala: So presumably what we need, or should be encouraging in fact are pleasures which give rise to skilful mental states.

S: Yes. But as I said, we seem to need a third term for that positive element in our experience which can appear, so to speak, as pleasure in the more passive way or as happiness in a more active way.

___: What about joy?

S: Joy is usually mental rather than physical.

Mangala: I think you can appreciate this very much like listening to music, like you can get great pleasure from music, but if you are completely passive, in a sense you're hearing it but

you're not listening.

S: Yes.

Mangala: ... so you have to be just listening which is an active process ...

S: Right.

Mangala: You have to be receptive.

S: Mm. But of course, in music, it isn't just the bare physical sounds. They have, for want of a better term, a significance which is apprehended by the mind.

Asvajit: It's something like sensitivity or responsiveness - you need that sort of quality.

S: Yeah.

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Malcolm: "Activity" does imply the mind applied, doesn't it? You couldn't say, well - like somebody ...

S: It implies concentration.

Malcolm: Yes.

Clive: I think pleasure comes, in a sense, it comes a little bit like an immediate reward ...

S: Mm.

Clive: ... like say you've, um, well, like for instance when I go weight training - I'm active, I train with weights - and I'm quite happy doing it, and it's very definitely active and then for ten minutes or so I sit in the sauna - I just sit there - and let my body relax, and in a way, that's like a pleasure, but it seems to sort of ... they seem to go together. Activity and a little bit of pleasure ...

S: Yes, one could also say that if there is too much pleasure, it ceases to be pleasure. It's as though you need the contrasts of effort and exertion to be able to experience the pleasure properly.

Clive: Yes!

Vajradaka: They say that about the sun on the West Coast - I mean the Southern West Coast of America - that it is so hot and so warm all the time that they never feel the contrast, that they go slightly mad.

S: Oh dear! (Laughter)

Vajradaka: This is just one personal viewpoint.

S: What about when it's cold all the time?

Vajradaka: Well maybe Finland is a bit like that.

S: Anyway, let's go on. Oh! We haven't got many minutes left. "Listen, my son though through Tibet the Dharma spreads, many Adulterate it. People call Themselves Gurus and disciples But with their clever tongues They indulge in obscene talk Go, my son, go, and teach them, Show them the right teachings Of the Pure Lineage." Now was it in this Chapter, or was it in another, that Milarepa said that one shouldn't criticize other schools ...

___: This one.

S: Was it? Yeah. But you can see now one must weigh that against this. One shouldn't as the follower of a school identify oneself exclusively with that as a group, and criticize another School in the same sort of way, but nonetheless one should be aware of the fact that, yes, that sometimes, well not the Dharma itself, but the way that people practise it degenerates, and that there is room for criticism and correction in the right sort of way. So it's happened already even with Milarepa, around in Tibet at this time. He says, "Though through Tibet the Dharma spreads, many adulterate it." They mix it up with things which have got nothing to do with the Dharma. "People call themselves Gurus and disciples, but with their clever tongues they indulge in obscene talk." Perhaps talking about Tantric sexual practices and so on. "Go, my son, go and teach them, show them the right teachings of the Pure Lineage."

So this suggests that there was quite a lot wrong with Buddhism in Tibet at that time. In some ways, the picture seems very much [129] as it is in some parts of the world today. (Pause)

Clive: Do you think it's always the case with Buddhism, that there have been one or two ... wherever it's been established there's been maybe only one really genuine ...

S: It seems as though that is a very common pattern. As though, well here there is a sort of general practice of the Dharma, but it has become rather standardized, stereotyped, mechanical, formal, and then there's just a small group of people arise again who take it much more seriously, really try to practise it, as with Milarepa and his disciples, but then after a while, if one isn't careful, the same thing happens to them. They become infected by formalism and so on. After all, don't forget the Karmapa belongs to - who is the head of a branch of the Kagyupa tradition, and some people would say that the Karmapa is a sort of group head, or group leader, rather than a real spiritual figure. You see what I mean?

So there is no way of safeguarding against this, except the individual efforts of individuals. So Milarepa says, "Listen, my son, Rechungpa, if from your heart you want To practise Holy Dharma Remember that Buddhism should Make one conquer one's desires." or one might say one's neurotic cravings - "Try to renounce all greed, Refrain from talking much."

"Listen, son Rechungpa,
If you want Buddhahood
Forget all pleasures of this life, strive
For Realization stabilized within,
And never from the base of your Self-mind depart."

The "base" is the "alaya" in a rather special sense. That is to say not a sort of ontological ground, but the Ultimate reality itself. So the final teachings, as it were, are quite simple and straightforward, and down to earth. [Pause]

But the great point sort of running through this whole song, seems to be the adoption of an attitude of receptivity, which is not one of passivity; which on the contrary is active.

So I think we should be very careful how we speak about 'receptivity', and not sort of suggest it's a state in which you just simply just lie back and take in everything indiscriminately. And you should not allow people to accuse you of being not receptive to them when you are being receptive, but you are happening to disagree with what they say - (Chuckling from some people) Because that means that they are just asking you to be passive. (Pause) Of course, again, one must be careful, and not claim that one is being receptive when one is merely being passive in a reactive sort of way. (Pause)

Anyway though we haven't come to the end of the chapter, we seem to have come to a definite conclusion nonetheless, so perhaps we can just leave it there.

[End of tape 7] [End of Seminar]

Hand transcribed by various volunteers over many years - many thanks to all of them.

Manuscripts checked by Valentine Wills.

Typed by Paul Dore and Heather Jones (Dhiranandi)

Checking, Contenting and Design by Silabhadra.

Printed and Distributed by Margje Perla-Zeef.

1 September 1993

Spellchecked and put into house style Shantavira January 1999