

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

Chapter 52: Rechungpa's Journey to Weu

Held at: Padmaloka

Date: November 1980

Those Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Subhuti, Jayaratna, Anandajyoti, Siddhiratna, Ratnaketu, Bob Jones, Ray Bisson, Wayne Spavin, Glynn Ivens, John Leah, Johnny Baker, Keith Mitchell.

Sangharakshita: Let's start reading. Would someone like to read that first paragraph, its Chapter 52, page 584. We'll go round in a circle.

"By the invitation of his patrons in Nya Non, who provided perfect food and service, Jetsun Milarepa dwelt in the Belly Cave, while Rechungpa stayed in another cave above it. At one time the Gurus, patron buddhas, and Dakinis revealed themselves to Rechungpa in his dreams persuading him to ask the Jetsun to relate his life story. After Milarepa had done so, Rechungpa yearned to go to Central Tibet [Weu]."

S: Just one or two points require some discussion here. One is the fact that 'the Gurus, patron buddhas and dakinis revealed themselves to Rechungpa in his dreams'. What do you think that signifies?

Just consider the situation. Milarepa and Rechungpa have been invited to stay in a particular place by the lay disciples who are looking after them, and providing them with food. Very well each of them is staying in a cave, they're meditating, and Rechungpa has dreams, dreams about Gurus, patron Buddhas and dakinis. Does one usually have dreams about these things?

_____: Not very often! (Laughter)

S: Not very often (laughter). So when one does have these sort of dreams what do you think that represents? What do you think it signifies?

Subhuti: Well that you're contacting a very much deeper level of your own....

S: It says here that the 'gurus, patron buddhas and dakinis all revealed themselves to Rechungpa in his dreams'. It's not that it was a purely subjective experience. He was in contact with, and through and in the dream state. So what do you think that means? Why the dream state rather than the waking state? Why did they not reveal themselves to him while he was meditating? Well perhaps they did but they also revealed

themselves in his dreams. If you dream about something what does that usually mean?

Johnny: There's something that you're not conscious of...

S: It's usually something that you're not conscious of, in your ordinary state, or you may be conscious of it in your ordinary state, but in either case what does it mean if you experience it in your dreams?

Well it means that you're concerned with that particular thing that particular object, on a quite deep level of your being. As though it has gone beyond, or even by-passed the ordinary waking consciousness. We know that if we're worried about something we tend to dream about it. That's just with regard to ordinary things, but if you're say meditating on gurus and patron buddhas and dakinis, if you're thinking about them, maybe reading about them, maybe the puja that you do is concerned with them, and then if you start dreaming about them, it means that they, or whatever it is that they represent, have started percolating down to a deeper level of your existence, your experience, which they don't usually reach, which is usually closed to them.

So this suggests that the individual consists of varying levels of being and consciousness, and that these levels are of varying degrees, one might say, of opacity. You might imagine the comparison of say the ocean and you might have falling on the ocean the rays of the sun, but these rays penetrate only a quite short distance. The upper levels are illumined but the depths are not illumined at all. They're left in darkness. But if the light is very bright and very powerful, well the rays may penetrate all the way down and reveal everything that is there. So usually what happens is that we're aware or conscious of or preoccupied with gurus, patron buddhas and dakinis on the surface of our consciousness, or with the surface of our consciousness that there's a surface of our being, but their influence doesn't go very far. We're affected just in a quite superficial sense, but in the depths of our being we may be stirred by quite different influences, quite different forces. But as you practise more and more, as you meditate more and more, as you become more and more deeply conscious of, or more deeply open to, these ideals, then gradually their influence starts permeating other levels of one's being, deeper levels of one's being. And one of the manifestations of that is that you start having dreams about gurus and buddhas and dakinis, and dreaming that you're meditating, and dreaming that you've gone away on retreat, or if you might dream that you're on pilgrimage in India and visiting different sacred places.

Someone told me, only a few days ago, that he'd had a dream of this sort, that he was on a pilgrimage in India, he was visiting Buddhagaya. So clearly some awareness, or some consciousness of Buddhagaya, and what it represents, had penetrated into his dream consciousness.

So this is what happened it seems, in the case of Rechungpa. 'the Gurus, patron Buddhas, and Dakinis all revealed themselves to Rechungpa in his dreams, persuading him ask the Jetsun to relate his life story'. This is the autobiography, so to speak, of Milarepa, which you find in "*Tibet's Great Yogi, Milarepa*", according to tradition recorded by Rechungpa. I wonder why the Gurus, patron Buddhas, and Dakinis' had to appear to Rechungpa in his dreams to inspire him with this work? Why do you think that was? Why not in his meditations? Why not during his waking state? [Pause] Well it's a different thing, isn't it? It's a different topic. It could not have occurred to him, at least not occurred in his conscious mind at all, to ask Milarepa to relate the story of his life. Perhaps Rechungpa was deeply occupied with his meditations and so on. But there

was another level so to speak on which he was aware of some other need. The text expresses this by saying that 'the gurus, patron buddhas and dakinis all revealed themselves to him', but perhaps, even though on the level of his conscious mind he was preoccupied with whatever meditations and practices he was doing, on another level he was aware of the fact that Milarepa's life was very interesting, very inspiring, and it would be a very good thing if Milarepa could be induced to relate this life in full detail so that it could be recorded and transmitted to future generations for their benefit.

So it's as though this sort of thought could not find expression on the conscious level because on that level Rechungpa was concerned, and perhaps quite rightly concerned, with his current spiritual practices. But the gurus, patron buddhas and dakinis found a way, they found an outlet in Rechungpa's dreams.

Sometimes we find that, that the surface mind, the conscious mind, is busy and it's only when that surface mind is not busy, that is to say, when we're sleeping, that inspiration can sometimes come from deeper sources.

So perhaps if Rechungpa had not been meditating, if he hadn't been doing whatever practices he was doing, if he was just sitting calmly and quietly, well, perhaps he would have been inspired by the gurus, patron buddhas and dakinis in that way in the conscious waking state. So this almost suggests that we must allow some room, some scope, for this sort of inspiration, not be so busy that we don't heed any little whispers coming to us from our intuitions, so to speak.

Sometimes the surface consciousness can be so busy, and so preoccupied that we miss certain things, you lose certain things, and if you're lucky they may come out in dreams or they may not come out at all. They may not be able to find an outlet in dreams even, because maybe your dreams are taking up with, or by, the things that you've been mentally preoccupied with during the day.

But there is the point, additionally, that one can contact reality directly from the dream state. Because clearly the gurus, patron buddhas and dakinis here are not presented as purely subjective experiences, not in the sense that as we would say 'it was only a dream'. They were actually present to him in the dream, just as beings could be actually present to him in the waking state, in the waking consciousness. So it is quite interesting that the point is made seemingly, that access to reality is not only from the waking state but it can be from the dream state as well, or in the dream state.

Usually, perhaps, we over value the waking state, the state of waking consciousness. We think that everything happens there - what doesn't happen while we're awake, doesn't happen at all. One could of course say that what happens in the waking state really does happen because it can be verified, but where is it verified? It is verified in the waking state. So what about what happens in the dream state? That is not entirely without even what we might call objective significance. Because even a subjective experience does objectively occur, does objectively take place, a dream is a fact.

So, a dream has its own reality, so to speak, even its own validity. So sometimes it is as though one is leading a double life, a life on the plane of ordinary waking consciousness, and a life on the plane of dream consciousness, and these two very rarely intersect, there's very rarely any

intercommunication between these two states or these two levels. But one can perhaps accustom oneself to the idea that intrinsically the one is no more real than the other. One cannot certainly attribute absolute reality to either. So absolute reality is as much beyond the waking state as it is beyond the dream state, and that you can have access to it from the dream state as you can have access to it from the waking state but it isn't in either of them, not in the sense that it is totally comprehended by either of them.

So a dream is not necessarily just a dream. Perhaps one can make the distinction between having an experience in a dream, and dreaming that you have an experience, and having an experience from the dream state. Say, for instance, supposing you are awake and then say, you develop insight in the sense of vipassana, it is not really that you have the vipassana experience in the waking state because the vipassana experience itself transcends the waking state, it goes beyond it. So, in the same way, you can have an experience of say vipassana from the dream state, you don't have it in the dream state. That is to say you don't dream that you are having a vipassana experience. You could, of course, dream that but in that case it wouldn't be a vipassana experience, but after an experience of the dream state you can develop vipassana. You don't have it in the dream state but, consequent upon the dream state, without any experience of the waking state coming in between, you have an experience of vipassana or you develop vipassana, you develop insight. So that is possible in and from the dream state just as it is possible in and from the waking state. We mustn't give a sort of false primacy to the waking state.

So eventually whatever vipassana experience you have, whatever experience of reality you have, will be carried over from the waking state to the dream state, because if it can be obviated or if it can be counteracted by the dream state, well, it isn't really an experience of reality at all. It belongs merely to the waking state in that case.

Siddhiratna: Does that mean the insight that you've had in the waking state would be as relevant to the kinds of dreams you'd have in the dream state?

S: Yes. Yes. For instance, supposing you did develop a high degree of insight in the waking state, that would be carried over into the dream state, so that in the dream state you could not even dream of doing anything which was inimical to the insight, or inconsistent with it, why should you. You cannot dream of doing anything inconsistent with it, any more than you can actually do in the waking state anything inconsistent with it. Because that insight, inasmuch as it is a total thing, is as much operative in the dream state as in the waking state.

In other words insight is not limited to a particular state of consciousness, not limited to the waking state or limited to the dream state. Just as if in - in the sense of subsequent upon - an experience of the dream state you do develop insight, that insight will carry over into the waking state and its fruits will manifest themselves there as well as in the dream state.

If you gain Enlightenment so to speak in the dream state, when you wake up you will still be enlightened, but that is different from dreaming about gaining Enlightenment. When you wake up you will still be unenlightened. You can dream about going through the motions of gaining Enlightenment but if, in your dream, you do gain Enlightenment, when you wake up you'll be enlightened. There won't be any difference.

Siddhiratna: Has that been known?

S: Well there have been, apparently, if one can trust the records, cases of people attaining quite high levels of spiritual experience in the dream state or from the dream state. Often, of course, we don't pay attention to our dream experience. So there are dreams and dreams. The American Indians have got an expression 'The Big Dream' - we might call it an archetypal dream. It might not be a dream in the sense of dreams of gurus, patron buddhas and dakinis are dreams, it might not go as far as that but nonetheless it is imbued with quite unusual significance, and has a very powerful effect upon you, and you sometimes do have the experience that you wake up having had a very powerful dream, a sort of luminous dream, a dream that effects you very deeply emotionally. And the effects of that dream last for a long time after you wake up. In fact you may never forget that dream, it may have a permanent effect upon you.

So it is as though we're leading a sort of double life, a life awake and a life asleep and dreaming, and that the two don't very often interact or overlap, though they can be made to overlap, and you could say that it's from a certain point of view, a sign of individual development if the insight and the experiences that we have in the waking state, because that is where insight usually occurs, start feeding themselves into the dream state and influencing that. And also when all the energy and richness and turbulence of the dream state start feeding themselves into the waking state, and giving it a bit more life and colour than it usually possesses. You get that when you write down your dreams, and you try to make them part of your waking consciousness. Or if you get inspirations which come from say below the level of ordinary consciousness. Sometimes if you do creative work you get a sudden inspiration or an image, or a picture just comes from somewhere. You haven't thought it out rationally, it just came, you're just inspired with it and that can happen to a considerable extent. So in this way the two states can interact and, as I said, you become more developed as an individual, they tend to come together more and more.

Otherwise you have very often a sort of clear cold rational consciousness on the one hand and a seething mass of semi-conscious, or even unconscious energies and forces and emotions on the other. But as you develop as an individual these two extremes come together into something much more harmonious and much more clear and much more rich and colourful.

_____: In the bardos there's a mention of the blending of those states. Are there, in the Vajrayana, practices to do this?

S: There are. I think there's a reference to them later on in the song, yes on the next page. Milarepa says 'that in sleeping he also practices for he knows how to illumine blindness'.

There are practices in the Vajrayana or in Buddhism generally even, for prolonging consciousness into the dream states, so that you never entirely lose contact with it. It isn't an easy thing to do because if you become too conscious, so to speak, you wake up, so you go back to the waking state instead of blending the waking state with the dream state.

Anyway that's all just on this little point, that '*The gurus patron buddhas and dakinis all revealed themselves to Rechungpa in his dreams, persuading him to ask the Jetsun to relate his life story. After Milarepa had done so, Rechungpa yearned to go to Central Tibet [Weu]*'.

What does that tell you about Rechungpa? He's always going off somewhere. In the course of various study retreats we've been studying these chapters in which Milarepa and Rechungpa are both present and we've found that Rechungpa, though he's got the best of the gurus, though he's got Milarepa, he's always wanting to go off somewhere else, and he does so frequently. So here you have a situation, a strange situation, in which Rechungpa has had this dream, 'the gurus, patron buddhas and dakinis' have appeared to him, and as a result he's asked Milarepa to relate the story of his life. And we have that story in *"Tibet's Great Yogi, Milarepa"*.

So Rechungpa has had the extraordinary experience, the wonderful experience, of hearing from Milarepa's own lips the story of his life from the beginning right up to the present day, and it's been a really enthralling experience. So having had that experience Rechungpa yearns to go to Central Tibet, to leave Milarepa. So this suggests as in fact we know from all these chapters that he's not a very integrated person. He's a very highly gifted person. He became, in the end, one of the two best of Milarepa's disciples, one of the two greatest, but it took him a long time to get there, and he seems to have been a very divided character. On the one hand yes there was his faith in Milarepa, his loyalty to Milarepa, but on the other hand, he's always leaving him, always going off somewhere. So we seem to see this sort of pattern repeating itself here. He's been with Milarepa, meditated with Milarepa, he's had these visions, he's heard the story of Milarepa's life. What's he want now? He wants to go off to Weu, in Central Tibet. Strange and contradictory but this is how it is. All right let's go on.

"At that time some patrons said, "Compare the father [Milarepa] with the son [Rechungpa]; the son seems to be far superior because he has been in India." Then the younger people all went to Rechungpa, while the older ones came to the Jetsun. One day many patrons arrived. They brought Rechungpa fine and bountiful food, but gave Milarepa only meagre offerings. [Not knowing this], Rechungpa thought, "Since they have brought me such good food, they must have made even better offerings to the Jetsun." He went to Milarepa and said, "Dear Jetsun, haven't we received fine offerings today? With all this food we can hold a sacramental feast with all the Repas. Shall we do so?"

S: Well there's several points here. 'At that time some patrons' (that is to say some lay supporters who were providing them with food) 'said, "Compare the father with the son; the son seems to be far superior because he has been in India."' So what does that tell you about people?

_____: How superficial they are.

S: Superficial, yes. Why do you think they thought Rechungpa superior because he had been in India? What was so special about India?

_____: It was the centre of.....

S: This is where Buddhism started, this is where it came from, this is where it came to Tibet from. There are big monasteries there, famous monks, famous teachers, famous gurus, and Rechungpa has been there!

Ratnaketu: This was probably mysterious for them. India probably seems mysterious from Tibet.

S: Oh yes, because in those days it was quite difficult to get there, it was a journey of weeks, if not months. A very difficult and dangerous

journey to this far away distant mysterious land of India, where there was all these wonderful monasteries and temples, and monks and gurus, and traditions, and dakinis hovering around. So Rechung had been there. So again, looking at it more closely, what does this tell you? Yes, people do judge superficially but they don't see or try to see you yourself, where you're really at. They judge by quite superficial, quite external standards.

Ray: I was talking about this to Surata yesterday. We were saying that because we're in Sussex we get people who have been to Chithurst where the Theravada monks are, and we get the impression that they're impressed by the robes, not eating after twelve and all that sort of thing, and they don't see the same thing in the Friends.

S: Yes. They don't see anything else. You find this with people who are as it were, 'India returned'. It's just the same in Tibet, it's just the same in the West. If you've been and spent some years in India, or if you were born in India or born in Tibet, well, that is very impressive, that itself as it were carries its own seal, carries its own credentials, but that's really got nothing to do with it. You've got to see what the person himself is like. After all, you could say, cows live in India, (laughter) dogs live in India, well so what! I mean people could have spent their time uselessly in India. I was telling one of the other study groups, the other week, the story of Tibetans whom I knew in Kalimpong, and you'd meet them one day and you'd realize they were off somewhere, so you'd ask them where they were going. Well they're going away on pilgrimage, they are going to Buddhagaya on pilgrimage. How long were they going to be away? - "Three months at least, they were going to be on pilgrimage".

So off they'd go and maybe three months later you'd meet them, four months later you'd meet them, and you'd ask them what sort of time they'd had and what they thought of Buddhagaya. But after you'd been talking a bit you realized that they spent only about two days in Buddhagaya! The rest of the time they were in Calcutta! But they officially were on pilgrimage, they were down in the plains. So it's not just a question of going to India, or even going on pilgrimage, it's what you do while you are there.

Somebody could have come from India to the West, or from Tibet to the West, could have spent twenty years in a monastery, could be wearing yellow robes or red robes. So what!

I remember in this case and incident from my days in Kalimpong, when I knew a very bluff English Buddhist who will feature in my next volume of memoirs. I've not yet come to this little story but I hope to find a place for it. He was telling me that he had some contacts with some very orthodox Theravada Bhikkhus, and there was one little Sinhalese Theravada bhikkhu who was really pompous, and he'd apparently been a bhikkhu for over twenty years, which meant that he was a Mahathera, because if you're a bhikkhu for twenty years you automatically become a Mahathera, or Great Elder. So this friend of mine, this British Buddhist friend, happened to meet this little Sinhalese Mahathera who'd been a bhikkhu for more than twenty years.

So when they met, this British Buddhist friend of mine, who was very unconventional from a Buddhist point of view, he said, 'Hello how are you?' So he said the little monk stuck his chest out and he said 'I am a Mahathera' and this British Buddhist said that he said it in such a way that he expected the poor British Buddhist to be really overwhelmed and to be down on his hands and knees in an instant. But anyway, this friend of mine wasn't so easily impressed, and he said, "A Mahathera", he said, "20 years a Bhikkhu, My god", he said, "20 years of undetected crime!"

(laughter). So he said, "The poor monk didn't know what to do", he wasn't used to that sort of response.

But one mustn't go by externals, one must just try to see what is really there, It could be that someone had spent his 20 years as a monk really usefully. It could be that he'd gained great experience, but you mustn't take it for granted. You mustn't think that everyone who comes from India, or comes from Tibet, is virtually Enlightened, or everyone who's wearing yellow robes is virtually Enlightened, or even red robes, even all sorts of fancy caps, and the rest of it. But it is extraordinary how people are impressed by this and here is a glaring example of it.

They've got no less a person than Milarepa, and here's Rechungpa too, who is quite developed, yes, but nothing like Milarepa, but they say, "the son seems to be far superior because he has been in India." I mean in a way could anything be more ridiculous than that? But this is how people judge. 'He must be very holy he's wearing a yellow robe', or 'he must be very holy he doesn't eat after twelve o'clock. etc, etc.

So I wonder why it is that people can be so superficial? Even people who've read quite a lot about Buddhism - why is it? As you said, people might come along to wherever you are working, you might be doing more meditation than any of those monks ever did, you might understand the Dharma better, but you've never been to the East, you don't wear a yellow robe - they won't take much notice of you. But somebody else, wearing a yellow robe and who has spent a couple of years in the East, even though he doesn't really know very much, they'll respect him really very highly. Why is this? Why are people so unwilling to try and see what is really there in the individual. What is happening? What are they doing?

_____: They're taking the easy way out.

S: In a way they are taking the easy way out. Because something which I noticed when I was in London years ago was, supposing they saw you maybe working in the restaurant, or behind the counter in *the Emporium*, you're no different from them apparently, you're dressed the same, your hair's the same, you're working, you've got a job, but you say meditate three hours a day, you study the dharma. So what does that in effect say to them? Well, you could do it too! They can't say, oh well he's a bhikkhu, he's a monk, I'm only a layman. There isn't that loophole! Because you're just the same as them, but you're also meditating, you're also studying the Dharma, you're also practising right livelihood. But if it's someone who appears very different, who's wearing a yellow robe and got a shaven head, well then you can sort of have a kind of respect towards them - "They are the ones that are leading the Buddhist life - we can't do it, we're only lay people!" You see what I mean? So if you attach importance to external things of this sort it gives you, as I said, a loophole. So maybe with Rechungpa they can say, "Of course he's a wonderful yogi, of course he can meditate for hours on end in his cave, he's been to India. We haven't been to India, so of course we can't be expected to do that sort of thing. We weren't born in a Buddhist country so of course we can't understand Buddhism properly. We've got a job so we can't meditate. We've got a wife and family so we can't take a serious interest in Buddhism". It's the perfect get out.

So I notice, especially among Theravadin Buddhists, there was this tendency to put the responsibility for practising Buddhism onto the monks, who very often actually didn't practice Buddhism, but it was enough if the lay people thought that they were, or believed that they were. If a monk takes a little nap in the afternoon the euphemism is 'he's meditating'. No one ever says 'Oh please don't disturb me in the afternoon, I shall be having a little nap', He says 'Please don't disturb me, I shall be meditating'. So the lay people go along with this - 'don't disturb him, he's

meditating'. When actually he's just lying down and having a rest or asleep and so on.

So the monks, if they're not careful, even the genuine ones, become focuses for the projections of the laity, or the laity imagine that the monks are leading a truly Buddhist life and that exempts them from leading it. They have just got to have faith in the monks and support them, well as we see that these people were doing - 'by the invitation of his patrons, who provided perfect food and service.....'. No doubt it is good that they should do that, no doubt they had faith and devotion, but they seem to see it as their role to do just that and not to think so much in terms of practising the Dharma themselves.

So they are impressed by the fact that Rechungpa has been to India, and they think that that means a lot. That it makes him even superior to Milarepa. You could say from ordinary people like that, that it's ridiculous to think of comparing Milarepa and Rechungpa. They're both above them and they can't really tell how they stand in relation to each other - that's for them to sort out! - if they're interested in doing that!

So they have got this tendency to try and sort out who is superior and who is inferior. I remember in this connection, it's a story that I've told before, although maybe you haven't heard it, that with regards to three of my own teachers in Kalimpong, there was quite a discussion among Tibetan lay buddhists as to which of them was superior to the others, or whether in fact one was more superior and another who was next, and another who was last. So one person apparently plucked up courage to ask one of the three lamas whether one or another of them was not in fact superior to the other two. So the lama said, 'yes it is true, out of the three of us one is definitely superior to the other two, but you people will never know which one it is!' [Laughter]

So it's interesting that the patrons think in these terms with regards to Milarepa and Rechungpa at all, that is to say in terms of superiority and inferiority. Really so far as they are concerned, it doesn't really matter. But not only do they think in terms of inferiority and superiority, but from their point of view the superiority and inferiority has consisted of childish things - that Rechungpa is superior because he's been to India and Milarepa is inferior because he's not been to India.

They've got such a superficial view. But maybe there's a little bit of satire, as the younger people all went to Rechungpa, while the older ones came to the Jetsun. The older ones are supposed, clearly, to be more experienced and more wise, more full of insight etc., etc. Actually in Britain we tend to find it the other way round. It's the old ladies and old gentlemen that go haring off after the lamas in all their ecclesiastical finery and so on, and some of the younger ones are at least more sceptical about these things. [Pause]

So 'one day many patrons arrived. They brought Rechungpa fine and bountiful food, but gave Milarepa only meagre offerings.' You can see that they are devoted, devoted enough to bring offerings, but look at the discriminatory way in which they give them. This seems quite wrong anyway. After all they're both meditating yogis. One shouldn't make this distinction on the basis of supposed greater or lesser spiritual merits. But this is what people do. They make lavish offerings to the one but meagre offerings to the other.

'Not knowing this Rechungpa thought 'since they have brought me such good food, they must have made even better offerings to the Jetsun'. He went to Milarepa and said, 'Dear Jetsun, haven't we received fine offerings today? With all this food we can hold a sacramental feast with all the Repas. Shall we do so?'

Why do you think the patrons, the lay supporters, made such fine offerings to Rechungpa but not to Milarepa? Was it just a sort of abstract appreciation of their supposed merits?

Ray: More merit?

S: Yes! More merit. I mean it's more meritorious apparently giving offerings to someone who'd been to India than to someone who hadn't been to India, and this perhaps was their naive way of thinking a greater blessing!

Anyway what happens next. Someone read that next paragraph.

[End of side one side two]

"Very well," replied Milarepa, 'you will find my share under that slab of stone. Take and use it.' But Rechungpa found only a portion of rotten meat, a bottle of sour beer, and a small quantity of barley flour. On his way back Rechungpa thought, 'Is this fitting of those patrons? Compared with my Buddha-like Guru, I am nothing. I cannot match a single hair of his head, even with my whole body. But now these ignorant patrons are doing this foolish thing. Hitherto I have been living with my Guru and receiving all the Instructions from him. My intention was to go on living with him so that I could serve and please him. But as things stand now, if I stay with him too long I will only become a hindrance and stand in his way. Thus, instead of being a helper I will become an competitor. I ought to ask his permission to leave.'"

S: There's just one more point with regard to that previous paragraph. Rechungpa says, 'with all this food we can hold a sacramental feast with all the Repas. Shall we do so?' So what does this indicate about Rechungpa? Well he's just obviously willing to share everything.

_____: He's generous.

S: Generous, yes. He's received fine offerings and he thinks Milarepa has received even finer offerings, so putting the two lots of offerings together they could hold a great feast for all the Repas, for all the meditating yogis. He makes that suggestion to Milarepa. So what does Milarepa say - 'very well' - he doesn't say 'well I haven't received very much, he says, 'very well, you will find my share under that slab of stone'. Why do you think it's put under a slab of stone? Well that probably is the only cupboard he's got to keep it from wild beasts and so on.

'Take it and use it' But Rechungpa found only a portion of rotten meat, a bottle of sour beer, and a small quantity of barley flour. On his way back Rechungpa thought, 'Is this fitting of those patrons? Compared with my Buddha-like Guru, I am nothing. I cannot match a single hair of his head, even with my whole body.' That hasn't always been Rechungpa's attitude as we've seen in other chapters, but anyway he has come to this realisation at last.

'But now these ignorant patrons are doing this foolish thing. Hitherto I have been living with my Guru and receiving all the Instructions from

him. My intention was to go on living with him so that I could serve and please him. But as things stand now, if I stay with him too long I will only become a hindrance and stand in his way. Thus, instead of being a helper I will become a competitor. I ought to ask his permission to leave.' So Rechungpa foresees the possibility of complications, that if people are neglecting Milarepa and thinking more highly of him, they'll be putting themselves in an awkward position. They'll be excluding themselves from the benefit that they could have received from Milarepa himself. Perhaps they'll be doing themselves harm by looking down on Milarepa in that way.

So he thinks that he ought to withdraw from the situation, and not remain in this insidious position of appearing to be a competitor with Milarepa. That's the last thing he wants to do, because he realises there's no question of any competition between them. Milarepa is in fact so much greater than he is.

Ratnaketu: I heard that there can only be one Buddha in a world system at any time. Is this for similar reasons? The people would instead of being of benefit start to feel down towards one?

S: That is sometimes mentioned, but the reason that is given is usually different. The usual reason that is given is that the earth could not bear the weight of more than one Buddha. You can see the significance of that, but the question does turn on an ambiguity in the use of the word Buddha itself. Do you see what I mean?

Ratnaketu: The Buddha is a separate selfhood?

S: No, I didn't mean that.

Subhuti: He discovers the way.

S: Yes. The term 'Buddha' is indicating a specific historical function, and a 'Buddha' meaning simply one who is enlightened regardless of whether he fulfils that specific historical function or not. So what is that specific historical function? It's the function of discovering or rediscovering the way to Enlightenment, or the way to nirvana, at a time, or in an age when, it has been lost or is no longer known.

So in the full sense a Buddha means one who is an extraordinary individual who is born at a time when there's no knowledge of the path to Enlightenment. No one knows how to attain Enlightenment, but this extraordinary individual, as the result of his own initiative, his own determination, finds that way again, even though it had been lost for millions of years, and opens it up to other people. Not simply one who gains enlightenment. So those who follow his teaching and who gain Enlightenment as the result of following his teaching, are Buddhas in the sense that they have awoken to reality, but not Buddhas in the sense that they have fulfilled that particular historical function.

So sometimes the word 'Buddha' is used in the sense of the one who fulfils that particular historical function, which includes, of course, the attainment of Enlightenment. Sometimes it is used in the sense of simply someone who has attained Enlightenment. So when it is said that there cannot be two Buddhas at the same time, it is two Buddhas in the first sense, because to have two Buddhas at the same time would be self-

contradictory.

Siddhiratna: Why is it be self-contradictory?

S: It is self-contradictory in the sense that once the way has been opened up again, and made known, well there's no question of anyone else having to discover it. You can only have one first discoverer in any given world period.

Siddhiratna: Is that of particular significance? I suppose it must be that we're sure that Buddha actually rediscovered it, it could have been anybody couldn't it, well presumably?

S: Well it isn't the Buddha that rediscovers it because he isn't the Buddha to start with. It is an individual, a human being. He is in a world without what we call Buddhism, without the Dharma. There are religious teachings of a sort, there are yogic practices, but they don't go far enough. So he feels some sort of dissatisfaction, there's something missing. What is it? Where is it to be found? How is it to be found?

As we find in the case of the historical Buddha he gains everything which is to be gained, according to the contemporary teaching, and his teachers tell him 'that's it, you've reached the goal, you've reached the end'. But he doesn't feel satisfied because there's something more, so what is that? So he goes off on his own to try to find that, and then finally he breaks through into that dimension which nobody had known about. So that is what we call a Buddha. So then he can make that hitherto unknown dimension know to other people. He can say well there is a stage further beyond, you haven't yet reached the goal, the goal is something other, something further, something greater. So a Buddha in this sense means someone who makes that discovery or rediscovery.

Siddhiratna: Is he still regarded as, as we regard him, as a hero rather than a sort of king or a god-like figure?

S: Well he is called 'Hero'. He's called 'Mahavira'. That is one of the titles of the Buddha which means, of course, 'Great Hero'. But as far as we can make out from Pali scriptures, in the Buddha's day, the Buddha was regarded as Enlightened of course and the disciples who followed him and followed his teachings and who became Arahants were also regarded as Enlightened. And it seems that they were regarded as being, so to speak, equally Enlightened. The only difference being that the Buddha gained Enlightenment first without a teacher. They gained Enlightenment after him by following his teaching. He gained what is called 'Bodhi', they gained what we call '*anubodhi*' or 'after Bodhi', but the Bodhi, the spiritual experience was the same in both cases, even though he gained it without a teacher and they gained it with a teacher.

But then later on the question seems to have been raised, how was it that the Buddha, as he became, was able to make that extraordinary discovery, that extraordinary breakthrough. Clearly he must have been an extraordinary person, *Acharyamanusa* in Pali. But then people weren't satisfied with just saying he must have been an extraordinary man, well what sort of extraordinary man, how did he become an extraordinary man? How was he born as an extraordinary man? Well he must have been extraordinary in his previous lives. In his previous lives he must have been different from other people. He must have prepared himself in his previous lives, so that when he was born, at this time, he would be able to make that breakthrough.

So then this whole sort of Bodhisattva myth almost sprang up, that originally the Buddha, as we call him, was a young man who was inspired by this example of a previous Buddha and who, instead of attaining Enlightenment under that Buddha and becoming an Arahant, decided to prepare himself by the practice of what we now call '*paramitas*', the perfections, over a period of thousands of lives, decided to prepare himself to be born as an extraordinary man who would be able to discover or rediscover the path to Enlightenment at a time when it was lost. So this is the general belief of the Hinayana and of the early Mahayana.

So there also came to be a sort of idea that a Buddha's equipment was greater.... In order to become a Buddha in this special sense you needed a greater equipment than just to become a Buddha in the sense of being Enlightened. If you wanted to become a Buddha in that special sense, in the sense of fulfilling that special historical or cosmic function you needed to practise the '*paramitas*'. But if you just wanted to become an Arahant and gain that same Enlightenment in this life by following a Buddha's teaching well you just had to follow the eightfold path. But then again eventually there came to be a difference posited between the Enlightenments that were attained. It was as though the Buddha's Enlightenment was greater than that of the Arahant. He was, so to speak, 'more' Enlightened. Then you find in the Hinayana, including the Theravada, the view that nowadays we do not need to aim at becoming Buddhas, because the Buddha's teaching is available, we can tread the eightfold path, we can become Arahants, we can become liberated. But the Mahayana developed this in a different way, The Mahayana said well no, to become a Buddha and fulfil that historical mission is a much greater thing than just to become an Arahant and gain liberation in this life. Everybody ought to become a Bodhisattva, everybody ought to become a Buddha and work for the Enlightenment of all. These are the historical roots, so to speak, of the development of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

Siddhiratna: It sounds like something like that's necessary otherwise you sort of feel history is kind of dependent upon chance of the arising of a human being who gained Enlightenment.

S: But if we look at it in so to speak psychological terms then we can see, or we can understand, that what the Mahayana is, so to speak, trying to say, what the Bodhisattva Ideal is trying to say, in contradistinction to a rather literalistically interpreted Arahant ideal, is that you cannot really think of Enlightenment as an exclusive personal possession. You can't really think of Enlightenment as something which you attain. You have also to consider the other dimension, the dimension of other living beings - that you are all interconnected. The Mahayana is so to speak trying to say that so long as others are not enlightened, in a sense you are not enlightened also. You are all interconnected, your lives are all interconnected, because how can you just sit, so to speak, enjoying Enlightenment and the bliss of Nirvana when others are suffering. If you have any sensitivity at all you just won't be able to do that.

So it's not possible to ignore the needs of others and just strive for your own Enlightenment. All that you can do is to strive for the Enlightenment of all. So in this sense you also get the development of the Bodhisattva Ideal, that a truly spiritual life cannot be an entirely self-regarding life. The spiritual life cannot be a refined kind of selfishness. Yes, you have to develop yourself, yes, you have to meditate, that is true, but you cannot do it, so to speak, just for your own sake. It has to be also for the sake of others. Even your own spiritual life as an individual has to be for the sake and the benefit of all. This is the Mahayana view.

Siddhiratna: That equates with the Buddha's deciding to go off and teach as opposed to merely sitting under the Bodhi tree.

S: Yes, you could say that. But of course we mustn't forget the nature of the historical development and we mustn't forget that as far as we know the Buddha himself - the historical Buddha - appears not to have seen any difference between his own Enlightenment and that of his disciples, but there's no doubt that in some schools, the Enlightenment of the disciple, of the Arahant, came to be seen in quite narrow terms, and it was against that probably that the Mahayana was protesting, and sort of restated the Buddha's original position and amplified a more detailed manner or more dramatic manner, if you like.

Anyway that arose after the question of whether there could be two Buddhas at the same time. I hope it's clear now in what sense there can be and in what sense there cannot be.

But to go back also to the point that I made, I seem to remember reading somewhere some statement to the effect that if two Buddhas were to appear it could be that people became uncertain, as it were, between them, or that even they tried to set up one in competition to the other. They themselves, of course, would never get involved in any such situation but other people might, just as these patrons did in setting up Rechungpa as superior to Milarepa when he wasn't. So you can imagine what they would do or what tricks they'd get up to if there were two Buddhas in the world. Just as in a kingdom you cannot have more than one king, so as it were in the spiritual world you cannot have more than one Buddha. There's only one Buddha at a time in that sense. There can only be, in your personal spiritual world, one focus of absolute loyalty, there cannot be more than one. So in that sense there can only be one Buddha at a time, here in a more subjective psychological sense. You can't go for refuge to more than one person so to speak. You can't totally commit yourself to more than one spiritual ideal any more than you can totally commit yourself to more than one person. I'm speaking in ordinary terms. You can't say for instance, to more than one person that I will spend all my time with you and only think of you. You can't say that to more than one person at a time. So in the same way, on another level, in a different sense, you can go for refuge only to one Buddha.

But supposing you've got two Buddhas around, well that would really be difficult for you because you wouldn't be able to see them as one, actually they would be one because they were both Buddhas, but you wouldn't be able to see that probably. So it's better for you that there's only one around at a time. Well, people get sufficiently confused having a lot of gurus around. They keep hopping around from one to another. They may be all perfectly good gurus but the fact that there's a number of them at the same time gives people the excuse just to go hopping from one to another instead of settling down with one and really devoting themselves to him and to following his teaching.

Ratnaketu: You find this with all sorts of practices and jobs. As long as there's something else you think that might be better.

S: Yes, which will suit you better, more in accordance with your temperament etc., etc.

Ray: Quite often though when an individual becomes enlightened does he still go for refuge to the rediscovering Buddha?

S: There is an episode in the Pali Scriptures where the Buddha is represented as reflecting, shortly after the Enlightenment, with regards to

whom should I live honouring and worshipping, and it is said that he looked around the universe and he found no being superior to himself whom he could honour and worship. So then he said, 'let me live honouring and worshipping this Dharma by which I have attained this Enlightenment'. So it's as though he was saying that that sort of cosmic law, if you like, that cosmic spiritual principle by virtue of which he was able to attain enlightenment, that is the only thing which is superior to him, not any other individual, not any other being, so that he will live honouring and worshipping that cosmic principle which made it possible for him to attain Enlightenment at all.

Ratnaketu: It's to that extent a person who gained Enlightenment that wasn't a Buddha in the sense of a rediscoverer of the truth could go for refuge to the Buddha as the person who rediscovered the truth, rediscovered the cosmic principle.

S: He wouldn't really go for refuge to him because what would be the purpose of the refuge? I mean the Buddha in that episode I've quoted didn't say I will go for refuge to that cosmic principle, because what would be the purpose of that, but he said that he would live honouring and worshipping it, as it were looking up to it because that was the only thing greater than him. But in the case of someone who gains Enlightenment it is said he becomes then his own refuge. He doesn't need another refuge. You commit yourself to the Buddha, you go for refuge to the Buddha in order to gain Enlightenment, but when you've gained Enlightenment what shall you go for refuge to, for what purpose? There's no purpose. You could say that the so-called archetypal Buddhas like Amitabha, they represent this sort of, to use that term, personification, of that principle in accordance with which individual historical Buddhas become Buddhas.

So in that sense the Sakyamuni lives honouring and worshipping Amitabha, as you find in fact depicted, in a manner of speaking, in some of the Mahayana sutras.

One must be very careful, and Rechungpa sees this, not to set up the situation, or to contribute to the setting up of the situation in which people's loyalties are divided. That is to say if there are two of you and a third person, say, is dependant, objectively dependant, reasonably dependant, on both of you for spiritual advice or guidance - maybe as Kalyana Mitras, or maybe just as friends, ordinary friends, you must be quite careful that you sort of work together, that you don't pull in opposite directions, because if the person, that third person, is equally devoted to both of you, that would create a situation of quite severe conflict for him, especially if he isn't really able to make up his own mind or think for himself, or decide for himself.

If one of you is saying 'I think you should join a community', and the other is saying, 'well no, I think you should go into solitary retreat', or someone else is saying, 'I think you should stay with your wife and kids', well he's being given contradictory advice and this can create difficulties for him.

_____: Isn't it a bit ironic that Rechungpa can see that and yet he found it difficult to stay with Milarepa? He was distracted by India and wanted to find out for himself.

S: Well, very often we can see where others go wrong very clearly, but we genuinely are unable to see where we're going wrong ourselves. It doesn't mean that what we see with regard to others isn't clear or isn't true, yes it can be, but nonetheless, we find it very difficult to turn that

same sort of brilliant analytical light upon ourselves.

It may be quite valid as regards others but it could be valid if we turned it upon ourselves but we just don't do that very often. That's why Burns says 'O that the lord this gift would gi' us, to see ourselves as others see us.' It's very easy to see others. Difficult to see ourselves. You can often be very right about others and very wrong about yourself. So one should be careful not to create this alternative, or even contradictory, focus of loyalty. This wasn't quite what was happening here. It wasn't that the patrons thought that they were equally enlightened, or would have their allegiance divided. No, they decided that Rechungpa was greater than Milarepa. But Rechungpa saw that that was so far from the facts of the situation that he was being put, or the patrons were putting themselves, in a quite false position and he wanted just to withdraw from that and not contribute to it, not reinforce it.

Right next paragraph.

"Very early next morning, Rechungpa went to see the Jetsun. He noticed that Milarepa was sleeping with his head hidden [under his arms, like a bird]. Megom Repa was also asleep in his bed. Rechungpa thought, "Concerning self-achievement, my Guru has completely realized the Dharmakaya. And as to altruism, does he not at times practice it like a bird?" Knowing what Rechungpa was thinking, the Jetsun sang a song called "The Four Activities"."

S: So 'very early next morning, Rechungpa went to see the Jetsun. He noticed that Milarepa was sleeping with his head hidden under his arms, like a bird.' You know, just like a bird puts its head under its wing - Milarepa apparently was sleeping like that. I'm not quite sure how he'd do it [laughter] but anyway perhaps it was his arms over his head, rather than his head under his arms. For he didn't have a pillow, don't forget that.

'Megom Repa was also asleep in his bed' apparently sleeping in the same cave as Milarepa - 'Rechungpa thought,'concerning self-achievement my Guru has completely realised the Dharmakaya'. You know what Dharmakaya means?

You've heard of the Three Kayas, are you familiar with this teaching? This is a specifically Mahayana teaching of the Three Kayas, literally three bodies of a Buddha - the Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya and Dharmakaya. We've spoken about the historical person, historical personality of the Buddha and of the Buddha's special function, this corresponds with the Nirmanakaya. And then we've spoken about Amitabha for instance as a sort of personification of the cosmic principle in accordance with which, or in accordance with the operation of which, or by virtue of which, it is possible for a human being to become a Buddha. This corresponds to the Sambhogakaya. It's not any particular individual Buddha, it's the principle of Buddhahood itself in an absolutely ideal form divested of historical accidents.

Then the Dharmakaya is the essence of that, that's completely beyond words, completely beyond form. So you've got these three - you've got The Nirmanakaya, the Sambhogakaya and the Dharmakaya. Sometimes they're called the historical Buddha or the human Buddha, the Ideal Buddha, and the Absolute Buddha, and sometimes - taking the word 'kaya' to mean 'body' - it is historical body, universal body and some translators render it as essence body. Also the three kayas correspond to body, speech and mind. This is from a somewhat different point of view.

The Dharma in Dharmakaya means the absolute, ultimate reality, which is beyond thought, beyond concept, beyond speech. So when you are enlightened, when a human being becomes a Buddha he realises the Dharmakaya. He realises, or wakens to, or becomes one with even, the ultimate reality, the ultimate principle of the universe of existence, of neither existence nor non-existence, nor both, nor neither. Whatever one conceives of as ultimate he realises that. So it becomes, in a manner of speaking, incorporated in his experience, or he becomes incorporated in it, and 'kaya' represents that. He embodies that. Do you see what I mean?

By virtue of the fact that he has experienced it, so Dharmakaya means the ultimate reality of things, the ultimate essence of things as actually experienced by an individual human being - in this case the Buddha.

Then Sambhogakaya is the embodiment of the perfection of speech. The Dharmakaya is, as it were, the embodiment, or the perfection of mind, mind meaning here the deepest part of oneself, because it is with that deepest part of oneself, so to speak, that one realises the ultimate. So Dharmakaya corresponds to mind, what in us is mind, in a Buddha is Dharmakaya. In the same way Sambhogakaya corresponds to speech, what, in us is speech or communication, or communication principle, in a Buddha is Sambhogakaya. So in his Sambhogakaya form, in his ideal form, his archetypal form, he communicates with others on the same spiritual level, communicates with other Buddhas and with highly advanced Bodhisattvas.

And then Nirmanakaya corresponds with - it literally means 'body of transformation' - Nirmanakaya, well what is Nirmanakaya in a Buddha in us is physical body. Our physical body determines where we are. The fact that we have a physical body means that we exist at a certain point in space and a certain point in time, therefore historically. So the Nirmanakaya is that body to which the Buddha communicates with ordinary human beings.

So this is the Trikaya doctrine or teaching. There is a detailed explanation of it in 'the *Survey*'.

So Rechungpa thought, 'concerning self-achievement my Guru has completely realised the Dharmakaya' - In other words he is a Buddha. He has realised ultimate reality.

'And as to altruism, does he not at times practise it like a bird?' What do you think this means? Altruism is, of course, consideration of others, devoting yourself to the well being of others. It's Maitri and Karuna, altruism represents the Bodhisattva Ideal, the Bodhisattva Vow. Well what does it mean - 'And as to altruism, does he not at times practise it like a bird?' How does a bird practise it?

Siddhiratna: By singing.

S: Do you think it's that

Ratnaketu: Always active.

S: Always active.

Ratnaketu: He sings it to anybody.

S: [chuckles] Well it has to be a singing bird for that!

_____: Over a great distance?

S: Over a great distance. It seems to me, the comparison is not made clear, that the bird flies in the air and the air, the sky often represents the void. So it's as though compassion moves about in the void. Just like a bird flying in the sky with its two wings. That compassion is completely free, ready to go anywhere just like a bird. So maybe the point of the comparison is something like that. 'And as to altruism does he not at times practice it like a bird?'. Is he not free, is he not moving about in this higher spiritual dimension all the time. And don't forget Milarepa has just been described as sleeping 'with his head hidden' and then, in brackets '(under his arm like a bird)'.

_____: Has that any special significance?

S: I don't know. I mean the Buddha himself is described as sleeping like a lion, that is to say, with his head resting on his right hand which is propped up by the elbow. But 'bird' - difficult to say. It must refer to something in Tibetan belief or in Tibetan folklore perhaps. To sleep like a bird is to sleep on the wing, isn't it perhaps? Sleep while still flying.

Bob: Possible qualifications in both. He says concerning self-achievement, as though that was one aspect. Why couldn't he just say my Guru who has completely realised the Dharmakaya? And equally 'as to altruism does he not practice it like a bird' rather than at times practices it like a bird.

S: Yes, or perhaps it is just a Tibetan idiom. I'm not sure about this. But in view of what follows - 'Knowing what Rechungpa was thinking, the Jetsun sang a song'. In other words he wasn't really asleep! Or not asleep in the ordinary sense. So maybe the bird, I don't know, but maybe the bird in Tibetan folklore is supposed to sleep on the wing. Some birds do don't they? They sleep whilst flying. I mean soldiers sometimes sleep while marching don't they? Well yes, you can sleep while marching.

_____: Can you?

S: You've never been in the army have you? [Laughter] Yes you can sleep while marching. This is well known. And birds, yes, you could say they're sleeping on the wing. What about those little birds that fly for days and nights together in the direction of Africa. Do you think they just don't sleep all the time? No, they sleep on the wing, I think.

Anyway, something like that probably is possible. It means that you're sleeping but you're not asleep. So in the same way Milarepa was sleeping but he was not asleep. Maybe that is the point of the comparison, because he's able to hear what Rechungpa is saying or thinking. He's able to respond and apparently he sings a song apparently even without waking up! [Laughter]. While most people couldn't even sing a song like that when they were waking up not to speak of while they were asleep. But Milarepa can sing songs in his sleep. What we've said before, what is the difference between the sleep state and the waking state for someone like him? They've been blended. So to be asleep is the same thing as being awake, to be awake is the same thing as being asleep.

Anyway that's a convenient point to pause for a cup of tea and then after tea we can go into the song.

[End of tape one tape two]

S: We're going to get onto the song that Milarepa sings apparently in his sleep. 'Knowing what Rechungpa was thinking the Jetsun sang a song called the Four Activities', so would someone like to read that song, the whole of it?

*"Listen with care, my son Rechungpa,
Your old father Mila sometimes sleeps,
But in sleeping he also practises,
For he knows how to illumine Blindness;
But not all men know this Instruction.
I shall be happy if all can share this teaching.*

*Your old father, Mila, sometimes eats,
But in eating he also practices,
For he knows how to identify
His food and drink with the Holy Feast;
But not all men know this Instruction.
I shall be happy if all can share this teaching.*

*Sometimes your old father, Mila, walks,
But in marching he also practices,
For he knows that walking
Is to circle round the Buddhas;
But not all men know this Instruction.
I shall be happy if all can share this teaching.*

Rechungpa, you should practice in this way.

Get up Megong, it is time to make some broth!" (laughter)

S: A little Zen-like isn't it? Everyday life is Zen.

So; "Listen with care, my son Rechungpa, Your old father Mila sometimes sleeps But in sleeping he also practises For he knows how to illumine blindness..."

What is this blindness? Presumably it's the unconscious state of sleep, and to illumine blindness means to suffuse the unconscious state of sleep with light of awareness. It's a blending of the two.

It raises the whole question of the in-between state and the in-between practice. You could say that sleep is an in-between state, that dream is an in-between state, a bardo state. Usually we think of practise in terms of what we do during our waking state, but it is important to be able to continue the practice beyond the waking state, continue it through the dream state. Otherwise what happens? You have a sort of alternation of two different kinds of state - you have a period in which you practise and then a period in which you don't practise; again a period in which you practise and then a period in which you don't practise - again a period in which you practise, a period in which you don't practise. Not merely a period in which you don't practise but a period in which you don't bother about practise. So a period in which you do something is followed by a period in which you undo that same thing, so this is what usually happens at first. So one has to find a way of continuing one's practice, even through the in-between state.

Siddhiratna: By practice, Bhante, do you mean actually meditation?

S: Well, some kind of spiritual practice, some activity which will produce a skilful effect. For instance, during the day itself you may have say two meditation sessions, you may do a visualization and mantra recitation practice, so how do you try to link those two so that you don't become totally confused in between? You try to keep up the practise of the mantra recitation. At least try to keep it going on at the back of your mind. So this is called the in-between practice. In the same way, if you do the Mindfulness of Breathing, as soon as you leave the meditation room, you don't just forget all about mindfulness - at least you shouldn't - you just continue the practice in a more general form of trying to be mindful whatever you do; moving mindfully, speaking mindfully and so on. You may not have such an intense experience of mindfulness as you do when you're concentrating on the breath, but there is some degree of mindfulness and that makes it easier for you to carry on with the practice next time you sit. So what you must guard against is the sort of 'moral holidays' in-between - you see what I mean? 'Holidays' from meditation, or 'holidays' from spiritual practise, because you may have a period of spiritual practise that may be quite worthwhile, then you have this little holiday in-between, and the results are just lost, just dissipated, just thrown away. So that's no use at all, so you have to find some way of continuing the practice during these intermediate states whatever they may be. So it's also a question of continuing the practice not only during the waking state but during the sleep state as well. Sometimes it happens through sheer momentum of the spiritual practice, if you've been meditating a lot and studying the Dharma a lot, well, the effect will continue in your dreams as it were, automatically, but even that isn't enough; I mean there are other practices to help you continue in that way. For instance, it is said that just before going to sleep you should be quite mindful and quite aware and maybe repeat a mantra, so that in

that sort of state you fall asleep. It is very good, for instance, to go to bed straight after puja and meditation or meditation and puja without speaking, without reading a book, without thinking upon anything, because then something of the puja and meditation experience continues into the sleep state, so you mustn't disturb that meditation or puja experience before you go to bed or before you go to sleep.

In fact, you will find you can quite easily drop off to sleep straight after a puja and meditation because mental activity has been stilled to some extent. Your brain isn't busy and active and it's very often that which keeps you awake. It has been noticed quite recently that if you have a really vigorous study group or discussion and that carries on right up until bed-time, you don't find it easy to sleep. Several people were saying that here a few days ago, they didn't sleep one night or slept very badly because the discussion continued until ten-thirty instead of ending at nine-thirty. So one has to watch that. (pause)

Ratnaketu: Just thinking about what you were saying about continuing practice right through when you were awake, and these 'moral holidays', if they become regular events you can then start to get quite split in your personality....

S: Yes, yes, that's true.

Ratnaketu: The Buddhist and the time off.

S: ...And not only that, but you think because you've, well, I don't want to use the word moral too much, but supposing you've observed the precepts, say quite strictly for a month, well that gives you almost the right not to observe them for a month (laughter). You see, you've earned your moral holiday, you've been a good boy, you've meditated every day maybe for a month - oh, now, it's not that, well, you've done enough for the time being, it's that no, as your reward for practising meditation, you can now not practise meditation - not that as a reward for practising meditation, I can do some more meditation. It's interesting what one thinks of as the true reward. I've really worked hard now so I deserve to have a bit of a free time, to be able to play a bit; not that I've worked hard for a week, well as a reward I'm going to work extra hard for another week. So it shows where one's values really are, doesn't it, eh, because you always reward yourself with something nice that you enjoy.

So I think one has really got to watch this, that one doesn't sort of reward oneself for being skilful by giving oneself permission to be unskilful. This is what it amounts to.

Ratnaketu: ...or even start to see things like retreats as holidays, in terms of sort of, you've been working hard for a time then you have a reward which is a holiday, a time off, when it's actually....

S: One can certainly think in terms of, objectively, 'I need to do something different; I need a rest; I need a rest physically; I need a rest mentally; I need a change; this is in the interest of my individual development'. Fair enough, but not to think in terms of, well as I said, rewarding yourself for being skilful by permission to be unskilful.

That is what one must watch. You know, you reward yourself for being good by giving yourself permission to be naughty. Well, it's really so

absurd, isn't it? (chuckle) Anyway, Milarepa says, "Your old father Mila sometimes sleeps..." - I mean, he's not saying, well, I'm a great yogi, I can do without sleep, - no, he says he also sometimes sleeps, "but in sleeping he also practises"; he's able to allow his waking state practice to seep through as it were; to percolate through into the sleeping state, "for he knows how to illumine blindness"; he knows how to bring together the light of consciousness and the darkness of the unconscious into something that transcends them both. "But not all men know this instruction". Even religious people, even spiritually-minded people seem to oscillate between the two; while they're in the waking state - yes, they may have wonderful meditations but what turbulent dreams they may have as soon as they fall asleep. In their waking state - yes, it's meditation, study, dharma discussion, but in their dreams - oh, wine women and song! (laughter)

Well that's no good! You've got to blend the two, you've got to blend the clarity of your meditation and study with the liveliness and interest that you have perhaps in the wine, women and song - which doesn't mean the two running side by side, it doesn't mean that; it means the two really blended or the clarity and the energy blended. "I shall be happy if all can share this teaching"...He says this perhaps because this instruction of how to illumine blindness is regarded or was regarded as quite esoteric, purely Tantric teaching, but Milarepa doesn't want it just to be kept for himself and a few disciples. He wants everybody to be able to do this, everybody to learn this, to blend what I have called the clarity, the clarity of waking consciousness with the blindness and darkness and turbulence of the sleep state. If you look at the state of dream it's a very interesting state, because it's very alive, it's very colourful, it's very active, it's very varied; so that's not to be thrown away by any means. It's to be blended with the clarity of consciousness and awareness.

Subhuti: You suggested ways in which you can sort of prepare yourself before you go to sleep. Is there anything more that one could do?

S: Well there are some special breathing exercises, and mantra recitation and visualization practice. There's one practice - I don't know whether one should just do this off one's own bat as it were - where one can compress the glands at the side of the neck at the same time that one repeats the mantra, and this does have an effect.

Subhuti: This is mentioned in the text.

S: Ah, yes, it's one of the Six Yogas, or includes it in one of the Six Yogas - one can do that. Probably the best way is simply - I think this is also mentioned - to make a strong resolution before you actually fall asleep that you will not lose consciousness. One can certainly do this and by this means prolong the consciousness to some extent. It's not in a way your individual consciousness - it's quite difficult to describe - it's not that you continue your consciousness; you don't remain awake, but you nonetheless have fallen asleep - no, that isn't possible, whereas at the instant you fall asleep there's a sort of loss of individual consciousness but it's as though the consciousness re-emerges or surfaces in the dream state in a sort of softened or diffused form. You're not altogether unaware of the fact that you are dreaming, there is some vestige of consciousness but if it becomes too much like the consciousness of the ordinary waking state, well you just wake up and in that way you defeat the purpose of the whole practice, the whole exercise.

Subhuti: Sometimes in dreams, they're full of power and real interest and fascination....

S: And colour, interest, yes indeed.

Subhuti: And it's quite difficult....you can sort of live with a sense of that for a few days afterwards - but it's quite difficult to know how to actually, well, use it.

S: Yes it sort of goes on at a very deep level sometimes and you don't always contact that level even when you're asleep, what to speak of when you're awake. It's a very visionary level, a very colourful level.

Subhuti: Maybe some creative use of it could be (unclear).

S: I think it does help if you write dreams down. I think if you write them down, that stimulates them because also, apart from this stimulating effect of actually writing them down, you can go back to them and read them over, read over what you've written and that will perhaps spark off something further, something more. Perhaps one can do this for a while.

Ratnaketu: Yes, I've found, sort of keeping a dream book, actually sort of writing them down, I remembered them just sort of over the period I was doing it - the dreams. I remembered them much more, there was much more to them.

S: Yes, and maybe you, not exactly produce more dreams, but they'll emerge more into consciousness because you sometimes feel as you wake up a dream slipping away. You see it slipping away. It's as though it belongs to a quite different level of consciousness, and the waking level of consciousness can't quite grapple with it, can't quite grasp it. It's something different. You don't quite succeed in interpreting it into or translating it into the terms of waking consciousness so that it can be remembered. It's as though memory itself, in a sense, is an aspect of the waking consciousness.

Subhuti: I experience myself as dreaming more on retreat, because it's as though the practical demands of everyday life, as it were, aren't so strong and when they are strong instead of waking consciousness is the consciousness and so I cut off quite quickly from dreams when I dream.....

S: And, of course there are levels of dream experience. A lot of one's dreams are quite ordinary dreams or what the Red Indians call 'Little Dreams', that is to say dreams which just reflect daily occurrences all jumbled up or they aren't of any significance really. But there's a deeper level of the what we might call archetypal dreams, dreams which are endowed with a strong feeling quality and great significance. So I think sometimes those deeper dreams, those archetypal dreams are overlaid by the dreams which are derived from the experiences of the waking state.

Siddhiratna: The images often are - quite mundane images acting out sort of universal themes.

S: I think we can tell the difference quite easily because there is such a strong feeling quality attaching to the archetypal dream. We really feel

as though we've been through something, as though we've reall experienced something. It isn't just a leftover from the waking state.

Siddhiratna: There's still a sort of interpretation that is often needed, isn't there, to make sense of it in the practical context.

S: I think one has to be quite careful about interpreting dreams, not to over-interpret. And first of all, really sort of study the dream and experience it and sort of listen to it, rather, because interpretation means you're always imposing the categories of the ordinary waking mind upon the dream content, whereas you should be opening yourself to it rather. You shouldn't sort of try to domesticate it too easily.

_____: Sort of limit it.

S: Limit it, yes, because through our ordinary waking consciousness something must mean either this or that, but that is not true of this other level of consciousness - it is very ambivalent, or multi-valent as they say. It's a level on which contradictions are equally true. You can actually have a dream of a creature that is simultaneously a horse and a chicken, but this is not possible in the waking state! It has to be either a horse or a chicken but in a dream it can be both a horse and a chicken - not a combination, not half a horse and half a chicken, but at the same time, in the same sense, entirely a horse and a chicken! (Laughter)

So when you wake up and you try to render it into terms acceptable to the waking consciousness. You have to say, well, 'I dreamt about a horse', so you repress the chicken half or 'I dreamt about a chicken' - you repress the horse half. Or you say it was black and white but in the dream it was black and white -it was completely black and at the same time completely white. But you have to select and that means you have to repress, so you get a very very limited version of what you actually did experience, of what you did actually dream. There are probably a number of alternative versions possible and which one you select or impose determines or depends on your general outlook, what you're interested in, what you think in terms of usually, and so on.

Anyway perhaps that's enough about that verse. Then he says, *"Your old father Mila sometimes eats, But in eating he also practices, For he knows how to identify his food and drink with the Holy Feast; But not all men know this Instruction. I shall be happy if all can share this teaching."*

So in eating he also practises. There are different ways of practising with regards to eating. In the Theravada they practise when eating in a very basic way, that is to say, you remain mindful when you are eating. You don't eat unmindfully, you don't eat with greed, you are conscious that you are eating, you may even be conscious why you are eating. You are mindful of the fact that you are eating in order to sustain the health and energy of the physical body so that you may devote yourself to meditation, so that you may develop spiritually. So in this way, from the Theravada point of view, you eat but you also practise.

From the Mahayana point of view, you eat reflecting that you are eating in order to keep yourself strong and healthy to gain Enlightenment for the sake of all living beings. You keep yourself strong and healthy so that you may serve all living beings, help all living beings.

In the Vajrayana there is a different procedure, which doesn't necessarily exclude the first two procedures. You mentally offer your food and drink to the gurus, the patron Buddhas and the dakinis, and you ask them to accept. And you take your food and drink as, so to speak, their leavings. And, of course, the ancient Indian idea is that if food is offered to someone who accepts it, or takes part of it, then something of himself passes over into the food. The food becomes what we call in the West sacramental food. So that by partaking of this sacramental food you imbibe something of the spirit, so to speak, of whoever it is that you offered the food to. This is a very ancient, you could even say primitive, belief, and you find it in the Vajrayana.

So when you eat and drink, you not only do it mindfully, you not only do it to sustain yourself so that you can lead the Bodhisattva life but you eat and drink having offered the food and drink to the gurus and so on, and you take as their '*prasad*' as the Hindus call it, this sacramental food. You take it as imbued with something of their essence. I don't know, I'm not sure how literally one can take this because purely spiritual qualities cannot be transmitted, according to Buddhism, can they?

So what is sort of happening? Is it just an association of ideas or is it a sort of magical rite - how is one to take it? (Pause) You offer food and drinks as it were in puja, ceremonially, and then having - it having been offered and accepted by the Buddha or the guru or whatever - you then partake of it, and in this way you imbibe some influence, quality, whatever. How literally is one to take this? Is it to be taken literally or is it symbolic? Well the Tibetans take it quite literally.

But anyway this is the Vajrayana point of view. That eating has to be, as it were, sacramentalised. And of course, if one eats and drinks or practises while eating and drinking, from the Theravada point of view one is on very safe ground. This is quite definite - yes, you should eat and drink mindfully, remembering why you eat and drink. The same with the Mahayana - if you follow the Bodhisattva Ideal, well yes, you can quite meaningfully reflect that you eat and drink to keep yourself alive, to fulfil the Bodhisattva Vow. But the Vajrayana point of view - that whatever you eat and drink, you eat and drink having offered to the gurus, devas and dakinis, you take it as sacramental food. This is a little more doubtful in a way. You can of course say that if you take only after offering you have associated the act of eating and drinking with the act of making offerings and that, in itself, of course, is a very good thing.

But Vajrayana tradition as usually understood goes rather beyond that - that by offering the food and drink to the gurus, devas and dakinis it becomes imbued with some kind of mysterious potency which helps you, when you partake of that food and drink, in your spiritual life. That is rather more difficult to understand. Perhaps we should keep an open mind about it but not think about it too literally, let us say. Anyway, it's this that Milarepa is referring to.

Sometimes there are various practices in which when you eat and drink you imagine the food and drink being poured into the sacrificial fires in the different psychic centres, or you imagine the food as being offered to the guru within and so on. There are many practices of this kind associated with the Vajrayana.

Anyway Milarepa says, *"I shall be happy if all can share this teaching. Sometimes your old father, Mila, walks, but in marching he also practices, for he knows that walking is to circle round the Buddhas; But not all men know this Instruction. I shall be happy if all can share this*

teaching"

What is this circling round the Buddhas? Do you know about this, this circumambulation? The Pali Scriptures describe how, when a disciple left the presence of the Buddha, he went round him keeping the Buddha on his right - this is supposed to be a practice or custom associated with the solar cult. You imitate the course of the sun round the earth as people used to think it was. This ('Productiona') keeping on the right, and Tibetans and other Buddhists still always move around a stupa or temple or holy person keeping them on the right or keeping it on the right that is. They circumambulate. There is said to be a sort of psychical significance to this, that if you go that way it churns up energies in a particular field but if you go in the other way, what we call in English, widdershins, it stirs up energies in a different way. This way stirs up energies positively; that way stirs up energies negatively. Therefore you go that way when you want to engage in black magic or something of that sort. The Bonpos in Tibet, they go widdershins because they are opposed to Buddhism, they go the other way round, but the Buddhists always go left to right. left to right is masculine, yes, left to right is masculine and - no - if you go, this is on the horizontal.....

Siddhiratna: Right to left is solar.

S: Yes, this way is Productiona, but the other way, widdershins, is feminine. The first is masculine. So if you have a feminine mantra and you visualise it rotating, it goes anti-clockwise whereas masculine mantras, that is to say mantras of masculine deities, go clockwise and so on. It's not good or bad in the Western sense, by the way. It's not positive and negative in the sense of good and bad. It's creative and destructive rather. The destructive can also be positive under certain circumstances.

So, 'In marching he also practises, for he knows that walking is to circle round the Buddhas.' So in what sense is walking circling round the Buddhas - is it really circling round the Buddha?

Ratnaketu: Is this referring to the fact that he sees that all beings are Buddhas?

S: It's something like this, that he sees reality, or he sees the Dharmakaya as - well not everywhere because then how can you circumambulate, because you circumambulate a certain point. You could say he regards the Buddha as being at the centre of the mandala, so he walks bearing in mind that Buddhahood is the central principle of existence - something like that. But this raises a point here - in the Vajrayana you've got lots of these associations of certain reflections with certain actions but I think what you have to be careful of is it doesn't become too arbitrary. The one simply juxtaposed with the other without any real inner connection. Do you see what I mean? [Pause]

Oh! For instance when you clean your teeth, there is supposed to be a reflection, well even a mantra, "I am now removing all my impurities"; when you comb your hair, "I am now straightening out my practice of the silas". Do you see what I mean? This is all quite good and useful but it's a bit extraneous. There's no deeper, inner connection.

Ratnaketu: It stands for...

S: Yes, it stands for something rather than being really in correspondence with it. So if you are practising in sleep by illuminating blindness, well that is something, as it were, real. And in the same way when you eat and drink mindfully, bearing in mind why you are eating and drinking, well this is, as it were, real. Or even if you walk feeling that you are circumambulating the Buddha, recognising the Buddha as the central principle of existence, well that is also real. But there are various other ways of practising when you are not practising, so to speak, which can be a bit arbitrary.

Otherwise you say when you blow your nose, well you are expelling all unskilful thoughts! - well you can associate like that, it may be useful, but again, you have to be careful how you do this. It could be a bit alienating almost. It's like in that poem by Robert Browning which I quoted yesterday in the other study group. The soliloquy of the Spanish cloister where the orthodox monk is represented as saying that when he sips his orange juice, he sips it three times, he finishes off his ration in three sips or three gulps in honour of the Holy Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In this way by his three sips he frustrates the Aryan, that is to say those who do not believe in the Trinity. So you can get these sort of very mechanical associations. So it is not really that which is meant. You shouldn't do things in that sort of way.

Ratnaketu: It's all right to remind yourself about - when you drink like that - to remind yourself of the Three Jewels but you shouldn't believe that the very fact that you're doing that is actually doing something.

S: Yes, right. Well if you have a drink of nice cold water, this sort of reminds you of drinking in the Amrita of the Dharma. Well if you can feel that, that is good but if without any feeling you say, 'Ah well drinking water, taking in the Amrita of the Dharma' it can be quite not only extraneous but even alienating. But there is a little booklet put out by my old friend Mr Chen giving hundreds of little mantras for every conceivable activity from getting up in the morning to going to bed at night. In a way this is the Vajrayana principle; you sanctify all activities with mantras just as the Brahmins did with Vedic mantras, but it can become quite external and mechanical. So I think one needs to be quite careful about this.

In any case the sacramental principle itself, I think, is a bit dubious from the Buddhist point of view. I mean what happens when you offer, say, food to the Buddha? Do you offer? Lets make it easy. Suppose you offer food to the guru who is actually alive and in front of you and he blesses it and then you partake of that blessed food. What has happened? What have you gained? Has there been any actual change, any objective change in the nature of the food due to his blessing? I mean there has been some experimental work done to suggest that food and drink can be subtly changed in this way by the thoughts, so to speak, which are directed towards that food. So, all right, you could say that the food becomes more healthful having received a guru's blessing and you partake of that blessed food, that sacramental food, but would it be correct to say that it helps you to gain Enlightenment, that you gain anything spiritual from it. Would it be correct to go as far as that? Could you spiritualise yourself by living on sacramental food?

_____: Wouldn't it be rather dangerous in that it might stop you from making an effort yourself?

_____: Yes.

S: Would it have any effect, do you think?

Subhuti:any notions of personal responsibility in the individual element.

S: Well for instance, food by itself, you do feel sometimes much better sometimes after eating it, so it could be that food blessed by the guru makes you feel even better, but it is only giving you an energy which you then need to use yourself. At the most, even though the Vajrayana certainly in popular formulations seems to suggest that you are spiritually benefited by eating this kind of food, I don't think that that really agrees with the fundamental teaching of Buddhism, that you can purify yourself only by your own efforts. The purity and impurity do not depend upon others; they depend upon you. So at best the guru could give you, via the sacramental food, a sort of transmission of some energy perhaps but it would be up to you nonetheless to utilise that energy properly. I doubt very much whether one can really go further than that from a strictly Buddhist point of view, even though some Vajrayanists appear to go beyond that.

_____ : Could it be a sort of diluted form of what happens if a guru blesses a thangka or say fills in the eyes or gives the mantra?

S: Yes, because what happens then is it's a common pattern that the guru visualises the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas and so on and also visualises them as descending into that particular object and remaining present in them. This is the actual process of blessing - it can be with regard to food or a thangka or whatever, an image. But the question still is in what sense is the Buddha or is a deva or dakini present in that particular physical object. It can be a charm, it can be an amulet - I would say there is a difference between a particular physical object being endowed with, let us say for the sake of an expression, positive vibrations, due to the fact that a guru has concentrated his thoughts upon it; there is a difference between that and the transcendental, or an aspect of the transcendental, or a transcendental quality in some sense being present in that physical object. I doubt very much whether a transcendental quality or presence can be invoked in the physical, in the material object in that particular way, but the Vajrayana seems to suggest that it can. I am personally doubtful about this - at least I think it's dangerous to think in this sort of way too literally.

The Vajrayanist might argue that well if a transcendental quality or experience can be associated with a human body, why not with some other material object? He might argue like that, but I must say I wouldn't be altogether convinced because the material object hasn't got the same organisation as the human physical body.

Subhuti: It's not conscious.

S: It's not conscious. Well he might argue that the human body itself is not in itself conscious, but that raises the very abstruse question of the connection between body and mind, to put it crudely.

Ratnaketu: What about the worship of relics of the Buddha and things like that, like that story about some lady who worshipped a dog's tooth believing it to be the Buddha's tooth. That actually did her.....

S: Well the moral of that is pretty clear, isn't it. There's no problem there.

Ratnaketu: Yes, because she believed in it.

S: The power of faith, yes, but supposing you get a genuine Buddha relic. Is there some trace in some sense of the Buddha clinging to that piece of bone or whatever, or old begging bowl? It's a very widely spread and held belief isn't it? Is there anything in it?

Ratnaketu: From what the Buddha said just before he died it seems not, because didn't he say don't worry about the body, leave that for the lay people to sort out.

S: Yes, but he didn't say that nobody should bother about it, you see. The bhikkhus had better things to do. But he didn't say that nobody should bother themselves about these things. But the question still is - I think it is much the same as I said with regards to food - it could be that some vibration or whatever, some positive influence clings to a fragment of bone - it's not impossible - but nonetheless it cannot exercise a determining influence in one's spiritual life. At best it can make one feel a bit better, a bit happier, a bit more positive, but the decisive factor is still your own individual will and determination. It can just be a somewhat conducive factor or another conducive factor and no doubt faith plays a very great part too and devotion, as is illustrated by the story of the woman who worshipped the dog's tooth. So how much is due to your faith, how much is due to the objective quality of that relic is very difficult to say.

Ratnaketu: Perhaps in places like Tibet where it seems that people there weren't so much interested in, like the West, scientific finding out what was actually what.

S: Yes, right.

Ratnaketu: ...but if they sort of believed that food blessed by a guru would actually benefit them spiritually, well that was all right for them simply because of the faith that they had in it and they didn't need to find out.

S: Yes, right. Because we do know, it's a well known fact that doctors often give what are called placebos, which contain nothing, but actually they do the patient good. It works. So, no doubt the subjective element of faith plays a very big part but one cannot dogmatically rule out some objective element or influence also, in the case of a relic or something blessed but one cannot attribute to that a decisive role even to the slightest extent in the spiritual life - not from a strictly Buddhist point of view.

Siddhiratna: So what did you say - if the transcendental could have an effect on the material object it wouldn't have any determining effect, that it would have....

S: No, I'm not saying that a transcendental object can actually be located in a physical object, no, but it could be that a guru, by concentrating his thoughts on a material object could somehow imbue that material object with what we might call positive vibrations. I quite recognise this as

a possibility. It is also possible that you could bring yourself into physical contact with that object so imbued and that something of those positive vibrations could be transmitted to you. I think this is quite possible. But they would only be transmitted to you in much the same way that you are strengthened by the food that you eat and drink. Yes?

[End of Side one Side two]

S: I think I mentioned I had an experience myself with someone allegedly transmitting energy to me - have you heard about that, in Calcutta some years ago? There was a visitor to the *Mahabodhi Society* once when I was there who was asking all sorts of awkward questions about Buddhism, so the bhikkhus asked me if I would meet him - he was an American - and talk to him. This must have been in the fifties. So I was waiting for him in the sitting room and he sort of came marching in and as soon as he saw me, as soon as he set eyes on me, he said 'Ah! You're not in very good health, you're weak! I shall give you energy!' and he seized hold of my arm, sort of closed his eyes and I actually felt energy flowing into me, but it was a very coarse, gross, muddy energy and I felt exactly as though dirty dish water had been pumped into my system. This was exactly how I felt. It was dirty dish water, very low grade, very very sullied energy, and it took me three weeks to get it out of my system. I was caught by surprise and so he was pumping this into me for several minutes. He was a healer, he told me afterwards.

So I'm quite sure, and other people have had this experience, that the energy can be transmitted from one human organism to another, from one human being to another, from one human body to another and therefore I'm quite prepared to believe that it can be transmitted not directly but also via a particular material object. But I don't think that any more can happen than that you are given a sort of access of energy of some kind or other. In the case of that man it was low grade energy - I'm quite prepared to believe that a guru or spiritually developed person can transmit more refined energy to you, perhaps he can even transmit it via a material object; that he can focus his thoughts on, say, an amulet, bless it, that it can be sent to you, you can wear it and that will give you perhaps, let us say, something of the energy that was put into it.

But the decisive factor - what you do with that energy, how you utilise it, is still your own will. In a manner of speaking. But we know that from our interaction with individual human beings, that energy can be transmitted. That some people do have healing powers and also we know that even in our ordinary communication with people, some people seem to drain you for no apparent reason while others invigorate you, you derive energy from them. So it seems that it's the same sort of thing in a more casual, undirected sort of form.

So if a guru is capable of concentrated thought and concentrates his thoughts on a particular material object, well, it's not impossible that through that object he can transmit some thing, whatever you like to call it, to a disciple or to a devotee. So similarly perhaps with food, but it becomes a bit indirect. Suppose for instance a Buddha image is let us say consecrated, to use that word, by a guru. It becomes imbued with some sort of energy let's say. So then food is offered by you to that image. So does some energy go from that image to the food then so that when you eat the food you also ingest that energy - could you go so far as that? It all gets a bit complicated doesn't it?

Or again it could be that by worshipping an image you put your own energy into it. I had some experiences of that sort with friends of mine. I told you before about a friend of mine in Bombay who had a little green Buddha-image on her window sill. It used to emit light and she also saw this happening a number of times but thought it might be an hallucination. So, without telling me anything about this, she sat me down in a

chair one evening when I visited her, a few yards away from this image and just told me to look at it and tell her what I saw, and I saw around the image first of all there was a green sort of phosphorescent outline and it gradually expanded until it filled the whole room with this brilliant green light. And then I told her and she said, "yes, yes that's what I see - the servants have also seen it" and the servants were Goanese Christians. They thought it was something to do with the devil, they were quite afraid. There you are. So who was the previous owner of that image we don't know but it could have been the property of someone who either concentrated on it for meditation or made many offerings over a period of years or whatever.

Ratnaketu: You find the same thing with shrine rooms that have been used for a long time.

S: Yes. There is an atmosphere. There is an atmosphere in churches sometimes, old churches. So one can't deny a measure of truth to this sort of position. But nonetheless one must again insist on the fundamental Buddhist principle that it's just like energy placed at one's disposal. It is not, one's own spiritual work done for one.

Siddhiratna: How does that affect - I think it's in the "*Essence of Zen*" they give it - "direct transmission of scripture over and above the written word" - I think that's it isn't it?

S: "No dependence on words and letters. A direct transmission outside the scriptures."

Siddhiratna: Yes, would that be direct transmission of vipassana insight?

S: I don't think one can speak of anything being transmitted in the literal sense. It is someone helping to set up the conditions for your own realisation.

Siddhiratna: So it sort of comes onto the discussion...

S: Yes, for instance if two people are communicating very intensely then one person says something then the other says something and each time there is an exchange of that sort it increases in intensity. Well let us suppose for the sake of argument one of those persons has already got Insight, the other hasn't. Well as a result of that exchange in which they both take part sooner or later the other person will have his Insight sparked off but he has also contributed to the overall process. It is not that he just sort of sits back and the other person just gives him the Insight like that. We mustn't think in those terms. The Insight is the product of the intensity of that interaction which is sometimes so intense that you can hardly say where one person's contribution begins and the other's ends. There is almost a sort of fusion, a sort of experience of non-duality, you could say, between them. In that experience you could say the Insight arises, but not that one gives it to the other, one being active and the other passive.

Siddhiratna: I've often wondered if that wasn't what telepathy would be a bit like because there's a sort of communication there, whether you wouldn't be able to tell that you were communicating or whether you've been communicated to.

S: Yes, sometimes you don't know unless you compare times when each of you started thinking about something, then you might discover that one person started thinking about it a few minutes before the other and then you can assume that the person who started thinking about it first transmitted the thought to the person who started thinking about it later.

It depends on the degree of sensitivity, contact between them - sometimes it's virtually instantaneous. It's very difficult to tell who really started it because it all could be within a few seconds.

Well that covers quite a bit of ground doesn't it. So, 'Rechungpa, you should also practice in this way. Get up Megong, it is time to make some broth!' So, bomp!, we come back to earth. Do you think Milarepa is doing that deliberately or is it just time for breakfast?

_____: Is that the fourth activity.

S: It could be, there are four activities; yes you could say that.

Ratnaketu: It's interesting that the three activities, or the three main ones are sleeping, eating and walking - practising with those.

S: Yes, you could reckon food and drink separately to make up the four but on the other hand you could....

_____: It could also be listening.

S: ...for instance it says, 'Rechungpa you should also practise in this way', This does suggest that the four practices are complete in those three verses, in which case presumably food and drink are reckoned separately, but on the other hand with Milarepa you never know. You can never be sure. Maybe it's sort of 'Get up Megong, it is time to make some broth!' - well doing everything at the right time - that's also a practice. You could look at it like that. Are there any other important activities that you could speak of in these terms? I mean sleeping is mentioned, food and drink, eating and drinking and walking. Anything else that you often do?

_____: Work!

S: Work. Ah, mustn't forget work! (laughter). However, maybe Milarepa does mention that, 'Get up Megong, it is time to make some broth!', well that's his work, that's his job, preparing breakfast. So, work. So how could one work in this sort of way, how could one work and also practice? Well that's quite simple isn't it.

Ratnaketu: You're working from the Ideal....

S: I thought you were saying working morning, noon and night! But they all say that. No, working by way of right livelihood, yes. That is

working and practising, if what you are doing is right livelihood, and also sometimes you could recite a mantra too etc. But certainly, working in accordance with right livelihood.

Ratnaketu: I was thinking about this before, that if you could really do that - make your work your practice, doing it for hours, make great advances.

S: All right, any other activities you could also practise in - sitting, just sitting quietly; running, those who do run or jog; some people say driving the car. Apart from just being mindful is there anything else that one could do? Feel that you're driving the chariot of the Dharma or that you're Going Forth just like the Buddha on his horse. Buddha if he'd been a modern Buddha, he would have left home by car presumably and then just ditched his car instead of just leaving his horse. (Laughter)

I'm sure there have been people who have driven forth from home and ditched their car and just gone along to the nearest centre or community. But the principle is clear, that you must never totally forget the Dharma. It really means that you mustn't divide your time or your life into periods when you practise and periods not just when you don't practise but when you've earned the right not to practise.

In one form or another your life should be a continuous practice. So that means you must either transform what you are doing into a practice or associate it with a practice or if that isn't possible you just have to give it up completely. If it can't be transformed, it must be discarded.

The Vajrayana in some respects holds the view that in the long run everything can be transformed. It doesn't believe that anything in the long run needs to be given up. The Hinayana takes more the view, the Theravada takes more the view, that there's quite a lot of things in life that definitely just have to be given up. The Mahayana takes the view to a lesser extent. The Mahayana will say, well there are quite a lot of things that you have to give up if you were thinking just of your own individual salvation but they are things which could be useful to you if you want to help other living beings, so don't discard them.

But the Vajrayana will say that there's nothing that absolutely needs to be given up, everything can be transformed. Even killing - they would go to that extreme but that is an extreme as can be practised even according to the Vajrayana, only by really Enlightened gurus. Therefore, you see, the Vajrayana will say you don't have to give up meat. All right, you eat meat, allow the sheep to be killed but you must be able to see the consciousness of the sheep and direct it to a higher realm. A tantric guru or tantric master has got that ability, they believe. So he is justified in eating the meat. He is not doing the sheep any harm by eating it, he is directing its consciousness to a higher level after death. He has that ability. How literally one takes that is another matter. Even if one takes it literally whether any given guru is able to do that actually in real fact as distinct from just saying it, that's quite a different matter.

So you can see that the Vajrayana can be quite dangerous territory for anybody to get into before they are ready, but luckily we are told by the main tradition that you have to really traverse the Hinayana first, and then the Mahayana, - and only then you can enter upon the Vajrayana. If you just rush straight into the Vajrayana, well you can see there are endless possibilities of confusion and rationalisation and all the rest of it.

Ratnaketu: Yes, you hear some people talking about it's all right to eat meat because Tibetan lamas eat meat.

S: Yes, but as Mahayanists they do not believe in eating meat. But as Vajrayanists they profess to have the ability to direct the consciousness of the slaughtered animal to a more beneficial rebirth.

Subhuti: There's quite a lot of that in Padmasambhava's biography.

S: Yes, well it could be that in the case of Padmasambhava it could be taken quite literally that he actually did that. On the other hand perhaps one can take it symbolically, that it is all the energies within oneself, energies which may be symbolised by animals of various kinds, are to be transformed, are to be transmuted. One can take it in that sense, that it's a drama that takes place within oneself.

Ray: Could you take that literally in one's own life, that it's best to give things up first, and then after you've thought.....

S: I think the normal procedure is that you have to give up to some extent, even quite a few things, quite a lot. You can use things in a sort of Mahayanistic spirit, genuinely for one's own good and the good of others only if you've really prepared the ground by giving those things up. The possibilities of rationalisation and self deception are endless. One has to be very, very careful. It's easy to say, well I can give it up at any time but the fact is can you? One has to be quite honest with oneself. I mean, be able to distinguish whether you are just indulging in something but you are not able to give it up yet, and when you are actually using it skilfully for a particular purpose, and not mix these two.

Anyway, any further point arisen from today's song? [Pause]

I think a good example of the sort of thing we've just been talking about is alcohol. It's something which some people need to give up and which other people can actually use. Do you know what I mean? If alcohol is just too much for you and you just can't restrain yourself or restrict yourself, well you should give it up completely. But it is, at least occasionally, possible to use alcohol in a positive way, at least to use a little of it. I don't say to cheer yourself up when you're feeling down - that is quite unfortunate, but I can remember occasions in the past, and I think Siddhiratna can too, when a little alcohol did actually help the situation.

I remember some very strained situations up at Muswell Hill, when I was living there some years ago and I used to sort of try to get to know people by inviting them up for a meal and sometimes there'd be four or five people and myself - Siddhiratna was living at the same place - maybe Kevin and two or three visitors and sometimes the situation was so sort of constrained and people not daring to say anything and all that that I'd just sort of take Siddhiratna aside and say, 'Just go down the road and get a bottle of something', so he'd scuttle off down the road only too happily [much laughter] and come back with a single bottle of usually red wine....

Siddhiratna: Hirondelle! [Laughter]

S: Yes, and after just a small quantity, it was quite amazing, the way that people opened up. I don't say that they really opened up but at least

some social constraints were relaxed and at least they were able to communicate a bit freely. So a few times we had actually to do that sort of thing. I don't think it's necessary any longer because communication now flows so freely that one just doesn't need these little helps. But I just quote the example to show that something like alcohol can have a positive role within certain definite limits. Please don't use this as a rationalisation. Please don't go away saying, 'Oh, Bhante says getting drunk occasionally is OK!' (Laughter). This is the sort of thing that happens.

But you could say that the Theravada approach to alcohol would be 'Alcohol is out - you should never take alcohol under any circumstances'; the Mahayana approach is, that, well, if a little alcohol helps communication between human beings, all right, that is quite justified; the Vajrayana approach would be that you should imbibe a little alcohol reflecting that in so doing you are imbibing the nectar of the truth itself. Do you see what I mean? These are different attitudes and this example illustrates the typical, the characteristic, attitudes of these three Yanas on their different levels with regard to all sorts of things. [Pause]

Ratnaketu: It seems to have, the attitude of the Vajrayana, apart from great development, great faith, that's all and you couldn't really do it from a scientific.....

S: But it's really more than faith. It's more than faith. Faith suggests in a way an element if not of blindness, of not knowing, but in the case of the Vajrayana, if you've reached the Vajrayana at all you're deeply imbued with knowledge and awareness and wisdom. You've got the realisation of sunyata behind you when you enter the Vajrayana. So you have first of all - well if you take some wine you must think that this wine is void, it's Sunyata. If you don't actually experience that, you've no right to drink it!

Siddhiratna: So why do you have to think that? Why is it necessary to think that the wine is imbued with Sunyata?

S: Because why are you doing it? In the example I gave you drink the wine reflecting that in drinking the wine you are in fact imbibing the nectar of, let's say, Enlightenment. But actually wine is wine and Enlightenment is Enlightenment. The two are different things.

Siddhiratna: I can understand the Hinayana view...

S: Ah, But from the Mahayana point of view wine is Sunyata. The Amrita is Sunyata, therefore it's Sunyata. So you can legitimately take the one as being the other if you realise their voidness. So that means you've got to have a realisation of the voidness to begin with that you get, so to speak, from the Mahayana or from your practice of the Mahayana. So experiencing the voidness of the alcohol and experiencing the voidness of the Amrita you can take the two as being one or at least not two, so that when you partake of the wine, inasmuch as you experience it as Sunyata you are partaking of the other because that you experience as Sunyata too. So that is the precondition. It's not a question of just taking the alcohol and labelling it as Amrita, it is actually realising that it is Amrita because of your realisation of the Sunyata of both those elements.

So you cannot do that unless you've had an experience of Sunyata to begin with on which you build - that is your basis. So if you realise that two things are equally Sunyata, one can be transformed into the other or one can, in a manner of speaking, take the place of the other. You are

sort of pouring Sunyata into Sunyata - Sunyata is drinking Sunyata. But it's not just a question of just taking your usual nightcap and just calling it Amrita, which of course it what happens. (If you live with) Tantric lamas, Tantric gurus, Tantric followers, they drink - they just say a mantra first - that's all it's become.

But in theory the mantra first of all purifies the liquor, then it renders it void and then it universalises it - but that's not so easy. So for practical purposes we shall stick to the Hinayana and Mahayana approaches - that if you find that drinking alcohol has an unskilful effect on you, well give it up. On the other hand, if under certain circumstances you find that alcohol just helps to lower a few barriers, well its use is justified. Of course, that's not the end of the matter, that just gives the opportunity of establishing communication. Alcohol just temporarily removes certain barriers to communication, so you just take advantage of that opening and try to establish something more genuine and more permanent. Just drinking together mustn't become a substitute for real communication.

Siddhiratna: Just sort of bulldozing them out of the way.

S: Yes, indeed. Anyway let's leave it there. It's nearly time for our non-alcoholic supper!

[End of Tape 2 and Day 1]

S: All right on to page 585, would someone like to read Rechung's little song if you could call it that? Read again those two prose lines so that we get the context. Who's next to read?

In asking the Jetsun's permission to leave, Rechungpa gave many reasons for going to Weu. At the end of his petition he sang:

*To visit different places
And journey to various lands
To circumambulate holy Lhasa
See the two divine faces of Jo Shag
Visit the saintly Samye Temple
Circle round the Yuru Kradrag
Visit the seat of Marngo
"Sightsee" at Nyal and Loro
And beg for alms
I must go to Weu.*

S: So, 'In asking the Jetsun's permission to leave Rechungpa gave many reasons for going to Weu.'

Do you notice that when people want to do something, if they really want to do it and they have a definite reason, they just give you one reason.

But if they are not very sure or very clear or if they are rationalising perhaps, they give you many reasons.

Oh I'm sorry I can't come tomorrow, My wife isn't feeling well. I've got to take the children to school, and also I have to finish writing an article." They pile up the reasons, and then the more reasons they give you for not coming tomorrow, the more suspicious you get. If there is just one reason it sounds more convincing, have you ever noticed that? So it's as though Rechungpa is not giving his real reason, he is giving so many reasons you get a bit suspicious.

He says 'To visit different places and journey to various lands To circumambulate Holy Lhasa, See the two divine faces of Jo Shag' - the note says *The Holy images to which many Tibetans make pilgrimages*. 'Visit the saintly Samye Temple, Circle round the Yuru Kradrag, Visit the seat of Marngo, "Sightsee" at Nyal and Loro, And to beg for alms I must go to Weu!'

Some of the places he's going to apparently to see, aren't even in Weu. [Laughter] They are either on the way or a bit out of the way, but he's giving all these reasons why he must go to Weu.

'To circumambulate Holy Lhasa'. You know that Lhasa is of course the capital of Tibet, and it was a practice, I think still is a practice for pious Tibetans on pilgrimage to circumambulate the whole city. Some of them walk round the whole city which isn't of course very large, it's probably smaller than Norwich, three times. Others prostrate themselves all the way as they circumambulate. They circumambulate by making prostrations. Some Tibetans of course prostrate all the way from Lhasa to Buddhagaya which is a distance of several hundred miles. This is a sort of standard practice.

Samye Temple is the first Buddhist Monastery-cum-Temple complex established in Tibet, established in the ninth century. You may remember that it was in connection with the establishment of Samye that Padmasambhava was invited to Tibet. So Rechungpa wants to go sightseeing, on pilgrimage, begging for alms etc., circumambulating, to all these places. The sum substance of it was he must go to Weu.

So what does Milarepa say? Would someone like to read the prose lines and then the whole of Milarepa's song?

Milarepa replied. "My son although you will have disciples in Weu the time has not yet come for you to go there. Please do not go against your Guru's injunctions but listen to this song.

*Born for the Supreme and Skilful Path of Secret Words,
He is the Jetsun Buddha disguised in human form,
Possessing the divine Four Bodies,
The embodiment of Bliss Four.
To Him, the great Marpa,
I pay sincerest homage.*

*On this early morning
Of the auspicious eighth ,
The dawning sun, like a crystal ball of fire,
Radiates it's warm and brilliant beams.
I, the Yogi, feel very well and happy.*

*Son Rechungpa, as people have well said,
You are the spear-holder
Of a hundred soldiers.
Please, do not talk like this,
But control your mind.
Try to cleanse it as a mirror bright,
And lend your ear to this old man.*

*When you live in a quiet hermitage,
Why think about staying in other lands?
Since you meditate on your Buddha Guru,
Why need you circle Lhasa?
While you watch your mind at play,
What need you see Samye Temple?
If you have annihilated doubts within,
Why need you visit Marngo?
Since you practice The Whispered Lineage teaching,
Why need you sightsee at Loro and Nyal?
If you observe with penetration your Self-mind,
Why need you circumambulate the Kradrag?*

S: So Milarepa replied, "my son, although you will have disciples in Weu, the time has not yet come for you to go there."

Milarepa is saying that he is not against Rechungpa going to Weu eventually. He foresees in fact that Rechungpa will have disciples in Weu. But he thinks that it is not yet time for Rechungpa to go there. So he says Please do not go against your Guru;s injunctions, but listen to this song.

And he begins his song with an invocation to Marpa, who of course is his own Guru.

He says 'Born for the Supreme and skilful Path of Secret Words,

He is the Jetsun Buddha disguised in human form, possessing the divine four bodies, the embodiment or Bliss Four, To Him the great Marpa, I pay sincerest homage.'

You know what the divine four Bodies are? We mentioned three of them I think yesterday. There's the Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Dharmakaya and very often a fourth body is added called the Svabhavakakaya, meaning the self originated body. This is usually said to be or to represent the unity of the other three.

So to say that Marpa possesses the Divine Four Bodies is equivalent to saying that he is fully enlightened, that he is a Buddha. He is also the embodiment of the Four Bliss, the Four Anandas. In the Vajrayana you find many sets of four, sets of five correlated with the five Buddhas, but also many sets of four. In fact there was a Tantric phrase which says everything goes by fours, so you get four bodies, four blisses and so on, these are all correlated; four awarenesses, four elements, four mudras, and so on, four initiations.

Anandajyoti: What are the Four Bliss Bhante?

S: I don't remember what the terms for these four are but they represent different degrees or perhaps better, different aspects of bliss. There is Ananda, there is Paramananda for instance, and two others which I forget. This is a purely Tantric term. The terminology of the four blisses is distinctively Tantric, but it represents the fact that from the Tantric point of view, the element of bliss is not excluded. This is why for instance you get enlightenment itself spoken of in terms of Maha Sukha, Sukha is also translated as bliss, though the word which is used in connection with the Four Bliss is not Sukha but Ananda.

So, To Him, the great Marpa, I Pay sincerest homage.

The other words Milarepa is invoking Marpa and saying in effect of him that he is enlightened, that he is a Buddha. He says, 'He is the Jetsun Buddha disguised in human form.'

One shouldn't I think take this word 'disguised' too literally. Putting it in traditional terms, Milarepa is saying as it were, ordinary people only see the Nirmanakaya they don't see the Sambhogakaya, they don't see the Dharmakaya, they don't see the Svabhavakakaya. To them Marpa appears as an ordinary human being, but actually he is a Buddha disguised in human form. But as I said you mustn't take this word 'disguise' too literally.

Anyway Milarepa begins by saluting Marpa as he does at the beginning of every song although on this occasion he does it in a more than usually elaborate way.

So, 'On this early morning Of the auspicious eighth, The dawning sun like a crystal ball of fire, Radiates its warm and brilliant beams. I, the yogi, feel very well and happy.'

That is self explanatory.

'Son Rechungpa, as people have well said, You are the spear holder Of a hundred soldiers.' What do you think that means? The spear holder of a hundred soldiers? It suggests that Rechungpa is in charge, a centurion as it were. Perhaps in ancient Tibetan days the soldier or the officer who was in charge of a hundred soldiers carried a special spear. So, 'You are the spear holder Of a hundred soldiers.' In other words you are a leading disciple, this seems to be what he is saying.

'Please do not talk like this, But control your mind. Try to cleanse it as a mirror bright, And lend your ear to this old man.'

So Milarepa is saying that you are a leading disciple, so you should not talk in that sort of way, talk of going off to Weu. You should control your mind. In other words he is suggesting that Rechungpa's desire to go to Weu is due simply to mental restlessness, mental ebullience, and that instead of giving way to that he should just control his mind and stay where he is.

'Try to cleanse it as a mirror bright, And lend your ear to this old man.' Try to make the mind pure, try to make it just like a bright mirror which just reflects things and doesn't react. At present he is suggesting that Rechungpa's mind is reacting very strongly, he has got this thought of Weu and he very much wants to go off there. So he is advising him to control his mind, to make the mind much more pure, much more bright so it simply reflects so that there are none of these crazy impulses to go dashing off here and there. So lend your ear to this old man, listen to my advice.

'When you live in a quiet hermitage, Why think about staying in other lands?' This reminds me a bit of an ancient Indian story. I forget the details, it's quite a long story but a summary of it might go like this. A certain king wanted to declare war on another king and conquer his lands. So that other king heard about this and wanted to ward off the attack, the invasion. So he sent a wise man to the king who was planning the attack to reason with him.

So he found the king just sitting in a pavilion and enjoying the evening air, so he asked him, "Is it true that you are planning this attack?" So the king said, "Yes" "All Right, but why are you planning it?" "Well, I want to seize your king's lands." "And when you have done that what will you do?" "Then I will march to the capital with all my force and I'll take charge of the capital." "And when you have done that what will you do?" "Then I shall take over the king's palace, and his treasure and his women and all the rest of it!" "And when you have done that what will you do?" He said, "Well I'll have a good meal, have a wonderful feast. " And then what will you do?" "Well I'll just sit down in the pavilion and enjoy the breeze."

And so the wise man says, "But aren't you already doing that already at the moment?" (laughter) What is the the need to go through all that performance, all that travel, to do the thing that you are doing now. Why bother?"

So in that way he convinced him. So this is in a way what Milarepa is saying to Rechungpa. 'When you live in a quiet hermitage, why think about staying in other lands?' We get this with some of our Friends, their quite all right in a certain centre or a certain community in England and they think, "Oh I'll go off somewhere else." They get a bit restless. Oh I think I'll go to India or I think I'll go to America." Well when you get there what will you do?" Oh I will find a Centre or find a Co-op. Well you are in one already!" So it suggests that there is some sort of

restlessness impelling them. So Milarepa is saying to Rechungpa, "Here you are, you are staying in a hermitage, staying in a cave with me. You have got everything that you need for your spiritual development, why do you want to go off visiting other countries, other lands?"

'Since you meditate on your Buddha Guru, Why need you circle Lhasa?' The external circumambulation is all right as a preliminary practice, but you are meditating, you have the opportunity to meditate on your Buddha Guru in your cave, in your hermitage; that is a much more important practice. Why sacrifice the greater for the lesser?

'While you watch your mind at play, Why need you see Samye Temple?'. It's much more important thaner than visiting any temple or monastery however ancient and historic, much more important than that is just studying the way your own mind works. This you have an opportunity of doing in your hermitage.

'If you have annihilated doubts within, Why need you visit Marngo?' He is suggesting, well don't go off visiting all these far away places, what you really need to do is to get rid of your internal doubts.

'And since you practice the Whispered Lineage teaching', that is to say the teaching of the Kagyupa School, to which Milarepa belonged, 'Why need you "sightsee" at Loro and Nyal? If you observe with penetration your self mind, Why need you circumambulate the Kradrag?'

So if you have understood your own mind, if you've understood your own mind at a deeper level, seen it at a deeper level, what's the need to circumambulate Holy places, Holy mountains and so on? So what do you think that Milarepa is really saying?

Ratnaketu: That the external things are all right, but what you actually have to do is work on yourself.

S: Yes, he's also suggesting, one can gather, that Rechungpa has reached a stage in his meditation practice, in his Yoga, where he has begun to experience restlessness. As a result of that he just wants to go off visiting these far away places, he wants to give up his meditation for the time being, give up his Yoga. But he rationalises that by saying that he is going to visit the Holy places, go on pilgrimage. Though that may be so, maybe he is going off to do those things, but the real reason is not devotion - the real reason is restlessness. And he is talking about going off on pilgrimage because presumably that would be more acceptable.

But one could say that even if it is a genuine pilgrimage it is of less value for someone like Rechungpa, who is reasonably well advanced spiritually, than staying where he is in the hermitage and getting on with his meditation practice. So it would seem that Rechungpa is just giving way to restlessness, and Milarepa is trying to counteract that.

You find that happens very often. You have everything that you need just where you are, but you still have all sorts of thoughts and doubts about going off and doing the same thing somewhere else for some reason or other. This is very often due simply to with restlessness. You might even think that you would get on better with your practice in some other place. It's not that the other place has any helpful special features, it's just some other place.

You might think, "Well I could meditate much better if only I could meditate in France or Southern Italy." And, "I'd really love working in a Co-op if only it were in Canada." [Laughter]

You might think that taking classes in London is really dull and boring, but "If I could only take them in New Zealand it would be really stimulating." That applies to the non New Zealanders of course.

So do you think that this is a common kind of feature, this kind of restlessness that Rechungpa is showing?

Ratnaketu: I even find that sometimes when I am meditating I am doing the Metta Bhavana and I think that I should really be doing the mindfulness, or the other way around. [Laughter] Just wanting to change.

S: It seems that Rechungpa is subject to these irrational impulses, and he just seemed to be quite a divided sort of character, spiritually very gifted in many ways but not very integrated, not yet anyway.

All right let's go on. Would someone like to read the next line of prose and then Milarepa's song?

But Rechungpa kept on pressing his request. Whereupon the Jetsun sang:

*It is good for you, the white lion on the mountain,
To stay high and never go deep into the valley,
Lest your beautiful mane be sullied!
To keep it in good order,
You should remain in the highest snow mountain.
Rechungpa harken to my words today!*

*It is good for you the great
Eagle on high rocks to perch,
And never fall into a pit,
Lest your mighty wings be damaged!
To keep them in good order,
You should remain in the high hills.
Rechungpa, harken to my Guru's words.*

*It is good for you the jungle tiger,
To stay in the deep forest;
If you rove about the plain*

*You will lose your dignity.
To keep your splendour in perfection,
In the forest you should remain.
Rechungpa harken to your Guru's words.*

*It is good for you, the golden eyed
Fish to swim in the central sea;
If you swim too close to shore,
You will in a net be caught,
You should remain in the deep waters.
Rechungpa, harken to your Guru's words.*

*It is good Rechungdordra of Gung Tang,
For you to stay in hermitages;
If you wander in different places,
Your experience and realisation will dim.
To protect and cultivate devotion
You should remain in the mountains.
Rechungpa, harken to your Guru's words!*

S: So in this song Milarepa is saying the same thing or making the same point over and over again with the help of various illustrations. One does get the same sort of illustration in the Pali scriptures themselves where the Buddha speaks about the monkeys who live up in the mountains in the trees and who don't get caught, but who get caught in traps if they venture further down the mountain side to where human beings live.

In the same way if monks stray away from their meditation etc. they get trapped and caught by Mara, there is a passage to this effect in the Pall Canon. So you could regard Milarepa's verses as being a kind of variation upon this theme, or a series of variations on this theme.

He says, "The white Lion of the mountain should stick to the mountains, never go down to the valley, otherwise his beautiful mane might be sullied." In the same way the Eagle should keep to the rocks, the higher rocks, and shouldn't perch lower down, he might be caught. The tiger should stay deep in the forest, the fish must stay in the middle of the sea. And in the same way Rechungpa himself should stay in hermitage and not go wandering about.

So to what extent is this true, or for whom is this true?
Does it mean that one must stay in hermitage indefinitely?
What is meant by a hermitage, what is meant by wandering?

Johnny: You should stay there until you are strong enough to withstand those sort of pressures

S: Yes it is rather like the retreat situation. Because our minds are affected in a certain way by the things with which we come into contact, we also think our minds are affected adversely we create or we set up or we go to a situation which is more favourable, conditions under which we can more easily practice and we should stay in those conditions until such time as we no longer need them.

So Milarepa is in effect saying to Rechungpa that he is not ready yet he is not fit yet to go wandering. His mind, his meditation, his experience in realisation will definitely be affected for the worse if he goes off as he wishes to Weu. Therefore he is advised to stay in the hermitage.

But what about working in the world and all that. How do you find it in this respect?

John: You do notice it.

S: You are not living in hermitages so how do you manage, how do you make do as it were?

Anandajyoti: Communities.

S: Communities, yes a community is a sort of hermitage isn't it in the midst of the samsara. It's an area, a space, to which you can withdraw where conditions are more favourable. If you didn't have that things would be very difficult indeed. Like a little oasis or a little light house, or a raft in the middle of the sea that you can just scramble on and stay there for a while.

But the basic principle involved seems to be that a recognition of one's own in a sense, weakness and the extent to which you are dependent upon external conditions, a recognition of the extent to which you are affected by external conditions. Therefore you need to create for yourself the best possible external conditions. You cannot dispense with those. You should not dispense with them until you are strong enough, really strong enough to do without them.

So it's not that Milarepa has fixed ideas about people staying in hermitages, he sees quite clearly that Rechungpa needs to spend longer in the hermitage. He needs to strengthen his experience and realisation. He will be adversely affected if at this stage he goes roaming off to Weu, even though ostensibly his purpose is the noble one of going off on pilgrimage. [Pause]

Anandajyoti: I think there is a passage in an earlier song of Milarepa where he is asked by some disciples to go into the villages to teach. I think he uses the same illustrations and the same animals and also says a very similar thing. He himself, should not go down into the villages, he should stay and meditate.

S: Well it isn't that in his case there would be any loss as regards his experience and realisation if he goes down into the villages, but he wants in

a way to set a good example because if it's known that the great Yogi Milarepa has now settled in the village and is spending a lot of his time there, well it could be that all the other Yogis who need really to be getting on with their meditation would think, "Ah well it must be all right to live in the village, Milarepa is doing it.", not realising that Milarepa has attained a level very different from theirs. One has to see where oneself is at. Some people can manage so to speak, living in the city, living in a community and working in a co-op, but others need to get away altogether, need to go off to a place like Tyn-y-Ddol where they don't even have contact with a Centre. Because at the Centre even through the Centre you come into contact with People from outside. Even though they have been drawn by their interest in Buddhism or meditation, still they bring along many worldly influences and attitudes with them. If you're not careful that cannot but affect you.

We had an example of this on the last mixed retreat, so I heard, that some Order Members went along with the best of intentions to help run the retreat and take the classes but unfortunately I think more than one happened to fall in love in the course of the retreat, which wasn't at all the idea. It wasn't my idea anyway [Laughter] that they should do such a thing.

So they were exposed to that kind of mixed situation prematurely, perhaps one needs to consider who, even among Order Members, should go on these mixed retreats and take the classes and lead the meditations. In a way you put yourself in a very exposed position, especially if you are a young male Order Member and there are lots of unattached women on the retreat and there you are sitting up in front leading things and glowing with the splendour of your meditation. They can find this very attractive and start casting very un-Dharmic glances in your direction [Laughter] and you cannot help but register that and you start responding.

So a situation to which you went in a sense with the best of intentions, doesn't work to your advantage. It may lead to your getting entangled and even entrapped in a quite negative sort of way. So one has to see whether one is able to venture into these situations, or whether one had better stay clear of them. One needs to be able to estimate one's own strength, estimate where one is really at and not expose yourself to situations that you can't really cope with. One has to be quite honest with oneself.

Subhuti: There is a kind of equal and opposite danger isn't there which is a kind of complacent lingering in the hermitage?

S: We haven't come up against that I think yet in the Friends. [Laughter] We have only got one little hermitage anyway!

Subhuti: I was thinking of just a lack of outward-goingness in the positive sense.

S: Well I don't know if that would be really a problem, because I think if you had reached this stage of being genuinely immune to outside influences, that would represent quite a high level of development and would involve, I think, a concern for other people anyway. You wouldn't be really immune unless you had developed some degree of insight and that insight would be inseparable presumably from some feeling of compassion for others. That would motivate you to go out and do what you could to help.

Ray Bisson: Is it possible though that say in this example of Rechungpa going to Weu, that by the experience of the visit he might from his own experience realise that there was no good reason for going there in the first place. It might have strengthened him in his resolve when he got

back?

S: It might, but on the other hand there is the possibility of being overwhelmed completely and never getting back, there is that possibility too. Of course Rechungpa has his own arguments in favour of his going to Weu as we shall see in a minute, he has no lack of such arguments.

But there is a kind of trend of thought of which I am quite suspicious, that, well it would be better to go through with it. It's a stage, as though it's necessary for your spiritual life or even helpful, or even an actual stage of spiritual development.

For instance to go back to the example I gave, some people might turn around and say, "Well, even if young Order Members do go on mixed retreats and do fall in love, well that's a stage in their development it's all part of their experience." But I think that is not in fact so, that it is a deviation from the path rather than a stage of the path. I think there is very much this tendency nowadays, under the influence of some forms of therapy, to regard every mistake as a stage of development. As if to say, "You can't make a mistake it is not possible to make a mistake, everything is a stage." Even if you spend for instance say taking drugs and getting into an awful state, really horrific, with dozens and hundreds of bad trips, well, that's all a stage in your development, it's good that you went through it! So there seems to be an inability to face up to the fact that you can waste your time, that you can regress, that you can diverge from the path. It is as though people are unwilling to face up to this fact, to this possibility, they want to make everything into a stage and so in that way they want to justify everything.

Because if everything is a stage then it doesn't matter what you do or what you go through, it is going to help you anyway in the long run, it's a stage in your development. At least it adds to your experience. I think this is one of the big micchaditthis of our day especially in these therapeutic circles.

Subhuti: Rechungpa's done quite a lot of wandering.

S: Yes it's not as though he hadn't done it before. It's as though people think of all these things as stages of development, but that the last thing that they think of as a stage of development is the stages that they actually ought to be going through, in connection with their meditation and so on.

There is also a kind of allied micchaditthi which is in practical matters I've found, people refusing to face up to the fact of failure. I'll give you a practical example. There have been several such instances recently in the Friends. For instance somebody wants to raise, let's say for the sake of argument, five hundred pounds to send to India, to send to Pune. So they launch a project to raise this five hundred pounds, but at the end of the project when they cast up their accounts they find actually that they haven't made any money at all. In fact they have incurred a debt or their Centre has incurred a debt of a hundred pounds. But when they give the report of this, this is hardly mentioned; that the people working together in the project had a wonderful time, it was a very positive experience, they learned a lot from it, they were very happy that they did it, it was a milestone in their progress etc., etc. The fact that the original objective of raising the five hundred pounds for India had not been fulfilled is just glossed over. That is hardly mentioned and that might come in at the end, "But we didn't do quite so well as we expected, but never mind it was thoroughly worthwhile, and we are glad we did it."

So this is not facing up to the fact that in fact, you failed, you did not do what we set out to do. So the tendency seems to be to try to make everything into a pseudo positive experience or event and not to face up to the fact of failure. It's as though you don't want to ever admit the fact of failure, you can't face the fact of failure. You want to pretend that everything was successful. So it's much the same way in the pseudotherapy which I've been speaking about. You don't want to face up to the fact that you wasted your time, you threw away two years of your life, you don't want to recognise that sort of bitter truth. You want to be able to say, "Ah well, it was a stage in my development that's also helped me" etc. etc. With of course no doubt the possibility of doing the whole thing over again too because after all it's an experience, if it's helped you once it might help you again, you won't recognise that you threw away those years, that you wasted your time. It seems as though people sometimes just want to have everything pleasant, not to face up to anything unpleasant, or recognise something as unpleasant, not recognise failure as failure, waste of time as waste of time.

So why do you think this is? It seems to be quite a deep rooted attitude.

Ray Bisson: I think that people are trying to see the positive side of something they feel is not quite positive.

Ratnaketu: They are not trying to rock the boat, trying to keep everything nice. As long as everything is nice, you don't really have to do anything, don't have to look too deeply. As long as you have got make-up on.....

Anandajyoti: Is it a fear of censure by other people?

S: Fear of censure by other people, that too.

Johhny: They don't want to see that they are wrong, so that they have to change.

Anandajyoti: That is very much a kind of group thinking though isn't it? Censure by members of your peer group.

S: Yes for instance in the example I gave. If you just said, "Well we tried to raise five hundred pounds, but I'm sorry to say we just couldn't do it, and instead we incurred a debt of a hundred pounds." Well obviously if you just put it in that bold fashion someone's going to say, well, that was pretty stupid!" [Laughter] "How come that you didn't organise things in a better way, why is it that you failed? Did you not put enough energy into it, didn't you think about it better? What happened, was there some kind of failure in communication?"

You have to face up to all these kinds of questions. But if you say "We had a wonderful time, there was a wonderful positive spirit amongst us, we gained a lot from it and then add at the end, "But we didn't make any money." It's as though the fact that you didn't make any money just doesn't matter. That failure has been so outweighed by all the other positive factors, so you don't have to face up to the fact of why you failed to

do what you set out to do. You don't, unless somebody is particularly sharp, have to explain the reasons for your failure.

Ray Bisson: You seem to be saying that if the objective isn't fulfilled then it is a failure?

S: Oh yes, because that was the objective with which you set out.

Ray Bisson: But just before you were saying that none of these side effects have any value?

S: No, I'm not saying that. They have a value, yes, but you shouldn't inflate that value so as to disguise the fact that as regards your main objective, you have failed. This is what I am saying. Maybe you did have a good time together and maybe there was a positive atmosphere, but that is not to be blown un to such an extent that it disguises your real failure.

_____: So what you are doing then is you are changing your objectives half way through without actually communicating that.

S: Yes, without acknowledging that. So it's just the same with these pseudo stages. Instead of saying, "Well yes, I made a mistake, I made it for such and such a reason. I should be careful in future." You say, "Well it was a stage in my development, it helped in the long run, it was all experience." So you don't have to go into these other things, you don't have to ask yourself why did it happened, why did you allow it to happen.

[End of side one side two]

It also suggests that success is very important to people, it doesn't matter what you succeed at so long as you are successful.

Subhuti: Or seem to be successful, because you are not really successful.

S: Yes, quite.

Ratnaketu: It's one of the things that is asked of a man by a prospective wife, that he is successful. It's one of the most important things.

Ray Bisson: Would you see a right livelihood project in those terms, unless it is successful financially?

S : Well a right livelihood project must be successful in all respects. It must be successful in three principal respects. First of all it must support the person involved in it. It must provide him or her with their actual needs, a means of satisfying those needs. Two, it must provide a positive work situation, a situation conducive to individual development. And three, it must make sufficient profit to not only plough back some into the business itself but to contribute to the Centre to which one is affiliated.

If a co-op is not fulfilling these three objectives adequately it is not completely successful. There has been a tendency in some quarters I know

to consider a co-op successful say if it only fulfils the first two - that are getting, I don't like to say 'wage' but they are getting money, enough money to live on and they are having quite a good time together in the co-op, it's a happy positive situation; and sometimes forgetting that the third objective, that is to say contributing to the support of a Centre, is not being met.

In other ways, you can have any other two or even any one objective fulfilled and not the other two. But all three should be fulfilled. So your co-op is not successful unless all three are being adequately fulfilled. So one should look at co-ops in these kinds of terms. It is quite easy for an emphasis to be placed on one, rather than on all three pretty equally.

So Rechungpa himself seems to be under some kind of delusion as we will probably see in the next song. He seems to think that his journey to Weu is in some ways good or necessary. He is not facing up to the fact that his desire to go is to a great extent a symptom of restlessness. He is not facing up to the fact that what he really needs to do is just to stay put and carry on with his meditation. We might even find him saying that his journey to Weu is a stage in his spiritual development. Who knows?

Anyway let's go on and see what he does have to say.

Dear Guru, if I stay too long with you, I shall become a hindrance rather than a help," countered Rechungpa. "It is also for the sake of furthering my experience and realisation that I want to go to different countries!" And he sang:

*Hear me, my Father Jetsun!
If I, the white lion on the snow
Mountain, do not rise up and act,
How can I glorify my splendid mane?
Rechungpa wants not to remain, but to visit Weu.
I beg your permission to depart today.*

*If I, the great eagle, king of birds,
Do not fly high into the firmament,
How can I magnify my mighty wings?
Rechungpa wants not to remain, but to visit Weu.
I beg my Guru's permission to depart today!*

*If I, the great tiger, the jungle lord,
Do not rove in the-deep forest,
How can I better my grand smile?
Rechungpa wants not to remain, but to visit Weu.
I beg your permission to depart today!*

*If I the fish in the deep ocean,
Swim not to the ocean's edge,
I can never sharpen my golden eyes.
Rechungpa wants not to remain, but to visit Weu.
I beg my Guru's permission to depart today!*

*If I, Rechungdordra of Gung Tang,
Travel not to different countries,
I can ne'er improve my Experience and Realisation.
Rechungpa wants not to remain, but to visit Weu.
I beg your permission to depart today!*

S: So Rechungpa first raises the point, going back to the incidents at the beginning of the chapter, that if he stays too long with Milarepa he will become a hindrance rather than a help, because people seem to be paying more attention to Rechungpa than to Milarepa himself.

But he adds that "it is also for the sake of furthering my experience and realisation that, I want to go to different countries." And he sang. So he uses the same illustrations as Milarepa but he gives them a different sort of twist.

So the point is is there any truth at all in what Rechungpa is saying? Is it possible to further one's experience and realisation by going to different countries, is that possible?

Johnny: Not in the spiritual sense I would have thought, but in the material sense you go out and experience different cultures etc., but in the spiritual sense you should still be meditating and getting on with practice, not wandering away somewhere.

S: But you don't think a stage might come, when your meditation practice is well established, or you are well established in your meditation practice. You don't think a stage might come when you could even enhance your experience and realisation by going out and travelling, visiting different countries meeting people? Do you think that might not ever happen?

Johnny: It might do yes, but I don't think so in this case.

S: No, I'm not saying with regard to Rechungpa's case but in what he says, leaving aside the fact that it's Rechungpa trying to justify himself, is there any truth in what he says at all, say for anybody? Do you think a stage might not come, genuinely come for at least some people, some time, when they could strengthen their experience, their spiritual experience by travelling, by going out?

Glynn: Maybe there is a stage quite early on where you just get raw experience by travelling. If you say, stay in England you never get any

insight at all because life's very tame, very placid, very easy. Whereas if you go to a different land, you get challenged in all kinds of different ways.

S: You can get challenged even if you stay at home. [Laughter]

Ratnaketu: Especially if you have already got contact with the spiritual community. For somebody who is based especially in a place like New Zealand who would never come across anything like that, I imagine it would be an advantage for them to travel. But if you already have contact with the spiritual community.....

S: But what Rechungpa is saying in principle, disregarding his own case, and what I'm asking is; in the case of someone who has say, spent a long time meditating in solitude, in a hermitage. Might not a stage come when he could enhance his spiritual experience, even enhance his meditation experience, by wandering about from place to Place?

Anandajyoti: You mean putting it into action, putting his experience of meditation into actual communication with other people? Like the Buddha wandering around North Eastern India teaching.

S: But what would be the criterion that he was in fact ready? How would one know? Rechungpa apparently doesn't know. Milarepa can see where Rechungpa is really at. He advises him to stay in his hermitage. He thinks it would be detrimental for him to go wandering off. Rechungpa doesn't agree with that. So what is the criterion?

Anandajyoti: Perhaps could it be from the point of view of the person who is going to do it, but it doesn't really matter to them, they are just as happy to stay where they are?

S: There is that too, that there mustn't be this yearning, this hankering to go to Weu in the sense that Rechungpa seems to have. It mustn't be such a fixed thing to go to a particular place. One can look at the whole question in terms of vipassana and samatha, because usually when you are meditating what you experience is samatha, dhyana states, and you don't experience vipassana - that is something that comes along later, and on the basis of your experience of the samatha. So it makes a big difference, your going out, whether you have experienced samatha only or whether you've experienced samatha and vipassana. I would say that if you have experienced only samatha, your samatha experience can be very quickly and very easily disrupted by contact with the world. Even in the case of someone with quite prolonged experience of dhyana states, that can be disrupted and they can generate very unskillful states even within a matter of days. So that doesn't allow for wandering very far.

I would say that if one is thinking in these terms, you can only safely wander to any extent, or expose yourself to what would otherwise have been deleterious conditions, if you have developed some degree of insight. Because you all know how difficult it is to experience dhyana states even under favourable conditions, and dhyana states do depend very much on conditions, they depend on your regularly sitting and meditating. You may not always be able to do that when you are wandering. You may find that you have been talking to people for a long time or you need to sleep or you have to go in search of food. Before you know where you are, you haven't meditated, i.e. you have not experienced dhyana states

for some days. And then you find that not having experienced dhyana states for some days, you start experiencing quite unskilful mental states, which are the antithesis of dhyana states. And then before you know where you are you are, within a week or two, you are right away from your meditation.

But if you have developed insight to any degree that insight by its very nature, is not something that can be lost, not something that can be destroyed. So even in the absence of further samatha experience, the vipassana experience is still there. The insight is still there. That has become a permanent part of your being so to speak, and you cannot therefore, really fall back.

So it's almost as though I'm saying that you shouldn't really wander in the sense of exposing yourself to the full impact of the world, without any external supports in the form of your hermitage, your regular meditation programme, your spiritual community, you shouldn't expose yourself to the world without any of those things unless you are practically a stream entrant, or even a stream entrant. Do you see what I am getting at? So technically speaking Rechungpa is not following the Hinayana Path, he doesn't think in terms of Stream Entry, he is following the Mahayana path. So technically he is thinking in terms of the Bodhisattva stages.

But howsoever one puts it, what it really means is that one shouldn't expose oneself to the full impact of the world unsupported, so to speak, unless one has developed a degree of insight. Whether one thinks of that in the Hinayana way in terms of amounting to Stream Entry or in Mahayana terms of amounting to say at least the arising of the Bodhicitta.

So it means that one shouldn't expose oneself to the world without any external support, especially support from other members of the spiritual community, unless one has had some experience of the transcendental which stays with one.

Apparently Milarepa does not judge that Rechungpa has reached that point. So it does seem in a way the world is a very dangerous place. Unless you have really developed insight you should just flit quickly from one Centre, hop from one Centre, from one spiritual community to another. You cannot afford to spend too long on the road in between. If you are on solitary retreat that is another matter.

But just consider what might happen to you if you went to a foreign country, maybe you have got a job there, maybe married, and for a year or two you didn't have any contact with other members of the spiritual community. You could get very far away from the spiritual life and the spiritual path. We find this happens sometimes even with people who stay almost within a stone's throw of a Centre, if they don't come along for a few weeks, or if supposing they are an Order Member and they miss Order Meetings for a few weeks, they can get very much out of touch to such an extent they feel even reluctant to reestablish the contact and then they get more and more and more out of contact. If you just stay out of contact it's as though automatically, you get more out of contact, you don't have to do anything extra to put yourself more out of contact. By virtue of the fact that you stay out of contact for a longer time, the degree of alienation from the Centre or whatever, increases.

So it's as though the spiritual community in whatsoever form, is like a sort of life-boat. You can't afford to swim too far away from it, you have sort of make short dashes from life-boat to life-boat. One has to be very aware of the extent to which one's mind can be affected, can be influenced by surroundings.

So Rechungpa seems to think that he's got to a point where his experience and realisation will be enhanced by travel. Milarepa doesn't agree with that, he thinks that his experience and realisation will only be diminished, he doesn't think that they are firmly enough established. In 'Hinayana', inverted commas, terms, Milarepa seems to think that Rechungpa has not developed enough insight, hasn't developed insight to the point of Stream Entry.

Glynn: How do You feel about the number of People in London for example who have been talking about how they would like to go to say Florence, because they feel they would be inspired by specifically, the art in the Uffizi and so on, would you consider that to be.....

S: I think that one has to be very careful with one's terminology here. For instance, what does one mean by 'inspired'? Or one could say, even if you do go to Florence, how many hours do you spend in the Uffizi? [Laughter] It's a bit like these Tibetan friends of mine going away for three months pilgrimage to Buddhagaya. You learn subsequently that they spent two days in Buddhagaya and the rest of the time has been spent sampling the delights of Calcutta in one way or another.

So all right supposing someone goes and spends say two weeks in Florence, even if they go to the Uffizi, how many hours do they spend there? Perhaps altogether, well, at an outside estimate, twelve hours? The rest of the time is spent walking the streets, going to Italian restaurants, window shopping, etc., etc., etc., drinking wine in the evenings at Piazzas and so on [Laughter] All right even though they spend say twelve hours in the Uffizi altogether, how long do they actually spend in front of the pictures, really looking at them. How many pictures do they really take in? How many pictures do they find really inspiring? Well actually maybe four or five, but you can go along to the National Gallery right here in London, and here are Italian paintings, some of them at least as good as those which you have in the Uffizi and no doubt no less inspiring.

So why in fact are you going there? You see what I mean? But the more general question probably relates to inspiration in a more ordinary human sense. Especially if you are out of touch with your emotions, if you are emotionally dull well you need to establish contact somehow or another, and the arts can certainly do that. And if you feel that the sunny blue skies of Italy and the art galleries help you well fair enough! But I think that one shouldn't think of it in terms of spiritual development, that is far too grandiose. You are just still struggling to be happy, healthy and human. It's not part of your spiritual development, you really haven't come to that point. One has to be quite honest with yourself. There is no question of slipping back because you haven't got to anywhere to slip back from! [Laughter] So I'm a bit suspicious, I mean it's all right for people who are newly into the Friends, thinking in these sorts of terms, yes perhaps they are emotionally blocked; maybe they do need to establish contact with their emotions and perhaps a visit to a place like Florence would help, I'm not saying that it wouldn't.

But in the case of let's say an Order Member who is into a regular practice of meditation, has got regular contact with the Spiritual community, who has the opportunity of listening to lectures, I don't think he would find anything in the Uffizi even though that is great art in many cases, I don't think he would find anything more inspiring the truth, in the spiritual Buddhist sense than those facilities which he already has, right here at home in England.

Ratnaketu: I remember last year Kulamitra went to Greece and when he came back he gave a slide show, and he said that he'd much rather

have been on retreat, he said it was very nice but he would much rather have gone away on a retreat.

S: I must say I personally have been feeling recently, thinking in terms of Western European culture, because that is what it is a certain sense of restriction. It is very beautiful and, yes, up to a point inspiring, but one can feel very cramped by it. I'm not quite sure what this means or what this represents, and I think one also has to be quite honest about it and not as it were go through the motions of being inspired when one doesn't feel inspired. It's quite easy to say to oneself, "Well, here I am in Florence, well this is the Uffizi, all these wonderful paintings, hundreds of them, I really must be inspired." But really, you don't feel inspired, you find it's pretty dull.

Who are all these figures in these paintings, these old men with beards, and haloes and all these strange expressions, and these fat babies?" [Laughter] Do you really find them all that inspiring? [Laughter] You must be honest with yourself. These scenes of torture, crucifixions and flayings and beheadings, and crucifying upside down. Is this really inspiring?

And then if you go to some other places, some other cities, great dishes piled with bunches of grapes and peaches and plucked chickens and bunches of pheasants hung up, and haunches of venison. Well, they are beautifully painted but do you really find it inspiring? Do you see what I mean? If you are honest with yourself, there's very little actually which you find really inspiring, and it's not necessarily a painting which is well known or even by a celebrated painter.

Sometimes here and there in an art gallery you do find something which is really inspiring, but it's not always the obvious picture. But to get back to what I was saying, considering Western culture which of course is often heavily imbued with Christianity, one does often feel a sense of restriction, one doesn't feel very inspired. One almost feels oppressed by it, and I think we have to be careful not to go back too much. For instance I was thinking in terms of the buildings that we have. There is a sort of tendency, I don't know whether this is a middle class tendency or what ever, but if you are looking for a place in the country, you think in terms of having some old country house, or some old castle, or even some old Abbey, and turn that into a Buddhist Centre. I'm beginning to think that we should get right away from that and create something quite new and even if necessary modern. Otherwise it's as though we are loaded down with a past which from a Buddhist point of view doesn't really have much to do with us and is even sometimes a bit antithetical.

So I say this despite the fact that by nature and even as a boy, I was quite attracted to the old churches and old castles and cathedrals and ruined abbeys and stained glass windows and the rest of it. But just these last few years I begin to feel that probably we ought to get away from all that and look more to the future and try to create something more of our own, not to refurbish things. Do you see what I mean?

So yes, it's all right to look for inspiration to Western culture and painting and music, but I think we have to make sure that we are being genuinely inspired and not simply diverted or entertained in a pleasurable sort of way, genuinely inspired. Also, let's not fool ourselves. Also be selective and not always looking back.

Ratnaketu: Yet at the same time do you feel that we shouldn't just adopt Eastern art?

S: I think that we have to be equally honest about that. You can go and look at hundreds of Buddha images, do you really find any of them inspiring, you must ask yourself that question. Some of them are 'dumpy' looking, some of them are disproportionate, some of them don't have very attractive smiles, they have smirks or grimaces. They are just sort of 'token' 'token' is not the word, they are just sort of stereotype representations of enlightenment in human form.

So one shouldn't just go along with that with one's eyes closed so to speak. One must really look and see what is really there. Is it really a great work of art? Does it communicate the spirit of enlightenment, does it communicate something of compassion? Yes, be inspired by that if it does, but not fool oneself or try and convince oneself that one is inspired and it's wonderful art when really one doesn't feel that at all.

Ratnaketu: Sometimes you feel that you ought to be inspired.

S: Yes, yes.

Ray Bisson: So what you are saying is that one should respond just to one's own experience.

S: Also of course one must cultivate one's own experience, one's sensitivity. In some cases it may be that a very subtle or refined beauty just eludes one, it could be so. But just because it's labelled a Buddha image you shouldn't feel obliged to feel inspired by it. You may not be able to feel inspired. You should be inspired by its actual aesthetic and spiritual qualities, not as it were by association. Do you see what I mean by that?

Johnny: We have got some really awful looking ones in our book-shop at Aryatara actually, really not at all inspiring the rupas.

S: Yes, and where did you get them from?

Johnny: I'm not sure but they really put you off. [Laughter]

S: But then someone might come up and say, "How could you say that!?" That's an image of the Buddha. It's as though you are saying that you are put off by the Buddha, which of course you are not saying. You are just saying that this is an inadequate representation of even what I have understood to be an enlightened human being.

But also it involves, this whole passage seems to involve, being honest with ourselves and knowing where we are at, what our feelings actually are, what our experience actually is, what effects certain things will have on us.

Johnny: You also need to have confidence to go ahead with your own ideas, when you see that something is going to help you.

S: Yes, if you find something does help you and you genuinely find that, then insist that, "This may not be a very traditional way, it may not be

the sort of thing that helps other people, but it does help me, and I just insist on that." One must say so. Maybe you feel really inspired getting up at three o' clock every morning, maybe that is your experience. Some other people may disagree with you, and try and convince you that it's very bad for you, that you feel tired at three o' clock in the morning.

Then you should say, "Well no I don't, that's not my experience, I feel at my brightest at three o' clock in the morning." You stick to it.

Ratnaketu: About this thing of travelling. One of the instances that's likely to occur around the LBC is that people who are supported by the co-operative don't have any money of their own. They feel they want to perhaps go somewhere or buy something in order to become inspired. And it's hard to decide because they then have to ask the co-operative for money or the community for the money. Then you have to decide whether you are going to give them the money or not, whether you are actually being hard by not giving the people money in order to spend it in this way.

S: Well to work in a co-op at all involves at least, or requires at least, a degree of commitment. it isn't easy to work in a co-op. Generally I think it's not nearly as easy as people originally thought it was. I think it has been realised more recently that working in a co-op in the full sense requires quite a high degree of commitment, one might even say practically the same degree of commitment that it requires to be an Order Member, as much as that.

So if one is able to work in a co-op in this sort of way, to be a co-op member in that sort of way, it suggests that you are able to meditate. So if a person in that kind of situation is looking for inspiration, it would seem the obvious place for them to find that inspiration in view of the fact that they are quite committed, would be in some kind of retreat.

So if say a person who is working in a co-op asks to be supported while they go on retreat, well that is very reasonable and even necessary, because they need - everybody who works in a co-op needs - some period on retreat, either solitary retreat or some other kind of retreat. But if people are asking for money to buy records or something of that sort or foreign travel, I think that needs to be much more severely scrutinised, because as in the case of Rechungpa, it may be a distraction.

Rechungpa is rationalising in terms of going on pilgrimage and circumambulating Lhasa and other places. Our Friends might rationalise it in a sense of "Well, it's good for my cultural development, it puts me in touch with my emotions, it inspires me, when actually it's just a holiday abroad with a bit of sightseeing in museums and art galleries. Do you see what I mean?

If one wants even to listen to records, one doesn't really have to spend much money, one can join a record library, one can borrow from one's friends etc. Perhaps all communities should have a collection of cassettes and records and other such things, it is quite understandable that people might get something from this. But this does not require a great expenditure on the part of the individual.

So if people are asking the co-op for money for these things I think as I said the request should be scrutinised very seriously. If they are the sort of people who really need a holiday abroad, then it seems as though they perhaps shouldn't be in the co-op at all. They haven't really got the

necessary degree of commitment, they are still working on being happy, healthy and human.

There is of course the additional factor that at the present stage of development of most co-ops, they are under capitalised and whatever cash can be spared ought to go into further capitalization. People ought to be prepared to in a sense even sacrifice needs which are quite justifiable in order to help that process of further capitalization, otherwise there is no expansion possible.

So I think that such requests need to be scrutinised very carefully. if someone is going on a retreat well fair enough, everyone should go on retreat every year, at least two or three times a year. But holidays, they should be treated with a certain amount of suspicion. Especially people living in London, they have much more than people in Florence. You find lots of people in Florence visiting the art galleries and museums in London. London is better equipped than almost any other city in Europe. You've got it all right on your door-step.

So if they are talking of going off to Florence to see the Uffizi, ask them how well they know their National Gallery or the Tate, the National Portrait Gallery and so on. There are quite a few pictures in Norwich they could come and see. [Laughter]

Ray Bisson: There does seem to be a confusion though between spiritual inspiration and emotional inspiration.

S: I wouldn't like to draw an absolutely hard and fast line of division between the two. Perhaps the one does shade off into the other. But they are distinct nonetheless. As I said, just as for Rechungpa, even going on pilgrimage would be a distraction. From our point of view, if you really are into spiritual life and trying to commit yourself, even cultural interests can be a sort of almost 'near enemy' one could say.

One should be very careful that one is in fact using the cultural interests to develop one's emotions or unblock ones emotions, @hd is not just using the cultural interest in a dilettante sort of way, to escape the exigencies of the spiritual life. One should be very careful that one is in fact using the cultural interests to develops ones emotions or unblock ones emotions, @hd is not just using the cultural in a dilettante sort of way, to escape the exigencies of the spiritual life.

I think most people find music more inspiring to use that term than anything else. But one has to be careful that one doesn't become rather indulgent in that respect and spend say, hours every day listening to music when really you should be doing other things. It should be like the salt in your diet, not the diet itself.

Anyway talking of 'diet' it's time for morning coffee.

[Pause for coffee break]

Anandajyoti: Why especially for women do you think?

S: Well for men a career is old hat, but for a lot of women new avenues are being opened up to them in many cases, new job possibilities and they get into these things as the expression of their energy and abilities, rather than getting into the spiritual life. In the case of some of our own Friends this has happened, even with some women Order Members this has happened, especially older ones, they have just got lost in careers.

So one could find that both for men and for women, perhaps for men more than women, that cultural pursuits become a near enemy. Because maybe up to the time of your becoming involved with the Friends, you hadn't had any particular cultural interests and you subsequently discovered a whole new world of culture, the arts, and you can get very involved and it can be very fascinating.

So, yes, this is part of someone's development as the healthy, happy human being, but if you are spiritually committed, then at least to some extent you should have gone beyond reliance on these things or need for these things.

Subhuti: At least they should not occupy the centre of the stage.

S: They should not occupy the centre of the stage. So if you find that there is an Order Member who spends all his time reading Shakespeare, or all his time or most of it, playing Haydn, or jazz records even, well it's a bit odd, you can't help wondering what's going on. (laughter)

Subhuti: There'll be a few fireworks down at the LBC (laughter)

_____: A burning of records. (laughter)

S: No put them into the library. I'm not saying that they shouldn't be available, that people should not have recourse to them, it's a question of proportion.

Anandajyoti: It can be very tantalising if you come into contact with the arts, and music and you discover all these areas and they just seem very rich and wonderful. But in my experience I've just felt that they are there just waiting to be explored and looked at. So I can experience them as very tantalising and I do I must admit I do feel quite a lot of the time quite a strong desire to spend a bit more time than I do, I have very little time.

S: Well, also I think it must be said that one should be selective and if one reads or if one listens to music, one should read and listen to only the best. One hasn't time for anything else. [Pause] Perhaps one way out is to join a community or a co-op where you are kept so busy that you just don't have time for these things.

Ray: But then what happens is that people regret not having the time.

S: Well in some cases they might even not have time to regret that they don't have time. [Laughter] They are kept as busy as that.

People have to be honest with themselves, I mean with regard to the visual arts. Even if you find a picture inspiring, well how inspiring do you find it? How long do you spend looking at it? Do you look at it every day? if so, for how many minutes? Even those things which you say you find most inspiring, well you might not ever look at them for more than a few minutes altogether. [Pause]

It might be interesting to ask people what they find most inspiring in the ordinary way. Well let's take it for granted that in principle at least they find retreats and meditation are the most inspiring, but apart from those purely, as it were, spiritual activities, what do they find most inspiring? Is it listening to music, or is it going for runs or swimming, or talking, or going to the pub or what is it?

Ray: What I find most inspiring is perhaps having worked a day in the restaurant and perhaps things haven't gone quite right; but talking about it afterwards and just communicating what has happened. It is not necessarily a happy ending to a working day, but just getting it out, I find that very inspiring. You just come away. I think that means more to you than anything.

S: I have sometimes felt on retreats in the past, especially when I have been leading the retreat, the best part of the retreat has been the daily Order Meeting. Even though nothing much happens and there is not maybe much to talk about, there seems to be something in that that one just hasn't had in any activity during the rest of the day. I don't know whether other Order Members have felt the same thing. It is certainly what I notice. Who finds music the most inspiring thing? Any music fans?

Johnny: Yes, I think I do.

S: You do? What sort of music?

Johnny: I think Mozart. I listen to a lot of other music as well, but of classical music I think Mozart.

[End of tape three tape four]

Bob: Do you have any views on Wagner? [Laughter]

S: Oh dear. [Laughter] I must admit I have enjoyed Wagner.

Bob: Can I get you some tapes? (laughter)

S: In what I must admit have probably been my weaker moments (laughter). It's like confessing a secret liking for brandy (laughter).

_____: Do you think it's important to give it a qualification?

S: Oh I think the qualification is more important than the rest of the statement. I have very mixed feelings about Wagner, and quite mixed

feelings about Beethoven. I think Beethoven is very often strained and forced, and sort of grand eloquent rather than grand. Not at his best, but quite often.

Subhuti: Is that susceptible to interpretation? Interpretations can vary a lot.

S: You mean programmatic interpretations?

Subhuti : Yes.

S: Well I think you can interpret music in that sort of way whatever you

Subhuti: Sorry what I meant was say different conductors can make it very different.

S: Ah, yes but even making an allowance for that. [Pause] What one notices as one goes through the history of music say from the Renaissance down to the present century, there seems to be a sort of disintegration of structure and a reliance more upon mood. I'm quite suspicious of that or suspicious of them. Music seems to be becoming more and more subjective. I think I appreciate the element of structure in classical music, and the emotional element, is also there but I think with the late Romantics especially the structure is not there in that sort of sense. I think that is a deficiency.

Though the music can be very enjoyable. Delius. Goethe said a very interesting thing about music. Goethe said that there are basically only two kinds of music - the music of worship and the music of dance. So classical music is on the whole the music of dance. If one takes for instance the typical classical form, the symphony, the symphony is a series of dance movements. For instance there's the minuet. Even baroque suites are series of particular dance measures one might say. And in a classical symphony, the four movement symphony you've got different kinds of dance balanced against each other and adding up to a whole, an organic whole. So what is important about music as dance is that it is sort of correlated with the rhythm of the human body. You feel like dancing to it.

So I think this is therefore part of the point of Goethe's remark, but I think what happens with romantic music, the more romantic it becomes, the less you are able to dance to it. So the less in contact with it you feel. Do you see what I mean? You can experience it emotionally but you can't experience it physically. It's as though modern music becomes progressively more and more dissociated from the rhythm of your own being. Sometimes it's in direct conflict with it. It's quite interesting for instance that members of symphony orchestras in the States, I was reading somewhere, who play a lot of very modern music, say that they find that it has a very jarring effect on them and produces mental disturbances. But they never find that if played Beethoven or Mozart or Haydn. That is very interesting. They tried experiments playing music to cows. They find for instance that cows respond very well to Bach and to Jazz. [Laughter] Respond very well means they become very contented and they give more milk.

But then the other kind of music - I think Goethe called it the music of worship and aspiration, religious music - is that music which expresses

the aspirations of the soul, so to speak. You get that in Bach perhaps above all. And you get perhaps a little of it in Mozart, for instance in say his 'Requiem'.

But I think one of the appeals of classical music is that it is in fact dance music. It has a sort of bacchanalian quality in it.

Ray: Do you see a problem with being inspired by music that was originally written by the inspiration of God?

S: Well you see there's a way of looking at that. One can be greatly comforted by the thought that both Bach and Handel switched melodies and so on between secular and sacred works. The same melody might appear say in the case of Handel in an oratorio or a religious work of that sort, such a religious work, and again as an aria in a very secular opera, and similarly with Bach. He could use a melody of that sort in a cantata, which is a religious work, and then in a secular suite. So I think that one can disregard the words very often. Though having said that I've come recently to think that I appreciate say Handel's operas more than say 'The Messiah' because 'The Messiah' is in a sense a religious work and the melody is very closely related to the text, and it seems that though 'The Messiah' is a great work, it's as though Handel's genius is more at home in a more secular atmosphere. This is what I feel having heard quite a few of the operas. That's the more genuine Handel.

It's well known in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period an artist painted religious scenes without any real Christian conviction. Sometimes taking their mistresses as models for the Virgin Mary and so on (no so very good taste). [Laughter] Raphael did this quite a lot. [Pause]

I must say that my own experience is that even after reading the classics of Western literature or listening to the classics of the Western musical repertoire, if one then reads or immerses oneself in a Mahayana Sutra in fact the atmosphere is totally different and it goes completely beyond even the best of culture. There's no doubt about that. It is not that there's some difference. It leaves it completely behind. I think one's real inspiration comes from those sources.

_____: I think a point you made on an earlier seminar was that culture can be seen as an intermediate between the mundane and the transcendental, and sometimes you can't just plunge into a Mahayana Sutra, you've got to work your way up to it.

S: But one must be sure that one is actually doing that and is not just using culture as a diversion from the spiritual life. In which case of course as I said becomes a near enemy. [Pause]

All right let's hear Milarepa's next song, bottom of page 588, with the little prose introduction.

The Jetsun then said, "Rechungpa! Before you have reached the Ultimate Realization, it would be far better for you to stay with me and not go away. Now listen to this song":

Listen, Rechung Dorjedrapa,

*The well learned Buddhist scholar.
Listen, and think with care on what I say.*

*Before faith and yearning arise for Dharma,
Beg not alms for mere enjoyment.
Before you have realized primordial
Truth, boast not of your sublime philosophy.
Before you have fully mastered the Awareness
Within, engage not in blind and foolish acts.
Before you can feed on the Instructions,
Involve not yourself in wicked occultism.
Before you can explain the profound Teaching,
Be not beguiled by partial knowledge.
Before you can increase your merits,
Dispute not over others' goods.
Before you can destroy your inner cravings,
Treat not charity as if it were your right.
Before you can stop projecting habitual thoughts,
Guess not when you make predictions.
Before you have gained Supreme Enlightenment,
Assume not that you are a venerable Lama.
Before you can master all virtues and practices,
Consider not leaving your Guru.
Son Rechungpa, it is better not to go, but stay!*

S: So 'The Jetsun then said, "Rechungpa! Before you have reached Ultimate Realization, it would be far better for you to stay with me and not go away. Now listen to this song": Listen, Rechung Dorjedrapa, The well learned Buddhist scholar.' There's probably a touch of irony in Milarepa addressing Rechungpa in this way. 'Listen, and think with care on what I say. "Before faith and yearning arise for Dharma, Beg not alms for mere enjoyment." What do you think Milarepa's referring to here? How could he 'beg alms for mere enjoyment'? Whose alms?

_____: His lay supporters.

S: His lay supporters. Because traditionally the bhikkhu or the yogi is dependent for support on the lay supporters, or 'patrons' as the translator calls them. So Milarepa is saying that before you have a genuine faith in and yearning for the Dharma, you should not beg for alms, you should not expect to be supported by the lay people. You shouldn't expect them to support you just so that you can have a good time. If you have genuine faith in the Dharma and yearn for it then you may expect their support, not otherwise. You see Milarepa is being quite reasonable. He's

not saying well unless you are a highly developed yogi you can't expect the support of the lay people. He's not saying well unless you're practically Enlightened you can't expect the support of the lay people, but he is saying that unless you have faith and yearning with regard to the Dharma, you can't really ask people to support you, because you're in no better position than they are. Why should they support you?

Perhaps there's an indirect reference to Rechungpa's going to Weu. After all who is going to have to finance his expedition? Well lay people in one way or another. So this may be tied up with what you were asking about co-ops. If someone isn't committed, though they may be working in or for a co-op, is it really right that the co-op should be expected to finance their mere enjoyment? If they are really devoted to the Dharma and say they want to go away on retreat, well yes that can be supported. But not other things. So this suggests that quite a degree of commitment is expected of people in co-ops, or you can't work in a right livelihood situation unless you are committed to the spiritual path. A co-op is a right livelihood situation. Right livelihood is part of the Eightfold Path. So how can you practise right livelihood unless you're treading the Eightfold Path, unless you're spiritually committed? So you can't be a member of a co-op unless you are spiritually committed. So if you are spiritually committed, how come that you are asking 'alms for mere enjoyment'? This is what it amounts to.

Ratnaketu: It's getting things the wrong way round. It's asking of support for your undharmic activities from the spiritual community, rather than your indirect undharmic activities supporting the spiritual community.

S: Yes indeed. Of course one mustn't be too rigid, because even if you are committed to the spiritual life you still have to eat and to drink. You may still need a little recreation. You may even need a little holiday just as a relaxation. That possibility also can't be ruled out, but one has to look at everything very circumspectly, and maybe they should not expect that just because they're working in a co-op they've got the right to be supported with regard to whatever they want to do.

_____: Do you think that begging for alms was seen as an enjoyable thing, because it says begging of alms for mere enjoyment, and in Rechungpa's original series of reasons for going to Weu one right at the end says 'and to beg for alms I must go to Weu', as though that rated with the sightseeing and in equivalence of enjoyment.

S: Yes right. Well one can look at it in two ways. [Technical pause]

If we look at this line 'beg not alms for mere enjoyment', the line, that is to say the English words here can be understood in two different ways. 'Beg not alms for mere enjoyment' means don't beg alms simply for the sake of the enjoyment of begging for alms. That is one possible meaning. The other is don't beg alms in order to get food and money etc., so that you can enjoy yourself with them. There are these two possible ways of reading the English line. The English itself is ambiguous, perhaps the Tibetan is ambiguous. But to take the first possibility, yes Rechungpa could find the actual begging of alms enjoyable because it brings you into contact with people, maybe you get invited inside, asked to sit down and take your meal there. You get chatting with the family and maybe they ask you to stay the night. So maybe, yes, the actual begging of alms is enjoyable.

On the other hand, perhaps it also means that you can beg for alms as it were pretending almost to be a religious person and wanting to be

supported in your religious life, but actually you just collect food and money with which you just go off and have a good time. It can be looked at in that way. But in either case of course Milarepa says you shouldn't beg for alms before faith and yearning arise for the Dharma.

Ratnaketu: The first one - begging for alms because it's enjoyable doing it - you just don't practise the cultural aspects of Buddhism, you simply do it for their own sake, without having anything from Buddhism.

S: Well yes, without having a real interest in the Dharma.

Ratnaketu: You can see some people who () this spiritual exoticism.

S: I think there will inevitably be an element of that at first, in the case of people coming along to the Friends, but as they come to understand more and more deeply what the Friends is all about that sort of interest will quickly take second place.

So if you are expecting people to support you, if you are expecting people to look after you, you must be very sure that you really are at least aspiring to follow the spiritual path. You've no right to expect them to support you if you are doing just the very things that they are doing. Why do they support you at all? It's only because they believe, they have the faith, that you are leading a higher life than they are leading. It's just the same with regard to the co-op. If the co-op gives you some money to go away on retreat, it is with the faith and the confidence that you are doing something which is spiritually beneficial to you and, because it's spiritually beneficial to you, in the long run it will benefit everybody. It's in that faith and confidence that they give you the money to go away on retreat. So you'd be virtually cheating them if after saying that you were going away on retreat you were just to take that money and just have a good time on holiday. It's that sort of thing that Milarepa is talking about, in the more traditional Buddhist sense.

Then he says, 'before you have realised primordial truth, boast not of your sublime philosophy.' So this raises the question of what is the relation between philosophy, sublime philosophy, presumably Buddhist philosophy, and primordial truth? [Pause] Well in the West very often philosophy has been speculative. One tries to arrive at the truth by means of philosophy, by means of the speculative intellect or through the speculative intellect. But in the case of Buddhism, the situation is very different. In the case of Buddhism the starting point is a spiritual experience. In fact the starting point is the Buddha's own spiritual experience. The Buddha started with that. He became the Buddha. There was no such thing as Buddhist philosophy. There was no such thing as Buddhism, but having become Enlightened, whatever that might mean, having achieved or attained that particular individual experience, haven risen to that particular level of being, whatever one might like to call it, having become a different person, having become a new man and having become Enlightened, the Buddha then sought to enter into communication with others, And in order to enter into communication with others, others who were unenlightened, he had to construct a sort of bridge, he had to be able to explain things to them, he had to be able to get them to see, at least intellectually, things from his point of view, his vantage point of Enlightenment.

So his effort to communicate, one might say the nature and the content, of his enlightenment experience in such a way that they could have some understanding of it intellectually and make that intellectual understanding the basis of an actual practical approach to that realisation for

themselves; this gave rise to what we call Buddhist philosophy. This was the rudiments, as it were, of Buddhist philosophy. This is how Buddhist philosophy started, and of course gradually became more elaborate. So essentially in Buddhism Buddhist philosophy is intended to communicate a spiritual experience, to communicate it especially in what we might call conceptual terms. Philosophy clarifies spiritual experience from the intellectual point of view, so as to make that experience in some degree accessible or comprehensible from the intellectual point of view for practical purposes.

So Milarepa says, 'Before you have realised primordial truth, boast not of your sublime philosophy'. You can learn Buddhist philosophy, you can learn about the concepts that belong to Buddhist philosophy, but that Buddhist philosophy doesn't really belong to you, you haven't really mastered it, you can't really boast about it, so to speak, until you've actually experienced the truth, the primordial truth, to which that philosophy points. Otherwise you're just dealing with the empty shell of philosophy, not with the real thing. So just to be a scholar, just to know about Buddhist philosophy, to know about the history of Buddhist philosophy, to be able to discuss the terms and concepts of Buddhist philosophy, is of no use in itself. It's meant as a medium of communication, so what are you doing with it unless you've got something to communicate?

So you notice that at the beginning Milarepa addresses Rechung rather ironically as 'The well learned Buddhist scholar', so here he's saying 'before you've realised primordial truth, boast not of your sublime philosophy', because if you do it's as though you've confused the two, you've confused realisation of primordial truth with a purely intellectual understanding of the concepts which are meant to try to communicate that truth or at least to arouse some awareness of it from the intellectual point of view. You think you've mastered the primordial truth just because you've mastered the terms in which it is communicated on the intellectual level. This seems to have been a mistake of Rechungpa's. It's rather like the well know bhikkhu I heard of who used to go around Ceylon some years ago and he'd give a series of lectures, and he'd always give the same series of lectures, he always spoke on the same subject, and what was his subject? - the forty kammattanas, the forty types of meditation practice according to Buddhaghosa - usually give exhaustive lectures on these, but he never practised meditation.

So in much the same way you can go around giving quite good lectures on Nirvana and Enlightenment and the void and all the rest of it, but you've no experience of these things, so really you are dealing only in concepts, only in words. You aren't able to communicate through those concepts and words, anything of the primordial truth because you haven't realised anything of that primordial truth. So Milarepa says, 'before you have realised primordial truth, boast not of your sublime philosophy'. It's empty, it's meaningless without any experience to back it up. Otherwise you are like the marriage counsellor who has either never been married or whose marriages have all broken down. [Pause]

'Before you have fully mastered the Awareness Within, engage not in blind and foolish acts.' What do you think that means?

_____: Is it just a direct reference to the desire to go travelling off to Weu?

S: It could be, yes. But what is this Awareness Within that one must master?

_____: Insight.

S: It seems to be something of the nature of insight, yes. If you haven't got that insight, well your acts will be blind and foolish automatically. If one looks back over one's own life, one can sometimes see this pretty clearly. And one must also remember that even good people can engage in blind and foolish acts. This is why it is said in a little saying I sometimes quote, that it takes all the wisdom of the wise to undo the harm done by the merely good. There are plenty of people rushing about doing what they think is good, but what the effects of their actions really are they just don't know. Their acts are blind and foolish. Sometimes they do more harm than good.

So even if one agrees that it is good to act, that one must help people, one must be active in the world. Even if one agrees and accepts all that, there is still the question of how are you to act in such a way that you don't in fact do more harm than good. Acting is not a virtue in itself. Sometimes people speak as though it was - it's better to do anything rather than to do nothing, but that's by no means the case. There was a quite interesting example of this in the London Borough of Camden when a special centre was opened for disturbed young people of some kind or other and actually they found after a year that by being kept in that particular centre they became far worse. They don't fully understand why but this is definitely what happened. They became worse after staying there for a year and not better. And that does seem to be the case with some mental hospitals - people become worse there instead of better.

Ratnaketu: So until such time as we've fully mastered Inner Awareness.....

S: Well I wouldn't go to the extreme of saying until such time as you've fully mastered Awareness then you shouldn't do anything. That might be impossible, but you should only act in a sort of crucial way to the extent that you really have some awareness within, some insight. You don't necessarily have to have mastered Awareness Within just to go for a little walk, but if someone asks you for advice about some serious matter that is going to affect his or her whole life, you shouldn't give any advice unless you can be sure that you really know what you are talking about, that you've got some awareness, some Insight into the situation, into that person. You see what I mean? You must be able to recognise those situations where a degree of awareness within is really necessary. I have been talking recently quite a bit about the difficulty of really knowing other people, and therefore the difficulty of giving advice. Only too often people rush in with their advice in a really clumsy and foolish sort of way. But before you advise anybody seriously you need to know that person really well and to have some real insight into their situation, their nature, into the Dharma itself. Otherwise how can you advise them? But people tend to hand out advice very quickly and easily. 'You should do this' or 'you should do that', 'this will be good for you' or 'that will be bad for you'. They don't know usually. A prime example is very often one's own parents. Sometimes they are convinced that they know what is best for you. They actually haven't a clue. Very often they don't know what's good for themselves. They've made perhaps a complete mess of their own lives - they're in no position to advise you. Very often their advice boils down to advising you to get yourself into the same mess that they've got themselves into.

So I think this especially applies to giving advice to other people. You can do quite a lot of harm with your well meaning advice. So 'Before you have fully mastered the Awareness Within, engage not in blind and foolish acts.' Well actually Milarepa seems to suggest that you've a choice but really you don't have. Until you've mastered the Awareness Within you cannot but engage in blind and foolish acts.

Ratnaketu: It is so that until you've got say Insight everything that you do is blind, whether or not it is good.....

S: Yes, very often it has good effects only by accident.

Ratnaketu: Even the Buddha and what he did. If you see somebody to whom you attribute a degree of insight and you live the life....

S: And also of course if you have some reliance on spiritual friends. I've spoken about not giving advice to other people, of course in the same way or for the same reason you can't really give advice to yourself. Very often you don't know what's good for you. You don't know what you should do. Perhaps you know what you actually feel here and now, or what you experience here and now, but very often you don't know what you should do about it or with it. So you need spiritual friends who can see you more objectively than you see yourself. That suggests that your spiritual friends need to have some degree of insight themselves. Otherwise they're in no better position than you are. So if you do ask anybody for advice make sure you ask advice from someone who, as far as you can see, is more experienced and more insightful than you are yourself. Otherwise you're simply asking the blind to lead the blind.

All right next. 'Before you can feed on the Instructions, Involve not yourself in wicked occultism.' What is this 'wicked occultism'? I think it's probably a quite periphrastic translation. It seems to be being involved in magical arts of one kind or another, maybe some of them even technically speaking, arts of black magic, destructive magic. So Milarepa is saying don't involve yourself in such things before you can feed on the Instructions. Don't forget Rechungpa is going off to Weu. He seems to be rather fond of associating with lay people. Tibetan lay people might ask you to perform magical ceremonies for them, sometimes ceremonies of an apparently destructive character. So Milarepa is saying that you should not do that 'before you can feed on the Instructions'. Instructions here seems to signify esoteric Tantric teachings, especially Pith Instructions coming from the guru to the disciple. In other words unless you are really deeply versed in the Vajrayana, unless you've a really deep experience of the Tantric teachings, you should not attempt to perform magical operations.

I remember Mr Chen saying in this connection that if one engaged in Tantric rituals, Tantric magical practices, without a thorough realisation of sunyata first, it was no better than vulgar magic. It had nothing to do in fact with the Vajrayana, it had not spiritual significance until that background of the realisation of the voidness. So Milarepa seems to be saying something of the same kind. That the Tantric rituals cannot be truly beneficial to sentient beings unless they are backed up on the part of the practitioner by some deep spiritual experience. Otherwise it's just a sort of magical display, a magical show - it's just ritualism in the bad sense.

So he's giving the same advice to Rechungpa in a number of different ways. He's stressing the outer activity of whatsoever kind, must spring from, or be governed by the inner realisation.

And then 'Before you can explain the profound Teaching, Be not beguiled by partial knowledge.' What do you think he's talking about here? How might it come about that Rechungpa should explain the profound teaching? How might this come about?

_____: Giving a lecture.

S: Yes, giving a lecture. The lay people he meets on his travels might invite him to speak about the Dharma, tell them something about the

Dharma, about the profound teaching. So it says 'Before you can explain the profound Teaching, Be not beguiled by partial knowledge.' Don't try to explain to people what the profound teaching really is so long as you see it only from a very limited point of view, so long as you are still beguiled by partial knowledge. What would be a more apposite example of this sort of thing? [Pause] Supposing you are asked to give a talk on the Dharma, how could you be beguiled by partial knowledge? What would be partial knowledge in this sort of context?

_____: You wouldn't really be able to use the words without any correspondence.

S: Yes, also of course partial knowledge in a purely as it were sectarian sense, that one is asked say to speak about the Dharma, about Buddhism, and in effect you just give a talk on the Theravada. You are beguiled by partial knowledge. You think that the Theravada is Buddhism, that Buddhism is the Theravada. Or Zen. Or Tibetan Buddhism. That is being beguiled by partial knowledge, just on the ordinary, as it were, intellectual comparative level - not seeing Buddhism as a whole and not talking about it as a whole.

So that is partial knowledge on the horizontal so to speak, but also there's partial knowledge in the vertical dimension, that is to say when you have no experience of what you're talking about, no insight into what you're talking about. It's all just words and concepts. You are just playing with them rather skilfully and in that way producing a talk, producing a lecture.

And then 'Before you can increase your merits, Dispute not over others' goods.' Now what is this all about? One could ask should one ever dispute over others' goods.

Subhuti: In a way you haven't earned the goods. You haven't built any basis for possession.

S: Perhaps it goes back to the alms giving, to begging for alms. You might dispute with people over what are their goods, saying that they should offer you more or you performed the tantric ceremony and they haven't rewarded you lavishly enough. You're disputing in that way, in that case, over their goods, over things that belong to them, but the thing that you should be concerned with is to increase your own merits. If your own merits are great, according to Buddhist teaching or tradition, well offerings will automatically accrue to you, you won't have to dispute about people handing over their goods to you. The meaning seems to be something like that. [Pause]

And the following two lines seem to bear that interpretation out because Milarepa says, 'Before you can destroy your inner cravings, Treat not charity as if it were your right.' You can't say well look here am I, I've become a holy man, I've become a monk, I've become a yogi, I've a right to be supported, it's your duty to support me. One shouldn't adopt that attitude.

[End of side one side two]

You've no right to be supported until you've destroyed your inner cravings. Then there is some meaning and some purpose in people supporting you. There's no meaning or purpose in them supporting you if you're leading no better life than they are themselves. The context is traditional but you can apply that to the co-op situation too. [Pause]

And again he says 'Before you can stop projecting habitual thoughts, Guess not when you make predictions.' What are these predictions?

_____ : Presumably a lot of people are asking for....

S: Because there are two methods of prediction - I talked about this a few days ago didn't I? Tibetan monks or lamas can make predictions astrologically or by throwing dice or in ways of that sort. When they predict in this way the result is determined by chance. Suppose they throw a dice three times and they get say three, five and two, well that combination of throws means something, they look it up in a little book and then they tell you what it means with perhaps some interpretations of their own. That is one way of predicting. Another way is just for the monk or the lama to go into meditation and then say, 'Ah, this is what I predict, this is what is going to happen.' So it seems that it's the second type of divination or second type of method of divination that Milarepa is talking about. He says, 'Before you can stop projecting habitual thoughts, Guess not when you make predictions.' It's very easy just instead of really seeing what is going to happen, having an intuition, a genuine intuition of what is going to happen, it's very easy just to guess, and the guess of course will be determined by your habitual thoughts. The guess will be just a projection of your habitual thoughts.

So until you can stop projecting habitual thoughts, don't indulge in making predictions which are in fact just guesswork. So you can apply that to situations other than those of prediction. Until you can be quite sure that you're not influenced by your own conditioning and prejudices, don't give advice to other people, otherwise you'll be like the fox in the story 'The fox who lost his tail'. I've told that story before, haven't I? No! Oh!

There was a fox who lost his tail. He must have lost it, he got it caught in a trap, so he could only get out of the trap by gnawing off his tail, so he lost his tail, and he felt really ridiculous and he felt all the other foxes were going to laugh at him so he couldn't sort of tolerate that so he thought all right I shall deal with the situation. So he went to meet all the other foxes and he was walking past them with his nose in the air rather proudly. So the other foxes noticed this and they started talking among themselves, 'well what's he got to be proud about?' So they said well 'you seem very pleased with yourself, what's this all about?' He said, 'Oh yes I feel so pleased, so happy. I've got rid of my tail. It was such a ridiculous appendage, it was always getting muddy and I feel so much better without it. That's why I'm really feeling great without this tail!' So they all started looking a bit dubious, and he said well, 'you should try it. You look ridiculous with your tails, they're so long and bushy and heavy and they get dirty and you have to drag them with you everywhere you go. Why don't you get rid of them?' In this way he persuaded all the foxes to have their tails amputated. [Laughter] So this is the way in which, this is the spirit in which very often people give advice. So supposing some young fox had come up to that particular fox and said well, 'what do you think I should do? What's the first thing I should do to lead a spiritual life?' Well obviously get rid of your tail! [Laughter]

So you have to be very careful asking for advice or taking advice because sometimes the advice that people give you is in line with their own weaknesses and deficiencies. For instance they might find it very difficult to go on solitary retreat. They might not have succeeded in going on solitary retreat. They might have had to leave after a few days, so they say to the young aspirant 'oh, solitary retreats aren't all what they're made out to be. They're not all that necessary really, you can get along very well. Just have a weekend off, go away with your friends for the weekend. That's just as good as a solitary retreat.' They can talk in that sort of way, because they've lost their own tail so to speak.

So therefore Milarepa says, 'Before you can stop projecting habitual thoughts, Guess not when you make predictions.' And then, 'Before you have gained Supreme Enlightenment, Assume not that you are a venerable Lama.' So this is a very heavy demand, in a way, that Milarepa is making. Don't give yourself out to be a great lama if you haven't actually gained Enlightenment. In other words he's saying you're not a venerable lama on account of some ecclesiastical position, it isn't an ecclesiastical position, it represents a spiritual attainment, a very high spiritual attainment.

Ratnaketu: Sometimes people want you to be a venerable lama!

S: Well you should just refuse. And I think it's very important with regard to say people coming from the East, that one makes a clear distinction between genuine spiritual attainment which is very difficult to ascertain, and ecclesiastical position. So one might be the head of a big monastery - that means very little. You might be regarded as the eighth or ninth or tenth incarnation of somebody or other - that means very little too. I have had quite well known incarnations coming to me and having nervous breakdowns in Kalimpong, [Laughter] and admitting that they didn't think that they were reincarnations at all. But they were regarded by the Tibetans as being reincarnations and they were heads of monasteries when they in Tibet. So all is not gold that glitters as they say. Not everybody is highly experienced or developed spiritually who has a high ecclesiastical position. The Pope is not necessarily a saint. Some Popes, quite a number of Popes have been very far from being saints, as is well known. Archbishops of Canterbury even are not exactly angels.

I remember when one particular Archbishop of Canterbury retired - I'm not sure which one it was, I think it was the one before Doctor Runcie - he was being given a little presentation at a Synod or something or other and it was a cheque and after receiving it he made some sort of coy remark. He said something like 'Oh the little lady in the gallery will know what to do with it' meaning his wife, and then he went on to eulogise the little lady in the gallery and if it hadn't been for her he wouldn't have been such a good Archbishop of Canterbury! [Laughter] It sounded absolutely sickening that he needed this sort of moral support from some little lady in the gallery well he just shouldn't have been Archbishop of Canterbury at all. He shouldn't have been a bishop, he shouldn't even have been an ordinary priest! It sounded really dreadful, so he clearly wasn't up to much spiritually. Just an ecclesiastical dignitary. But not only that, not only did he depend on this sort of support but he seemed to revel in the fact and everybody seemed to think it was a really great thing to say and showed what a great chap he was and rounds of applause for him and the little lady in the gallery! [Laughter] She was probably sitting there all coy and beaming.

But it shows that there are no spiritual standard at all any more. This is what it shows. So 'before you gain Supreme Enlightenment, assume not that you are a venerable lama. You are not a venerable lama because you've studied the scriptures or you've got lots of pupils or you're the head of a monastery or you're well received wherever you go. That doesn't make you really a venerable lama.

'Before you can master all virtues and practices, Consider not leaving your Guru.' So here we come onto the Vajrayana, so to speak, in full force, because in the Vajrayana the relationship between guru and disciple is regarded as very very important, quite crucial. So Milarepa is advising Rechungpa not to leave him until he is able to master all virtues and practices. It's a very tall order indeed. So why do you think this is? What is Milarepa in fact saying. What is he asking of Rechungpa, what is he demanding of Rechungpa? Is this sort of advice applicable only to someone

like Rechungpa who's admittedly a bit flighty and restless, or does it apply to all disciples, and what does 'leaving' actually mean? Why does 'staying with' actually mean? Perhaps one could say that it represents in a highly concentrated form what I was saying earlier on about not allowing oneself to be out of contact with the spiritual community until such time as insight really has been attained. You just can't afford to do that. You are like a little lamb sent out among wolves! I don't want to press the lamb imagery too much! [Laughter] You know what I mean! Like a little sardine among sharks. [Laughter] You're like a little daisy in the path of a whole procession of steam-rollers! [Laughter]

So this seems to be Milarepa's whole emphasis. That Rechungpa should not go away, should not wander, not roam, until he is certain that that wandering and roaming will not in fact harm him in any way. So this means there has to be a permanent attainment on Rechungpa's part, an attainment which usually is represented in terms of Insight or breaking the fetters and so on. Until that happens well one needs the external supports, whether in the form of the hermitage, the guru or the spiritual community in one form or another. But does one really feel that, is that actually one's experience? Maybe you haven't had the experience, maybe you've been sensible and not gone very far away for some time. But someone who did do that wrote to me a few days ago and said that after he'd been away from the spiritual community for a few weeks he started finding that his meditation was drying up and that he was in fact getting out of touch, so he made haste to re-establish contact. He found it happening after two or three weeks.

_____: I noticed it when I went down to Cornwall a few weeks ago, just for a week. That as the week progressed my meditations got more and more scattered and dispersed. It was harder to sit each day.

S: Sometimes it's hard enough even when you're living in a spiritual community, what to speak of when you go away from that. I mean go away into a mundane situation, not go away on solitary retreat. I don't want to be precious about this. One is after all intent on breeding young heroes, not pussycats! But nonetheless one must [Laughter] be realistic. One doesn't want people to be pampered and petted and made comfortable on someone's, spiritually speaking, 'lap'. One doesn't want that sort of thing, but nonetheless one doesn't want those who are unprepared to wander off and do what Rechungpa was wanting to do and what Milarepa keeps warning him against. It's a question of knowing one's own strength and one's own weakness.

Ratnaketu: I feel this in London on a much smaller scale, just spending an evening going into the city. You don't really sort of fall far distant away but really you've got to know how long you can stay.

S: Yes indeed, it's a question of knowing how long you can safely spend away from that sort of contact, how long you can safely be without that kind of spiritual support. It's as simple as that.

_____: If you go with say two of you it's a lot better because you can come together.

S: Yes indeed, right, safety in numbers! [Laughter] But it's like going to a plague situation. If you're really healthy you can go and work nursing say or rescuing plague victims. I'm not thinking in terms of inoculation, I'm thinking of how things might have been in the old days. If you're really healthy you can go and do that for some days on end, even weeks. But if you're not maybe you can't do it for more than a day without

succumbing to the infection yourself. It's rather like that. Knowing how long you can work in that sort of situation without succumbing to the infection yourself and becoming a victim yourself.

Ratnaketu: You notice this at work in the building teams. We have to have lunch in streetside cafes and it's just full of all sorts of people [Laughter].

S: What do you do, you hide behind one of the big blokes!! [Laughter]

Ratnaketu: When there's a lot of us and you're sort of fresh off a retreat or something like that we're sitting there and we've got a community all of our own in the corner and we don't even notice what's going on. But if there's just one or two of you and you're tired after having been working for a long time, you really feel the noise and the other people are just draining.

S: Whereas if there are a whole lot of you you can make more noise than everybody else! [Laughter] Drown the jukebox or whatever. [Pause]

Ray: It struck me that for outsiders it seems more like we're dependent on the group situation.

S: Well indeed you are dependent and that's the plain truth! [Laughter] But it's what I called on the last seminar a reasonable dependence, it's not an unreasonable dependence. There should be no false pride here. 'I can do it on my own. I can make it by myself, I don't need anyone's help' - There shouldn't be that sort of false pride and false independence. You are dependent, objectively and reasonably dependent, and sensibly dependent on these positive conditions for your spiritual growth.

Ratnaketu: But sometimes people, if you live in a spiritual community, they think that you're weak, you can't survive in the world and things like that, but they don't realise that it's like a life raft and you're in the middle of the ocean so it's sensible to hold on to it!

S: What they don't realise is that they're not surviving, they've gone under! They don't realise it very often. The only reason they're floating on the surface is that they're dead! [Loud Laughter] Well it's true isn't it. [Laughter]

So one shouldn't allow oneself to be intimidated by these accusations based on gross micchaditthis - that you are an escapist or you're running away from life, running away from reality. You're just trying to get out of a burning house. It's a sensible thing to do. [Pause]

But anyway perhaps we should get back, before we close, to a point I did raise - we didn't really go into it but it may become clearer now - whether objectively there is anything in Rechungpa's point of view, not for Rechungpa himself, but generally, whether a time does not come when you can usefully and positively go forth and actually increase your experience and realisation by wandering. I mean perhaps when you develop at least a good degree of insight you shouldn't remain by yourself, and perhaps you yourself will spontaneously and naturally and truly feel that thing and you will go about in the world not exactly to test yourself but just to see how much you can assimilate. It's not just a question any more of bearing and surviving but of turning your experiences in the world, or of the world, to your advantage, to some positive use. Do you

see what I mean? This relates to a fairly advanced stage of the path. For most people it's a question of surviving and keeping on the raft and not getting knocked off. But it does seem that there is a further stage where you can adopt a more heroic attitude and roam even about in the world without losing your insight - insight in any case can't be lost - and even adding to it as a result of your experiences in the world. They won't be experiences of the kind that usually happen to people because you will be a very different kind of person, you won't be doing the sort of things that people usually do when they roam about in the world.

But that stage obviously doesn't come in a hurry. One shouldn't, as Rechungpa appears to have done, assume that one has reached that stage when in fact one hasn't.

Ray: What was your experience when you first went forth in India as regards this? Did you feel that you were searching for various.....

S: I found that going from place to place was very distracting. That one needed actually to settle somewhere in a convenient and conducive environment and get on with one's regular meditation and so on. One couldn't really do this wandering from place to place, and that that is what one really needed. This is what I found. [Pause]

John: I was thinking on a similar theme to this in a study group at 'Aryatara' inasmuch as people find it difficult to put down roots and stay in one place these days. There's a great impulse to keep moving.

S: Well there's great facility of travel. There's an aphorism I think in '*Peace is a Fire*' - one doesn't have to do something because one is able to do it, but nowadays people seem to think that if you are able to do it that is a reason for doing it. As I said I think in the aphorism the fact that you can do something is no reason for doing it, or the fact that you are able to do something is no reason for doing it, but people often think that it is a reason for doing it. Because these facilities exist, because it is easy to go to the States, it is easy very cheap to go, therefore you should go, that's a reason for going. Because it is easy, because it is cheap, and this tends to make people more restless and rootless than before.

Of course on the other hand one must watch that one doesn't fall into the other extreme, be trapped in the other extreme, that is that one doesn't just settled down in one place in a cosy, comfortable group like way. One must also watch that.

_____: Presumably if you're living in a spiritual community it wouldn't be a cosy place.

S: I don't think one should assume that. I think one should even go so far as to say that there is no such thing as a spiritual community as a sort of objective reality. The house obviously, the building doesn't make the spiritual community - it's the people who make the spiritual community. It's their particular level of consciousness, the way in which they relate that makes the spiritual community. So one might have say eight or ten people living under the same roof - all right potentially you've got your spiritual community. But there might be times, there might be days together when those people are not living and relating to one another as members of the spiritual community, and therefore for those days there is in fact no spiritual community on the premises. It's just a group.

Then again you might have an occasion when perhaps there's a puja or a discussion or a study group, then people rise to a certain level of consciousness, they start relating in a certain way, then, for a short time, the spiritual community is there. But you can't have a permanent spiritual community until everybody has developed a degree of insight. So one must be very careful not to assume that one is part of a spiritual community just because everybody on the premises is, technically, committed to the Dharma and so on. You may just have settle down in a cosy little group. That is a great danger too.

So there's a difference between putting down spiritual roots and putting down more cultural or social roots and so on. So if people are still trying to be individual, there's a lot to be said for shifting them around, because otherwise they may tend to just be settling down in some sort of congenial situation. But once you've got really launched into your spiritual practice, well if conditions where you're practising continue to be conducive you've no reason to move away. Not out of restlessness anyway. [Pause]

So it may be that people stay for a certain length of time in a particular community, working at a particular centre, but what one has to continually see is whether they are growing as a result of that. Stability by itself is not necessarily a virtue. They may simply be making themselves at home there in a quite self-indulgent sort of way. Even if they are keeping up regular meditation or at least sitting regularly and so on. One mustn't overlook that possibility. You can't guarantee that you're continuing to develop by just being in a particular situation, as it were, for its own sake. I mean if you roam prematurely you will certainly deteriorate as regards your spiritual progress, but you cannot guarantee that that will not happen by simply remaining in one place. There's no situation in which there is no risk. There is no situation in which you can just sit back and just leave it to the situation itself. That would be a form of silavrataparamarsa, formalism or superficiality, or just going through the motions.

_____ : So you should try and root yourself more in your practices and your own efforts.

S: Yes, root yourself in yourself, in your own practice, in your own experience, rather than in any particular place, however conducive at present to your development that may be.

Ratnaketu: How do you think we should discern whether you should stay in a particular community or move somewhere else to another community, to another centre?

S: I think one can assume that after a couple of years you probably will have become a bit attached, and that therefore it might be a good idea for you to move on, into a similar situation but of a somewhat different pattern. It's very difficult if you don't have any actual insight not to become attached to the house in which you live if you're there a long time, the garden, the people, the facilities, even the unattractive features [Laughter] - then you becoming rather fond of them too. The fact that there's a floorboard missing and a cobweb in the corner. You can become quite fond of that cobweb. You've seen it there for the last two years! It all becomes lovable.

So I think probably one can assume that after a couple of years you need a change. The same pattern, the same medicine perhaps but in a different bottle, so that you don't become attached to the bottle.

_____ : Or indifferent to the medicine.

S: Or indifferent to the medicine. You might even be so attached to the bottle that you don't notice the medicine's no longer there. [Technical Pause]

So I think therefore that one has to be very careful not to commit oneself or to say that one commits oneself to a particular situation, a particular place, community, centre, co-op, say for five years. I think one should be very very careful about making statements of this sort. I don't think one can commit oneself in that way. You don't know yourself well enough. We have had cases of people committing themselves even for five years to a particular place, a particular situation and then leaving after a year, which is really quite disgraceful but it's only to be expected because you don't know yourself well enough, you don't know how you are going to change, you don't know what you are going to need in a year or two years' time, so how can you commit yourself in that particular way? Especially if you're not even committed to the Three Jewels even. How do you know what might be good for you later on, or best for you later on?

So one should be a bit more circumspect, a bit more moderate and say well as far as I can see this place suits me and I have no thoughts of going anywhere else. This place is meeting all my needs and as far as I can see it's going to continue to meet all my needs. I have no thought of going elsewhere, but be open, at least in principle, to the idea of going somewhere else if actually that is what you need to do. If you've got an organisational responsibility, if you're a Secretary or a Chairman or something of that sort, well, you can't be an effective Secretary or Chairman without some continuity of tenure, some length of tenure. So if you become a Chairman, well obviously you have to commit yourself to that for a year or two years or three years, according to the circumstances of the case. But you can only do that if you really know yourself very well, and that means you have to be a reasonably mature person to be able to make that sort of commitment. [Pause]

_____ : You also have to be careful of not using that kind of argument as a rationalisation for.....

S: Oh yes indeed. You are between the devil and the deep blue sea, yes indeed.

_____ : Sometimes you hit a bump and say oh I actually need

S: Right. [Pause] But you can't ever find a situation which is free from risk. This is impossible. There is no foolproof situation, because into the situation you carry the fool, namely yourself! [Laughter]

Anyway I think we can leave it there for today. Oh we haven't said anything on the last line - 'Son, Rechungpa, it is better not to go, but stay!' Milarepa sums up his advice in those words. But as we shall see tomorrow Rechungpa disregards his guru's advice, which is rather sad but we'll deal with that tomorrow.

[End of tape]

Day 3, Tape 1

"In spite of the Jetsun's attempted dissuasion, Rechungpa was still bent on going. Milarepa then said, "It seems that you will not take my advice, but have made up your mind to leave. Well, although once I promised our patrons not to let you go to Weu, and swore to it, all oaths are like phantoms and dreams. So I will now grant your request and let you go. You may make your preparations at once."

Rechungpa was so delighted that he almost cried. He then stayed with the Jetsun for a few more days to learn more Pith-Instructions and to copy some scriptures.

At the time of his departure, Rechungpa dressed very simply in a cotton robe. He put the Ahru of Bhamen and the trident on his back, put the Scripture of the Whispered Succession under his arm, and came to the Jetsun for his farewell blessing.

Milarepa thought, "Rechungpa has lived with me for such a long time! After this separation we may never meet again." With this thought in his mind he escorted Rechungpa for a distance. When they came to the crest of a hill, he asked, "How will you walk on your way?" Rechungpa sang in answer:"

S: So 'In spite of the Jetsun's attempted dissuasion, Rechungpa was still bent on going. Milarepa then said, "It seems that you will not take my advice, but have made up your mind to leave.'" He's not open to any advice or suggestion from Milarepa. He's definitely made up his mind, he's just not going to listen to anything that Milarepa's going to say. Sometimes people do get into that sort of state of mind, don't they. They've made up their minds, right or wrong, and they're just not going to listen to anything that anybody can say. Sometimes if you know that they've made up their minds in this way you realise there's nothing that you can say. They're not open to reason - not open to conviction. So, Milarepa realises that this is, in fact the case with Rechungpa.

So he says: "Well, although once I promised our patrons not to let you go to Weu, and swore to it, all oaths are like phantoms and dreams. So I will now grant your request and let you go."

When Milarepa says: "all oaths are like phantoms and dreams", what does he mean? Does he mean that oaths, solemn promises are not of any real importance, have no substance in them?

Subhuti: They're not reality itself.

S: They're not reality itself, but is he in any way condoning the breaking of oaths?

_____: Is he saying that you're not, you don't always have control over what you promise?

S: Ah! You don't always have control over what you promise if what you promise involves what?

_____ : Someone else!

S: Someone else! In a sense you've no right to swear any oath involving other people. It's hard enough to guarantee your own behaviour what to speak of guaranteeing somebody else's. You can swear to be faithful to someone, you cannot swear that they're going to be faithful to you. You can promise to turn up yourself at the appointed time; you can't promise that other people will turn up at the appointed time. So perhaps Milarepa recognises this - he has promised the patrons that Rechungpa will not go to Weu. But when it comes to the point he can't really stop him going if he wants to. Perhaps even Milarepa underestimated Rechungpa's obstinacy and foolishness and egotism. Perhaps he really thought that Rechungpa always would listen to him. Well, now he realises he won't. So he says: "all oaths are like phantoms and dreams", that is to say oaths which involve other people are unreal. It's as though an oath which involves another person has no reality. You can't in fact make an oath involving another person.

So: "You may make your preparations at once". He gives in, he sees he's got no alternative. It's not always easy to do that when you can see that someone is making a mistake. You give your advice - it's very good advice, sensible advice, the right advice, but they don't listen! What are you to do? Some people become very angry and offended if their advice is not taken. They say, 'alright, I'll wash my hands of you, have nothing further to do with you. Won't listen to me? Alright, I'll never speak again, I'll never advise you again.' Some people react in that sort of way. But Milarepa doesn't, you see.

He says: "so I will now grant your request and let you go. You may make you preparations at once". And he even, as you'll see later gives Rechungpa a sort of send-off, - he escorts him part of the way, he doesn't react at all!

He doesn't hold it against Rechungpa that he's not following his advice. He still continues to do the best that he can for Rechungpa.

So: "Rechungpa was so delighted that he almost cried" What does this tell you about Rechungpa?

_____ : He needs the approval of Milarepa.

S: He needs the approval of Milarepa - also he really does want to have his own way! He's so pleased that, well, he's got his own way at last - he's overcome Milarepa's resistance. Milarepa has given in. He's so pleased, he almost cried, huh?

And also he doesn't really like to disagree with Milarepa. After all it's so simple, I mean, if Milarepa will only agree with him and let him do whatever he wants well everything will be lovely. So now it is - he's getting his own way, there's no conflict between him and his Guru. His Guru is being reasonable and agreeing to him doing what he wants to do. So he was so happy he almost cried.

"He then stayed with the Jetsun for a few more days to learn more Pith-Instructions and to copy some sutras" This is rather ironical that he is

disregarding Milarepa's advice and is going off to Weu even though Milarepa doesn't want him to go but, he spends a "few more days to learn more Pith-Instructions" and also to copy some scriptures.

One might have thought - well if he isn't really taking Milarepa's advice seriously when Milarepa gives it - well what's the point of copying his Pith-Instructions. But, apparently Rechungpa doesn't see that. Instructions are OK so long as they tell you to do what you want to do (laughter).

Ray: Perhaps he feels a bit guilty for going so he....

S: Perhaps he does, yes he'd better show now he is a good disciple after all. (Pause)

"At the time of his departure Rechungpa dressed very simply in a cotton robe" the typical Kagyupa garment. "He put the Ahru" [query, 'drug?'] "of Bhamen and the trident on his back, put the Scripture of the Whispered Succession under his arm and came to the Jetsun for his farewell blessing" It's quite interesting what he takes with him. First of all he dresses very simply in a cotton robe because he is a Repa - a "cotton-clad one" like Mila-repa. They wear the cotton robe - a robe of a single piece of cotton cloth - to indicate their proficiency in the practice of dumo or the production of the psychic heat so that they can live without any more clothing than just is required for the sake of decency.

He put the Ahru - which may be a drug - of Bhamen, and the trident on his back. Well, if it is a drug, a medicine, why do you think he's carrying it? It might be a sort of what we might call "magic pill" that he's acquired in India. Something which, if you swallow it, will help you in your meditation. Maybe it's a sort of medicine which has been blessed by some great guru. Tibetans do in fact believe very much in these sort of things. Sometimes they are made not only of herbs and other such things but they include a few hairs from the guru's head. I remember once I rather offended a Tibetan Lama because he had - he said he had some very good medicine with him which was very useful if your meditation wasn't going very well, so I said, "Oh, that's interesting, what's it like?" So he took it out and showed me and I said, "Well, what's that? It looks like some dog's hairs." So he said, "No! Those are some hairs from my guru's head!" (Laughter). The coarse black hairs looked to me just like a dog's hairs. (Laughter). And he said that whenever he felt ill or his meditation was disturbed, he just clipped off a very few pieces of these hairs and mixed it with his food and he said he always got better. He probably did. (Laughter).

So it might have been something like that. And a trident on his back. Why the trident? What is this trident.

_____ : Is it the same sort of trident that Padmasambhava has?

S: It could be. It can be one of either two things. It could be the, what is called the Kakara, the monastic staff. The Sarvastivadin Bhikkhus of India or Sarvastivadin Bhikkhus - I should say - developed the practice of monks - Bhikkhus, Bhikkhus, carrying with them an iron staff with rings attached to the top and surmounted by a trident; three prongs, the trident - the three prongs - representing the three jewels, and the various other sort of appurtenances of the staff had all sorts of other significances. But the practical purpose of the iron rings was to produce a jangling noise as you walked and to scare away insects from your path so that you wouldn't tread on them. So this staff was not used by the Theravadins but it was used by the Sarvastivadins. And it was the Vinaya in its Sarvastivadin form which was introduced into Tibet.

So Tibetans don't usually nowadays carry this iron staff but they know of it and Arahant disciples, Bhikshu disciples of the Buddha like Sariputra and Moggallana or Ananda rather or Kashyapa, when they are represented in art, when they make images of them, they give them staffs of this kind. You can probably see them in pictures of Tibetan art. So that is one possibility that it was a staff of this kind. The other possibility is that Rechungpa, like Milarepa, wasn't a Bhikshu at all. He seems to have been a sort of freelance wandering Yogi just like Milarepa. So these freelance wandering Yogis both in India and in Tibet, externally at least, looked a bit like the Hindu Yogis, the Shivite Yogis, who today still carry a trident, in fact. Just a simple trident. So it may have been simply this. It's called a Trisol. You find this trident on the top of Hindu temples which are dedicated to the God Siva. So it could have been either of these, either the orthodox Sarvastivadin Kakara, or it could have been a Hindu-type Trisol, or it might at that time have been a Buddhist Trisol, the Shivite ascetics might have adopted it from the Buddhists, it's difficult to say.

_____: Why would they be carrying that, Bhante?

S: I'm afraid the modern Hindu Yogis sometimes use it for fighting with. They use it as an offensive weapon. I don't think the Buddhists could have used it for that purpose. It could be that the trident also is a simplified form of the Kakara. It's quite difficult to say because the Kakara anyway does have a trident at the top.

Siddhiratna: Would the trident, I was thinking the trident symbolised a Buddhist and not a Hindu but the Hindu ones also have three prongs.

S: Yes. The trident does seem to be essentially a Buddhist symbol. It occurs very early in Buddhist art. Obviously representing the Three Jewels. The Hindus took over many symbols from the Buddhists - gave them a different significance.

Ratnaketu: When you were talking about the Hindu one were you just talking about the top bit.

S: Yes.

Ratnaketu: Or the whole, or does it have a big long.....

S: It does have a staff, yes. And Hindu Sadhus carry a - one explanation is that it's to keep wild beasts at bay - that is a possibility, because Yogis and ascetics often wander in the jungle or even live in the jungle so they might have needed some such weapon. So, anyway, whatever it is, he put the trident also on his back.

"Put the Scripture of the Whispered Succession under his arm" What does this signify - "under his arm"?

_____: Near his heart?

S: No. It means literally under his arm actually, but why under his arm? Is this how one usually keeps scriptures? (Pause) Do you usually put them under the arm?

Ratnaketu: He didn't have any baggage, pockets.

S: No. (Laughter) (Pause). Well the Tibetan Buddhist custom or tradition or practice is that you never put scriptures under your arm. To do this is considered very disrespectful. If you notice, if Tibetan monks or Lamas carry a book, a volume, they always carry it on the shoulder. This is considered more respectful. Do you see what I mean? This is the invariable practice. So, why do you think that Rechungpa "put the Scripture of the Whispered Succession under his arm?" in his armpit, virtually. Why? Do you think he was being deliberately disrespectful?

_____: Might it be to do with it being an esoteric text?

S: Yes! It's to do with it being an esoteric text. It says the "Scripture of the Whispered Succession" - obviously it's a record of orally transmitted teachings, which are not to be made known to the public. So you find, for instance in the Hevajra Tantra there is an instruction in the text itself that when you travel from place to place this is to be kept under the arm. What I think is meant - you must remember that Indian Scriptures were written on thin strips of Ola leaf. They could be about eight or ten inches long and about one and a half to two inches broad. I think that what often happened was they were sort of strapped under the arm and they were just sort of strapped here so that if the arm is close to the body they are completely hidden and no-one knows that there is any text there. I think this is the sort of way in which they were carried. So, clearly, Rechungpa is hiding these texts under his arm because they do contain orally transmitted material which is not to be made known to the general public, even to ordinary Buddhists. In other words the suggestion is he's fully equipped, he's a fully equipped and accoutered member of the Kagyupa Order or Kagyupa tradition. He's got his white cotton robe, he's got his drug - if it is a drug -to help him with his meditation, he's got his trident and he's got the text of the orally transmitted teachings under his arm. So equipped, he comes to Milarepa for his farewell blessing.

He's like an Order Member going off maybe to India with his, what shall we say, with his Kesa and, what else? Well, his copy of Shabda, of course! The latest one. His Puja book and so on. His travellers cheques (Laughter).

Milarepa thought, "Rechungpa has lived with me for such a long time! After this separation we may never meet again" Why is this? Why does he think that they may never meet again?

_____: Well, travelling's dangerous.

S: Travelling is dangerous, but also?

Ray: He thinks that Rechungpa might change his mind about the Dharma.

S: That's possible I suppose. But I think something else is uppermost in Milarepa's mind.

_____ : He might die.

S: He might die, because he is very old, maybe approaching eighty. So.. "With this thought in his mind he escorted Rechungpa for a distance." Even though Rechungpa had been so stubborn and so wilful, Milarepa's attitude towards him doesn't change.

"When they came to the crest of a hill he asked, 'How _____ will you walk on your way'. Rechungpa sang in answer:"

So Let's see what Rechungpa has to say. Would someone like to read the whole of that song.

*"Using the Dharma View as a simile,
I walk forward in the Manifestation Void.
With no thought of Nihilism or Realism, I walk ahead:
Following the Immutable path, I walk straight on.
Though my understanding may be poor, I have no regret.*

*Using the Dharma Practice as a simile,
I march forward in the Bliss-Illumination.
Neither drowsy nor distracted, I march ahead:
Following the Path of Light, I march straight on.
Though my practice may be poor, I have no regret.*

*Using the Dharma Action as a simile,
I walk forward in the Discipline.
Without foolish talk, I walk ahead:
Following the Path of Non-clinging, I walk straight on.
Though my action may be poor, I have no regret.*

*Using the Dharma of Samaya as a simile,
I walk forward in purity.
Without hypocrisy and circumvention, I walk ahead:
In the Path of Straightforwardness, I walk straight on.
Though my discipline may be poor, I have no regret.*

*Using the Accomplishment of Dharma as a simile,
I walk forward in Immanence.
Without fear and hope, I march ahead:
In the Path of Four Bodies, I march straight on.
Though my accomplishment may be small, I have no regret.*

*Using the Jetsun Marpa as a simile,
I walk forward in the Whispered Lineage
Without talk and words, I walk ahead:
Following the Path of Pith-Instruction, I walk straight on.
Though my spiritual provision is meagre, I have no regret.*

*Using my Guru Milarepa as a simile,
I march forward in Fortitude.
Without laziness and sloth, I march ahead:
In the Path of Diligence, I march straight on.
Though my perseverance may be small, I have no regret.*

*Using myself, Rechungpa, as a simile,
I walk forward in the way of the Gifted Ones.
Without deviation and wrong thoughts, I walk ahead:
In the Path of Veneration, I walk straight on.
Though my prayer may be feeble, I have no regret."*

S: Rechungpa says quite a lot in this song:

"Using the Dharma View as a simile, I walk forward in the Manifestation Void". So what is this "Dharma View"? This particular trinity of terms is very common in Tibetan Buddhism. That is to say, The View, the Practice, and the Action. You notice there's a verse about each of these in turn. So the View means, as it were, the fundamental, the basic philosophy, the philosophy which forms, as it were, the theoretical foundation of a particular kind of spiritual path, and the type of action relevant or appropriate to that path.

For instance, if you are, let us say, a follower of the Madhyamika School, then your view is of the fundamental voidness of all dharmas. If you are a follower of the Yogachara School then your view is that all dharmas are One-Mind. Do you see what I mean? So the View indicates the basic philosophy of Buddhism, which is not a philosophy in a purely intellectual or academic sense. As I said, it represents the theoretical foundation of the particular spiritual path. But more specifically the View represents the philosophy, not of Buddhism generally, but of a particular school or a particular tradition.

So Rechungpa says: "Using the Dharma View as a simile, I walk forward in the Manifestation Void." It's as though the doctrine of the Manifestation Void, in which there is neither Nihilism or Realism constitutes the "View" of the school to which Rechungpa belongs.

But what is this Manifestation Void? What does one mean by Manifestation Void? What is Manifestation here do you think? What Sanskrit word does this probably represent.

_____: Dharma?

S: No, I don't think it's dharma. I think it's more likely to be rupa, because the correlative of sunyata - void - is rupa, usually. So it's the view of sunyata and rupa. But what kind of view of sunyata and rupa? How does one see sunyata and rupa?

Ratnaketu: They are not distinct.

S: They are not distinct: they are not two. As in fact the Heart Sutra says: that there is no fundamental duality between the so-called reality and the so-called appearance. This is the View, and therefore: "with no thought of Nihilism or Realism, I walk ahead." What are these two views, Nihilism and Realism? In Sanskrit they are Uchedavada and Sasvatavada. There are many references to them in the Pali texts. Are you familiar with these? Originally they arise within the context of so-called rebirth. The view or the teaching that when you die your being is just cut off, that you altogether cease to exist, that there is no life after death, this is called the view of Nihilism. Do you see what I mean? That while you are alive, you exist, but after you are dead you do not exist in any sense.

Death represents the complete cessation of whatever existence, whatever being you had. So, as I said, the word Ucheda literally means "cutting"; at the time of death you are completely cut off - nothing of you survives death. So this is called Uchedavada or, as we usually translate it in English, Nihilism.

The opposite of that is sassatavada in Pali, sasvatavada in Sanskrit. This is the view that after death, or upon death, you continue to exist. You continue to exist, as it were, unchanged. That there is in you an eternal, unchanging immutable "core", as it were, as it were of self-hood, which survives death unchanged and persists after death, continues after death. So this view is sasvatavada, the view of, well, it's usually translated, "Eternalism". That you eternally exist, eternally exist in the sense that your existence is indefinitely continued or prolonged within time, and of course continues after the death, after the disappearance, of the physical body. So that "Eternalism" is here translated as "Realism". So do you see the difference between these two points of view? So the question arises "What was the Buddha's point of view? Did the Buddha hold that one ceases to exist at the time of bodily death, or did he hold that you survived bodily death? What was his view?

_____: Neither and both. A sort of Middle Way.

S: A sort of Middle Way, but in what did that Middle Way consist? Can there be a Middle Way between Nihilism and Realism? Is it possible?

What is the alternative? Is there an alternative to these two views?

Ratnaketu: Isn't it that you are continually changing, that you are neither lasting forever and you're neither dying, you're neither sort of not-existing because you're continually changing all the time.

S: Hm, Yes. So in speaking in terms of Realism or Eternalism the emphasis is on the continuation of your being unchanged, or at least that the nucleus of your being survives unchanged. Usually, of course, Hindus who held to this belief believed in an unchanging Atman. They believed that even though the physical body ceased to exist, the Atman went marching on, so to speak. For instance, in the Bhagavad Gita - The Bhagavad Gita being of course a classic Hindu text - Sri Krishna says that: Just as a man puts off one set of clothes and dresses himself in another set of clothes; in the same way the Atman, the soul, discards one physical body and takes another. The physical body - the Atman itself - remaining unchanged even though the physical body changes.

So that is not the Buddhist view. The Buddhist view is that there is no unchanging Atman. Usually the term used is Anatta or Anatma which means no-atma or no-atta, no soul or no self, howsoever you translate it. But remember, what was the definition of Atman. Atman was defined in the Buddha's day at least by some schools, as being essentially unchanging. So that what the Buddha's Anatta or Anatman teaching negates is an unchanging ego-entity at the 'heart' so the speak, of human personality. So in order to bring out the full meaning of the term Anatta or Anatman or Nairatmya

we should translate not no-soul but no unchanging soul, no unchanging self. Do you see what I mean? So the Buddha did maintain that death was not the end. There was psychical continuity beyond death but this psychical continuity was not to be understood as the persistence of some unchanging entity but the continuity of a process which even during life itself, even before death, was a process.

According to Buddhism our so-called soul, our so-called self or Atman as the Hindus call it, is in fact a sort of stream of mental states and processes, not anything fixed or unchanging. And this stream flows on after bodily death, still continually changing. So this is why we also have in this connection the question or the problem of who is reborn. Is it the same person or is it another person? If you say it's another person, well then you fall into the Wrong View of Nihilism, because it's just one person succeeding another. After you there is somebody else. So there's a gap in between. If you say it's the same person well then you suggest that it's one unchanging soul continuing, so that would be Eternalism. So what in fact happens, according to Buddhism is that in dependence upon the last moment of consciousness of the so-called being of this life there arises the first moment of consciousness of the being of the next life, so that the two can neither be said to be different nor can be said to be the same. There is continuity but not identity. This is the standard Buddhist position. You see what I mean?

So you cannot say that the person who is, so to speak, reborn, is the same as the one who existed before nor can you say that he is different. Those two expressions do not in fact express - neither of those two expressions - expresses the truth of the situation. Do you see what I mean? This is sort of standard even basic Buddhist teaching. But Buddhism goes even further than that because it says even in this present life itself - leave aside the question of Rebirth - you are a process, you are constantly changing so that you today are not the same person as you yesterday. You are neither the same nor different. The truth of your existence can neither be explained in terms of unchanging existence nor in terms of

non-existence, nor a combination of the two. Do you see what I mean? From instant to instant you are a mental state which arises in dependence on the preceding mental state. And in dependence on that present mental state there arises the future mental state. There is continuity but there is no identity. Or rather, the continuity does not consist in the conservation of any unchanging element. There is pure process, there is change but there is nothing that changes. There is Rebirth but there is nobody who is reborn. There is Enlightenment, there is the attainment of Enlightenment, but there is nobody who attains enlightenment. This is, of course, a fundamental Buddhist teaching. So if one goes a little more deeply into it one may say that the Buddhist view is that from the flux of existence, from the flux of experience, we abstract sort of different bits and pieces so we imagine the continuity of existence as consisting of bits which are sort of artificially joined together. And there are sort of gaps in between those bits - so we have existence-non-existence, existence-non-existence but the difficulty is in explaining, well, if they are different how come that they are connected?

The Buddhist view therefore is that there is continuity. You cannot express the truth of the matter either in terms of existence or in terms of non-existence or both or neither. These concepts are quite inadequate to deal with the flow, as it were, of reality. So this is the view of Manifestation Void with no thought of Nihilism or Realism, that you do not see existence in terms of existence or in terms of non-existence or in terms of any combination of those terms. Original Buddhism, as we may call it, what as far as we know was the Buddha's own teaching, applied this kind of approach as it were psychologically, to the question of the individual life especially in relation to the question of death and future rebirth. But in the Mahayana the approach is much wider, much broader, and the Mahayana denies that these terms - existence and non-existence - have any validity with regard to existence as a whole. And this, of course, is the significance basically of the Śūnyata teaching. When one says that existence is void, śūnyata, what does one mean. We mustn't take the "empty" too literally. It means it is empty of any concepts, that all you have is "pure experience, pure existence" - inverted commas - because you cannot really speak of Reality let us say in terms either of existence or of non-existence, or both, or neither.

What it's really saying is existence and experience transcend the capacity of thought fully to express them. Existence transcends thought. This is the basic teaching in a way, the basic view here of the Mahayana in general. Thought is not adequate to existence, or, if you like, to life. Life transcends thought. Thought is only a by-product of life. Thought cannot handle life, cannot fully express life, cannot fully express experience, existence, reality. Because usually we are trapped by our thoughts. We not only think that thoughts are adequate to express reality but even that thoughts are reality. We mistake the finger for the moon to which the finger is pointing. So this is the fundamental postulate, if you like of the Mahayana, especially as regards the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, the Prajnaparamita Sutras, that reality transcends thought, that thought cannot be fully and satisfactorily, that Reality cannot be fully and satisfactorily expressed in terms of thought, however profound.

So existence and non-existence, being and non-being are especially mentioned because they are, as it were, the fundamental concepts. Do you see? They are the most general, the most abstract. If you negate them you negate all thoughts, all concepts. So if you say that Reality cannot be expressed either in terms of existence or non-existence, or both, or neither, you are, in fact, saying that existence, to use that term, cannot be expressed in terms of either existence or non-existence, or in terms of thought at all.

So this is the view. So, Rechungpa says: "Using the Dharma View as a simile, I walk forward in the Manifestation Void. With no thought of Nihilism or Realism, I walk ahead: Following the Immutable path, I walk straight on. Though my understanding may be poor, I have no regret."

What is this "Immutable Path"? I suspect that this really represents the Vajra-yana - the path of the Tantric tradition, which is, after all, the path which he actually follows - the Kagyupa School is an essentially Tantric School, a Vajrayana School. So to "walk forward in the Manifestation Void with no thought of Nihilism or Realism" - what does this really mean? What does it boil down to in say simple terms?

Subhuti: Direct experience.

S: Direct experience. Your path is a path of direct experience. It is not a dualistic path. Duality is a product of the mind itself. Your path is not a path of concepts, not a path of words. It's a path simply of experience. That is all that you are concerned with. That is the path of the Vajrayana, the immutable path - and that is the path Rechungpa says, on which he walks, straight on. So "Though my understanding may be poor, I have no regret."

So it's very important to remember this, not only with regard to the Vajrayana but with regard to Buddhism as a whole, that one is primarily concerned with experience. Though even the concept of experience has its limitations, as I think I pointed out in that lecture on "Buddhism as Experience and" - (Interruption:**Subhuti:** Enlightenment!) **S:** "Enlightenment as Experience and Non-Experience". Because, if you're not careful, even experience can become a concept. You can be caught up with the concept of "Experience". Your experience. I mean, this whole concept of experience is grossly overworked. You've probably heard this joke about people in California. Have you heard that one? (Laughter) That you know in California it takes four people to mend a telegraph wire. One man to do the job, and the other three to share in the experience. (Laughter)

[End of side one side two]

Siddhiratna: It takes one man to change a lightbulb but the lightbulb has really got to change (Laughter)

S: All right, let's go on then....

Subhuti: Bhante, before you do, do you think that we have a View in this sense, within the FWBO. Do you think it's not something that's crystallised yet?

S: Hmmmm. That is quite interesting. I would say to the extent that there is a View, it is this View: It is probably, so far, at least the view of the Madhyamika rather than that of the Yogacara, this is as far as I would say myself or this is what I would say myself. It does seem that the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras and the Madhyamika school even, at least from a certain point of view, do give expression to what, as far as we can see is the ultimate View, that is, thought, concepts, taken as far as they possible can be taken. And even the Yogachara View seems to be to some extent - though very useful, and very sublime - to some extent a falling away from that, almost a concession to relative truth. So I think one could say that though we don't make much of it, that the sunyata-rupa, that rupa is sunyata, sunyata is rupa, is our View, so to speak.

In other words, putting it in very plain, direct, down-to-earth terms, that we stress the primacy of experience over thoughts and stating that in the

traditional, conceptual Indian way is to state the Madhyamika philosophy. It is perhaps worth pointing out that, according to some authorities at least, the Vajrayana itself represents a direct application, a direct working out in practical terms of the Madhyamika standpoint, especially the Mahamudra, which includes, of course, the Atuyoga the Dzog-chen practices. They all represent so many different direct applications of the fundamental, as it were, Madhyamika viewpoint.

Subhuti: Zen is founded on Yogacara, that's the View.

S: Well, yes and no. (Laughter). Historically the tradition is that Bodhidharma, when he went to China, took with him a copy of the Lankavatara Sutra. That is the sort of legendary account of the introduction of Zen, so to speak, into Southern China. Scholars say, from a more historical point of view, that the Zen movement, or Ch'an movement, I should say, probably originated among a group of Chinese students of the Lankavatara Sutra, so to that extent Ch'an has its origins in the Lankavatara Sutra, but nonetheless, even though that might have been the origin historically, quite soon, quite early in the history of Ch'an, the Diamond Sutra in particular became of crucial importance. It's the Diamond Sutra that one finds Hui Neng represented as tearing up. Not tearing up the Diamond Sutra because he favoured the Lankavatara Sutra but tearing up that because once you'd torn up that you've torn up everything.

So that suggests that that was regarded as the ultimate Sutra, and certainly, for hundreds of years, maybe for more than a thousand years, well over a thousand years, Ch'an and Zen have based themselves certainly much more on the Diamond Sutra - which is a Perfection of Wisdom Sutra - than on the Lankavatara Sutra, to the extent of course that they base themselves on Scriptures at all. But it's as though the typical Ch'an Realisation, if one can speak in those terms, is closer to the typical Perfection of Wisdom Realisation than to the typical Lankavatara Sutra type Realisation.

Subhuti: I was thinking that modern-day Zen seems to be prone to one or two philosophical difficulties, such as that you are already the Buddha....

S: Yes, Indeed!

Subhuti: which seems to follow on from the Yogachara standpoint.

S: One could look at it like that, yes.

Subhuti: Unless you apply sort of Madhyamika analysis to the Yogachara.....

S: Or to the very concept of One-ness.

Subhuti: Yes. You get into all sorts of difficulties.

S: Well, the classic example of that is, the, I think it's a sort of Koan that when you have reduced all things to the One-mind to what will you reduce the One-mind? So that represents a sort of, in a nutshell, Madhyamika critique of the Yogachara. I remember that Mr Chen and I used to discuss this quite a lot and it was Mr Chen's view - I don't know to what extent this is right or wrong, though it appeared quite plausible and quite acceptable to me - it was Mr Chen's view that the difference between the two schools was - that the Madhyamika reduced everything directly to sunyata whereas, according to him, the Yogacara reduced everything to the One-mind, and then reduced the One-mind itself to sunyata. He did not agree that the Yogachara represented an inferior truth or a lower truth, but simply represented a different procedure in this way. So you can understand that as quite plausible and quite acceptable, but nonetheless it does represent the Madhyamika "viewpoint" - inverted commas - as being the ultimate viewpoint.

Though again, of course, Nagarjuna makes it very clear in his Madhyamika-Karika that he does not propound any "View". The Madhyamika is the negation of all views because it's the negation of all thoughts, it is the negation of all systematic intellectual constructions about reality. He stresses the "unthinkability" of Reality but stresses that "unthinkability" is not a concept to be "applied to" Reality. It's very easy to juggle around with these refined, even Madhyamika come Ch'an come Mahamudra concepts but it's really very difficult actually to stop thinking in those terms and actually to experience reality, so to speak. So, yes one could say that the Madhyamika View - which is of course a Non-view, is the ultimate View, it's the ultimate View because it is a Non-view. Perhaps one can't really say anything more than that.

_____: Did the Yogacara, Bhante, develop subsequent to the Madhyamika historically speaking.

S: Yes, it did. Perhaps it's worthwhile saying a few words about that, although I have spoken about this in the *Survey*. It did, - just before you asked that question it occurred to me that one could posit a closer connection between the Yogacara and Samatha practice and between the Madhyamika and Vipassana practice, though this is only very rough and ready and as it were approximate. It does seem that the Madhyamika tradition eventually did get bogged down in dialectics and got out of touch with actual spiritual transcendental experience and therefore the Yogacara school, so to speak, came along and started stressing, or rather re-stressing, the importance of Meditation - of Yoga - of the practice of Yoga in the sense of Meditation - Yoga-cara -that is what it means - "practice of Yoga" - the School of the Practice of Yoga".

So, the Yogacara came along later than the Madhyamika in that sort of way. Originally, of course, the Madhyamika Insights were Insights that revealed themselves within the context of meditation, but eventually the context disappeared - one was left with the intellectual, conceptual formulations of the Insights, and then the formulations were evacuated of Insight and you had just formulations and you just played around with those and in that way you had a dry Madhyamika dialectic. So, the Yogacara stressed that one must get back to experience, get back to meditation. So they did do that, but perhaps they got a bit too much back into meditation, a bit too much into samatha and started looking at, or interpreting reality in terms of, meditation experience, samatha experience, and therefore perhaps started thinking of reality more in terms of One-Mind, One-Consciousness. So one needed a sort of Madhyamika critique of that side of () - which, of, course, to give them their due, the Yogacarins often did provide for themselves. In the end perhaps you got a sort of blend almost of Yogacara and Madhyamika. You get that in Tibetan Buddhism - the two schools aren't really separated. You can either go directly to the Void, reduce everything to the Void, or reduce everything to Mind first, the One-Mind first and then reduce that to the Void. But, in either case you get back to the Void, sunyata. You have to relinquish all concepts about reality in order fully to experience reality. You can't even think of it any longer in terms of reality, you can't even

oppose the Real to the Unreal, can't even oppose sunyata to rupa.

Anandajyoti: was going to ask how was it that the Yogacarin formulation of One-Mind actually helped them - how it helped them to place the stress on meditation. Or was it the other way round - are you suggesting that they first felt the need to go back to meditation and out of that came the formulations?

S: It does seem that this is a valid historical interpretation, a valid historical way of looking at things. One can't be completely sure because after all the Yogacara began, so to speak, with sutras. Those sutras purport to be the teachings of the Buddha. But they could have been - it's very difficult to say - teachings which were put down by people who felt that the Madhyamika had become too one-sidedly intellectual and dialectical - teachings which were attributed to the Buddha himself, it's very difficult for us now to tell. Perhaps there isn't always that sharp antithesis between the Madhyamika and Yogacara approaches in some cases. But certainly, if we go through the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, the language used, so to speak, is very conceptual more often than not. Whereas if we go through the Lankavatara Sutra we have a great feeling of experience being stressed. The typical expression is *pratyaksha-gochara* which is something like.... well the field or sphere of experience. Suzuki brings this out very well in some of his studies of the Lankavatara Sutra. I think probably since the Madhyamika approach is so rarefied and deals with very refined concepts and expresses its Insight in terms of very refined concepts, it'll always need, so to speak, the Yogacara corrective which insists upon the necessity of the meditative context within which alone those refined concepts can have their full significance or convey their full significance. You do find among Tibetan Lamas, among Tibetan Geshe very highly learned men, who know their Madhyamika philosophy thoroughly, inside out, with all commentaries and sub-commentaries and so on, but who in fact are just intellectuals who don't meditate, who haven't, in fact, developed the appropriate or corresponding insight. And so far as they're concerned the Madhyamika is just the school of philosophy. You are a Madhyamikavadin just as in the West you might be an Aristotlean or a Hegelian or a Kantian.

So perhaps the Yogacara emphasis is always needed. In a way perhaps the Yogacara approach or reducing everything to the One-Mind first is safer because that ensures that you do actually get onto the path of meditation, though again one must say that the Yogacara in the end became scholastic too. It developed a sort of Abidharma of its own and became over-preoccupied not with the practise of meditation but with the actual study of different states of consciousness from a scholastic point of view. So you always have to remain on the alert. There's no school of philosophy, no View even, to which you can commit yourself with the certainty that it won't ever petrify or ossify into just an academic system. (Pause)

Subhuti: That's our View.

S: Yes, that's our View. But that is, in historical terms, the Madhyamika View. In the context of the Theravada, in the context of the Theravada Pali scriptures, you find a sort of Madhyamika attitude in a way in the Buddha's teachings, in some chapters of the Sutta-nipata, especially the Atthaka-vagga, we've never had a study-seminar on that but if we ever did that would be really the sort of study-seminar to end all study-seminars; we probably wouldn't dare to have one again after that, we'd be so thoroughly disillusioned about words and concepts everybody would just go off into their mountain hermitages in disgust and just meditate for the rest of their lives. (Laughter).

Subhuti: What's that translate as.

S: The chapter of the eights - Atthaka-vagga. It's a very difficult chapter - very well translated by Woodward into verse and even though it's verse he's managed it very, very well. (Pause).

Then: "Using the Dharma Practice as a simile, I march forward in the Bliss- Illumination. Neither drowsy nor distracted, I march ahead: Following the Path of Light, I march straight on. Though my practice may be poor, I have no regret."

So, based upon the View there is the Practice - your Practice in the broadest sense. So here the Practice is that of Bliss-Illumination. So what is that all about? Bliss-Illumination - what does that represent?

Subhuti: Sounds like samatha-vipassana.

S: There is certainly a parallel, there is certainly a correspondence but in a rather special kind of way. (Pause).

"Bliss" stands for not only samatha, it stands, in a way, for emotion, it stands for the organic, it stands for the material, it stands for the mundane, it stands for the body.

"Illumination" stands for all the corresponding things. It stands for - what shall we say? - it stands for Insight, it stands for Awareness, it stands for the Unconditioned and so on.

Ratnaketu: That corresponds to the View that.....

S: The Practice essentially is the bringing together of these two, the harmonising of these two, the integration of these two on every level of one's being. So, "Bliss" sums up the entire, as it were, mundane side of things, "Illumination" sums up the entire spiritual-come-transcendental side of things and these are to be unified. The energies that are in the Samsara, the powerful, even violent energies, that are in the Samsara, that produce the Samsara are not to be discarded, are not to be thrown away. They are to be utilised, they are to be channelled in the direction of the Spiritual, in the direction of Enlightenment, in the direction of Illumination, and eventually harmonised with it, blended with it.

Ratnaketu: I've been thinking about this. If you say you've got a lot of Samsaric energies in a particular direction, how are you to bring these into line, how are you to get these.....

S: Well, there are all sorts of ways. One way is meditation, another way is through the appreciation and the enjoyment of the Arts, but using the Arts for this particular purpose. Another way is remaining mindful whatever you do. Another way is, of course, associating different activities with the repetition of different Mantras, do you see what I mean? But the basic practice, according to the Vajrayana, or at least according to the Kagyupa School, is that there should be this blending of Bliss and Illumination at every level. Bliss, in a way, represents the worldly, because

usually our enjoyments are of a purely worldly nature. So the Vajrayana View is that that aspect of things is not to be discarded. It is to be blended with the Spiritual, blended with Illumination, refined, if you like, rather than given up. Because, after all, the energy that has produced us, that has sort of precipitated us into another life, another birth, must be a tremendous energy, so it's not a question of just trying to cut that off, but rather of channelling it, leading it, sublimating it, if you like - but that's a rather ambiguous term - but blending it with the Spiritual, with Illumination.

So it's in this sense that the Vajrayana is non-ascetic. It's in this sense that it is even, in a way, hedonistic, but it's the "Higher Hedonism" so to speak. Sometimes the Vajrayana is spoken of as the "easy path" or the "pleasurable path" or the "Blissful path" because it doesn't require you to give up Bliss. Well, no form of Buddhism does really, but some stress this point more than others. In the Dhammapada, the Buddha's disciples are represented as declaring - "Happily we live. Joyfully or Blissfully we live, among those who are not happy, not joyful, not blissful".

So Bliss is a sort of psycho-physical experience and that sort of psycho-physical experience of Bliss in the highest sense is to be united with the realisation, one might say, of the Void.

The most intense experience of Bliss of course is in connection with meditation. (Pause).

So the Vajrayanic approach is that if you have any intensely pleasurable experience, the attitude is not that this is a pleasure, this is quite dangerous, I'd better stop this, I'd better give this up. The approach or the attitude is rather of let me be very mindful with regard to this pleasure, let me try to lead the energy that is in that pleasure, let me try to lead that kind of Bliss in such a way that it can be united with a higher spiritual insight and understanding. That higher insight and understanding is not regarded as something sort of dry and barren and intellectual. It has a deeply emotional significance. It is in fact a deeply emotional experience also, as well as being an insight, as well as being an illumination.

It's significant that we usually think of worldly life as enjoyable and spiritual life as rather difficult and painful. It shouldn't be like that, the Vajrayana says. It's as though the Vajrayana is saying the same enjoyment that you get out of mundane life and more you should be getting out of spiritual life. Transfer your mundane enjoyment to the spiritual level, as it were. This is what it is saying. Blend your Bliss and your Illumination. So this is the Path, or rather this is the Practice, in principle, according to Rechungpa, according to the Kagyupa tradition; and this, of course does, so to speak, tie in with the View. Because if, according to the View, no duality is ultimate, no concepts fully express the nature of reality, then if you have a non-dualistic view, you cannot have a dualistic practice, - you must have a non-dualistic practice. You cannot regard the Samsara and the Nirvana as being ultimately two things. Of course, to begin with, you have to do that, and this is where, of course, the Action comes in. But we'll go on to that in a minute.

So Rechungpa says: "Using the Dharma Practice as a simile, I march forward in the Bliss Illumination". I progressively, within my experience, bring together Bliss - especially Meditative Bliss - and Illumination - especially the Illumination brought about by insight.

"Neither drowsy nor distracted, I march ahead." Why are drowsiness and distraction especially mentioned?

Subhuti: The two things - the two extremes of what can happen to energy - it can either be dull or scattered.

S: Usually regarded as the two great Hindrances of opposite nature, to meditation. You can either become dull and drowsy and sluggish and torpid, or restless, distracted and so on. Rechungpa seems to more incline to the second of these two Hindrances.

So: "Neither drowsy nor distracted, I march ahead: Following the Path of Light, I march straight on. Though my practice may be poor, I have no regret".

And then, after View and Practice, the Action; the particular, the specific, Action appropriate to the practice. The practice as outlined in the previous verse is very broad indeed, this bringing together of Bliss-Illumination, this is a very broad sort of thing, a very broad type of practice - one needs to come down to concrete details. So: "Using the Dharma Action as a simile, I walk forward in the Discipline. Without foolish talk I walk ahead: Following the Path of Non-clinging, I walk straight on, Though my action may be poor, I have no regret."

So, first of all you have the View, you have your basic spiritual outlook upon life, if you like, your "philosophy" - inverted commas - and then you have the Practice - which represents in broadest outline the application of that View. But that Practice has to be worked out in a detailed manner, by you in your actual, concrete, individual situation and that constitutes the Action.

So: "Using the Dharma Action as a simile, I walk forward in the Discipline." You need to follow a disciplined way of life, you need to observe particular precepts, whatever they may be, and Rechungpa especially mentions that "Without foolish talk I walk ahead." This is just a typical precept. I don't know why he especially mentions that - perhaps because he himself is particularly prone to engage in foolish talk. In any case it represents a dissipation of energy.

"Following the Path of Non-Clinging, I walk straight on. Though my action may be poor, I have no regret" He seems to have in mind as his Action a rather ascetic lifestyle. The ascetic lifestyle is the concrete application of the general method or, if you like, principle of the practice, at least here for him.

_____: The Path of Non-clinging brought to my mind that Aphorism of William Blake which goes something like: "He who binds to himself a joy, does the winged life destroy, but he who kisses a joy as it flies lives in eternity's sunrise."

S: Yes.

_____: So that's a bit related to pleasure which is related to

S: The pleasure is not to be eschewed but is to be made the - what shall I say? - (pause) - well, is to be enjoyed - not to be made the occasion of clinging. And this is a quite fine point, even a quite dangerous point you may say. Pleasure plays a very important part in people's lives, doesn't it? Unconsciously people pursue pleasure. You think in terms of good food to eat, you think in terms of being warm and comfortable rather than cold and uncomfortable. Your organism quite naturally pursues what is pleasurable, follows after what is pleasurable. In a sense there's nothing

wrong in that, there's nothing wrong, according to Buddhism, in pleasure. Pleasure, the experience of pleasure is ethically neutral, obviously, because pleasure is a vipaka, it's a result. Here are you, as it were, passive, you've got your sense organs. There comes to you a pleasurable sensation. There's nothing unskillful in that. There's nothing unskillful in the experience of pleasurable sensations. Pleasurable sensations, in fact, have a tonic effect on the system. You could hardly live without them.

But unskillfulness comes in your volitional reaction to them. If you start not just experiencing the pleasure, the pleasurable sensation, but grasping it, clinging to it, becoming attached to it, trying to perpetuate it, that is the unskillful element. So our experience is such that very often as soon as we experience the pleasure we - I won't say experience - but we generate the clinging. If you look at the list of the twelve nidanas you find that in dependence upon feeling, and this means pleasurable feeling here, arises craving. This is the usual pattern, and usually the craving arises so quickly upon the pleasurable experience that for us the two are just indistinguishable. So, because they tend to be indistinguishable, having understood that craving is something that we must get rid of, we try to get rid of craving by shutting out, or by blocking off, the experience of pleasure. Do you see what I mean? We try to make sure, so to speak, that we won't ever commit any theft by cutting off our hands. Or we try to make quite sure that we'll never speak a lie by cutting out our tongue. But is that really the way? No!

So it has to be emphasised that the experience of pleasure - even intense pleasure is not in itself either skilful or unskillful. It's a vipaka. What is either unskillful or skilful is our reaction. If our reaction is one of craving, clinging, attachment, then that is unskillful. So the Vajrayana makes the view not only that you should give up craving but it positively makes the point that you should not give up pleasure. Do you see what I mean? Because pleasure is, in a way, what keeps you going. Pleasure is your life, pleasure is your energy. Energy is eternal delight, Blake said. Delight is eternal energy. So if you try to get rid of craving by getting rid of pleasure - well you may succeed but you'd be throwing away the baby with the bathwater, so to speak. You may be a very craving-free person but if you're at the same time a pleasure-free person well, what sort of person are you? You're a very dull Jack indeed! Do you see what I mean? So the Vajrayana says yes, give up craving - it's fully in favour of giving up craving as all Buddhist schools are. Out with craving! Down with craving! (laughter) Craving is just not on. But other Buddhist schools usually have got a rather unenthusiastic attitude towards pleasure. Do you see what I mean?

The Vajrayana, on the other hand, seems to have a very enthusiastic attitude towards pleasure. Yes! Enjoy yourselves boys, let pleasure build up, enjoy all sorts of intense pleasurable experiences, but: no craving. Blend the experience of pleasure with the experience of Illumination. This is the Vajrayana attitude which is rather different. It's a very difficult one because it's so easy to fool yourself. So therefore you need, I think, for the "safe" practice of the Vajrayana some preliminary asceticism. And that's where the Act here comes in. "Using the Dharma Action as a simile, I walk forward in the Discipline. Without foolish talk I walk ahead: Following the Path of Non-clinging, I walk straight on." You've got to be really sure that you can enjoy pleasure without clinging to it. But the Vajrayana almost goes as far as to say: not only that you can't gain Enlightenment so long as you engage, indulge in craving, it almost says you can't gain Enlightenment so long as you don't experience a lot of pleasure. Because, after all, yes, you do experience pleasure in the context of meditation, certainly. But the Vajrayana almost seems to say, well, it doesn't matter what kind of pleasure you experience, pleasure of meditation, pleasure of worldly life, yes, experience it all, but no craving. It's a very difficult path, it's sometimes called a heroic path.

There are said to be sort of three main paths, though this is not so much a Buddhist as a Hindu formulation. There's the Path of the I'm forgetting these things a bit there's the Divine Path - that is the Path of the man who is not moved by pleasure; not moved by worldly things:

he's the Divine Man. Then there's the Heroic Man. The Heroic man is moved by them but he continues to live in the midst of them and he controls his use of them. And then there's of course the Demoniactal or Diabolical Man. Well you can guess what he's like! [Laughter]

But this is the Heroic attitude, you do not, you do not refrain from pleasure because of the fear that pleasure might give rise to craving and attachment. So the Vajrayana says that, almost says that the experience of pleasure is almost in a sense equally necessary, as much necessary as the experience of Non-clinging. It doesn't make things easy for you, it says, no, I'm not going to allow you to give up the pleasure. I insist that you have the pleasure without the craving, which is really difficult. So you really need to go into training for that! (Laughter). So, the Theravada tends to say that well, the craving is such a terrible thing and pleasure is so likely to give rise to craving that in order to be quite sure of not being entangled in craving you'd better give up, you'd better give up pleasure. And the only pleasure that is permissible at all is that which comes from meditation. That tends to be the Theravada View, and even the Mahayana view to some extent, but certainly not the Vajrayana View.

The Vajrayana View is in a way much more courageous, much more heroic, and also, I think, more real, because one finds in one's own experience one is very much on a sort of tightrope because you've got to keep yourself balanced between pleasure without craving and non-craving without the elimination of pleasure.

Siddhiratna: There's a difference between pleasure-enjoying and pleasure-seeking.

S: Yes, usually if you seek pleasure it is because of your attachment to it - usually.

Siddhiratna: The pleasure giving (rather) as opposed to pleasure seeking.

S: But, I mean, there's a lot of things that are pleasurable which come to you without your seeking them. Like the pleasure of enjoying the warmth of the sunshine and so on, the pleasure of enjoying nature, the elements.

Anyway we can enjoy now our cup of tea without clinging (Laughter).

[End of tape - Day 3 Tape 1 - next tape - Day 3 Tape 2]

Ratnaketu: You know how you said that the Vajrayana path doesn't deny pleasure and that it's much harder to because of that. It's more of a challenge that and you said you needed a lot of practice to prepare yourself - would this preparation involve not having pleasure for a while?

S: Oh yes, it could involve that, because as I mentioned, usually in our experience the result process and the action process are very difficult to distinguish. I spoke of the twelve nidanas. I spoke of craving arising in dependence on feeling, that is to say especially pleasurable feeling. Pleasurable feeling, or feeling in general, is the last nidana of the result process of the present life. Craving is the first nidana of the action process of the present life. Usually what happens is that in dependence on the experience of, say, pleasurable feeling, craving arises so quickly that we're not able to separate them. It's almost a sort of single experience. So what we need to be able to do is to separate pleasure from

craving, so in order to be able to do that we may have to separate ourselves from pleasure, especially from particular pleasures, things that we particularly enjoy, so that we can just separate the craving from the pleasure.

You might, for instance, find certain kinds of food or the eating of certain kinds of food, intensely pleasurable; in fact you may find eating itself intensely pleasurable. Alright, you go on a fast. So what happens? - you're not eating food, and you can experience the craving separately from the experience of pleasure which you get from eating. So if you can experience the craving separately from the pleasure, you may be able to experience the pleasure separately from the craving. At least you can produce a gap so that later on you'll be able, say, to eat something that you enjoy, experience the pleasurable sensation, and then actually watch the experience of craving arising in dependence on that. Then you can say, that's what I've got to check, and training yourself in this way, you can gradually produce quite a gap between the experience of pleasure and the arising of craving in dependence on that experience of pleasure and perhaps, after a while, after a long while even, you might be able to get rid of the experience of craving in connection with that particular pleasure entirely. Just enjoy the pleasure and then that's that, you're finished with it. I think craving usually expresses itself in the form of a desire to prolong that pleasure, to have it indefinitely, to make it a permanent part of your life, to have it always around, always available instead of just enjoying it when it is there and then, so to speak, forgetting all about it.

So, yes, the training may involve actually depriving yourself of that pleasure for the time being so that you can experience the craving separately, and in that way separate craving from pleasure and pleasure from craving. Therefore in the Vajrayana asceticism has this very provisional value, well in Buddhism in general it does in principle, but in the Vajrayana in particular asceticism has this very provisional character. The aim is to experience pleasure as well as non-craving. I mean, the Vajrayanist would almost say that non-craving without pleasure is as useless as pleasure without non-craving. So for the Vajrayanist, the Hinayana, or pseudo-Hinayana, conception of Nirvana is of a state where there is no craving but also no pleasure. The Vajrayana doesn't want that sort of Nirvana, it doesn't regard it as the real Nirvana. On the other hand, the world, the Samsara, is a state where there is pleasure, though often of course pleasure mixed with pain, but no non-craving. So the Vajrayana wants both; it wants pleasure, but without craving; it wants non-craving, but with pleasure. It wants Nirvana and Samsara [Laughter] Samsara and Nirvana, in a state of non-duality. It wants the clarity, the illumination of Nirvana but with the bliss of Samsara.

So it is a non-dual practice based upon a non-dual view and the action, of course, may well be an ascetic action. So therefore, with the Vajrayana you get a very different spirit from what you get with the Hinayana and even with the Mahayana. You get a sort of spirit of joy and happiness and pleasure, but also a spirit of the transcendental, also a spirit of asceticism. You read stories of Tantric yogis roaming about from place to place, maybe without any clothes, meditating, but also meeting with dakinis and indulging in jollifications at particular places of pilgrimage and then going off to meditate again. So you get quite a different sort of spirit, a quite different sort of atmosphere from what you get with the Hinayana or even the Mahayana.

Ratnaketu: I noticed this when I first came in contact with the Friends and saw photographs of different teachers and I remember seeing a whole lot whom I know see as Theravada Bhikkhus and especially very elderly ones and they all looked incredibly solemn [Laughter] and sad, and there wasn't any happiness there at all, and I saw another one of

S: Though probably that's a bit misleading. I think also sometimes Theravada Bhikkhus think that that's how they ought to look, [Laughter]

that's how the laity expect them to look, but when they're on their own together, they can, even Theravada Bhikkus, can sometimes be quite happy and jolly. Not in front of the laity, the laity don't expect them to be jolly! But their official expression is often very grim indeed!

Ratnaketu: I also saw then pictures of Tibetan lamas, especially one I remember I saw on a (??? Choling) calendar of Jamyang Khyentse, sort of dancing, and it just looked so full of energy and liveliness.

S: (Laughing) Well dancing is one of the things Theravada Bhikkus are prohibited from doing. [Pali phrase.. ending in *gita- bharata* obscured by laughter), that is the precept for sramaneras, no singing or dancing. You see, this is why, in the Theravada, music and song and dance are banned because it's associated with pleasure and pleasure is dangerous. So in order to avoid the danger, better to avoid the pleasure itself. This is the Theravada view. While there is a certain sense in it, certainly as a preliminary ascetic approach it is indispensable, but the Theravada usually doesn't get any further than that. The Mahayana even, not to speak of the Vajrayana, would consider that to be a mistake.

_____: It seems to me, Bhante, you said that the laity might expect the Bhikkhus to look rather glum. Do you think that perhaps in conventional morality that this provisional discipline gets absolutised somehow?

S: I would put it further than that, I would say that in the Theravada, the dualism receives a social expression, the metaphysical dualism receives a social expression, the spiritual dualism receives a social expression. The monks are supposed to have all the non-craving and the laity are supposed to have all the bliss! [Laughter] There is a sort of division of labour! [Laughter] Whereas the Vajrayana view is that non-craving and bliss have to come together. Therefore, in a way, the bhikkhus and the laity have to come together. Therefore, in the Vajrayana there isn't that hard and fast distinction of Bhikkhu who is practising only non-craving and layman who is practising only pleasure.

_____: I was also thinking of Victorian conventional morality where we seem to have the same sort of thing, where you cut out anything that might tend to give rise to craving, so you cut out the pleasure as well.

S: Yes. But again from a purely disciplinary point of view that may be necessary for a while so that you may study the workings of your mind and dissociate craving from pleasure and thus dissociate pleasure from craving. One mustn't underestimate the importance, even the necessity, of that. I think there are very few people who can healthily enjoy pleasure without it giving rise to the corresponding craving.

Johnny: So you sort of undergo some sort of asceticism until you're sort of aware of how you react to craving.

S: Yes. But if you give up pleasures indefinitely, as it were, on principle, give up all pleasures, there's no doubt, well, even your spiritual life can dry up in the end. It is as though pleasure, in a healthy positive sense, is very nourishing, and this is why, if you get deeply into meditation, it has such a tonic effect on the whole system and you feel so well, so much better than you did before you meditated because there are very blissful experiences connected with meditation, very inspiring experiences, and these make you feel even physically better and stronger, what to speak of mentally and emotionally. According to some traditions, if you are a successful meditator and a good bhikkhu, you become sleek and fat and

plump and shining [Laughter] and start radiating, as it were!

Alright, let's go on.

'Using the Dharma of Samaya as a simile, I walk forward in Purity. Without hypocrisy and circumvention, I walk ahead; In the Path of Straightforwardness, I walk straight on. Though my discipline may be poor, I have no regret.' What is this 'Samaya'?

Ratnaketu: It's the vows.

S: It's the vow, in a way the pledge. It has a purely tantric significance, or rather it's the tantric counterpart of the Hinayana come Mahayana vow. Especially when, having been initiated into a particular tantric practice, say, a meditation, you pledge yourself to certain observances which will enable you to follow that particular practice, which will make it possible for you to follow that particular practice, which will make it more effective and will also act as a sort of expression of it on the practical level. For instance, you may make a pledge, after you, say, have been initiated into a particular visualisation and mantra recitation practice, you may take a pledge that you will do that practice every day, at a certain time, say every morning at a certain time for, say, three years. That is your 'Samaya'. You, as it were, promise the Buddha or Bodhisattva into whose practice you have been initiated that you will, as it were, remember him, or remember her, or do his or her practice every day in that way. It's like a sort of vow, a sort of oath, that you enter into. So where the practice is specifically Vajrayanic, the pledge is called the 'Samaya' and obviously it can take many forms.

So: 'Using the Dharma of Samaya as a simile, I walk forward in Purity. Without Hypocrisy and circumvention, I walk ahead.' What does purity mean here, do you think? Is it to be understood in the ordinary sense? What is impurity? In a quite straightforward, literal sense, what is impurity?

Ratnaketu: It defiles.

S: Being defiled.

Ratnaketu: It's having something extra.

S: Something extra, something different added or mixed in. So, impurity represents a condition of, well, you could say, non-integration. So when you are pure, there's nothing mixed in, there's nothing extraneous. You're integrated, you're all of a piece, you're harmonious. You're at harmony with yourself.

So: 'Using the Dharma of Samaya as a simile, I walk forward in Purity.' You're completely faithful to your tantric vows. There is no defiling or disturbing element. This is what it means. It's not purity in the narrowly moralistic sense.

'Without hypocrisy and circumvention, I walk ahead.' Well, there's no need for hypocrisy, no need for circumvention, because you are faithfully observing your tantric vow. There's no difference, no divergence, between your profession and your practice.

'In the Path of Straightforwardness, I walk straight on.

Though my discipline may be poor, I have no regret.' So he walks on like that. Don't forget he is answering Milarepa's question as to how he will walk on his way and he is replying in sort of allegorical terms. He'll walk straight ahead, just as someone who observes his tantric vows, as it were, walks straight ahead, faithfully observing them.

Being without hypocrisy and circumvention and walking in the path of straightforwardness was considered very important by tantric yogins from a certain point of view. They were reacting quite strongly to formalistic monasticism because very often that did tend to encourage hypocrisy and circumvention, so they made a point of being completely straightforward, whatever people thought of them. So for this reason they sometimes appear to be completely unconventional. Not that they were deliberately flouting convention, though when things started to decline perhaps that did creep in, but that they were just acting naturally and straightforwardly in accordance with their actual feelings. Obviously not in such a way as to do any harm to anybody, but they were very careful not to try to appear better than they actually were. They would rather that people thought them worse than they were than that people should think them better than they were.

For instance, if a tantric yogi entered a village and he saw an attractive woman, if he felt some sort of desire towards her he would say: 'Oh, I really like that woman, I really fancy her,' straight out. He wouldn't attempt to hide his thought. Whereas an orthodox Bhikkhu, a Hinayana, Mahayana Bhikkhu might become aware of that thought and even recognise it as a not desirable thought, an unskilful thought, and try to check it but not admit that he'd had it. Whereas the tantric yogi would express it on the spot. If he thought: 'That's an attractive girl,' he said: 'Look: That's an attractive girl.' He would try to be all of a piece. If he thought it, he'd say it. He wouldn't bother about appearances. Do you see the difference of attitude? And that might make him seem unconventional. He wouldn't try to conceal the way he actually thought, the way he actually felt. Or maybe when he was going for his alms round someone might be rude to him, he might get angry so he wouldn't just check them, he would say, "You stupid fool!" [Laughter] because that's what he actually thought! So if he thought it he should also say it, that would be the Tantric yogi's approach. Whereas the bhikkhu, the orthodox bhikkhu, might think, "Well, I might think it, but it's not a good thing to say it." Well, there's something in that too, but the Tantric yogi was more concerned with being completely honest, completely open, completely straightforward, being all of a piece in body, speech and mind. He attached importance to that.

Ratnaketu: This could be a great help especially to sort of alienated Westerners who get to think, "I must love everybody and it's wrong to hate," and so you sort of say how you love everybody when underneath you don't and you sort of fool yourself.

S: You don't fool other people usually though! But you see the point of the Tantric yogi's approach. Obviously too, this can be parodied or misunderstood and some so-called Tantric yogi's no doubt did that, but still, the philosophy, so to speak, underlying the unconventionality of the genuine Tantric yogi I think is clear.

So: 'In the Path of Straightforwardness, I walk straight on. Though my discipline may be poor, I have no regret.'

Then he goes on to say: 'Using the Accomplishment of Dharma as a simile, I march forward in Immanence. Without fear and hope, I march ahead; In the Path of the Four Bodies, I march straight on. Though my accomplishment may be small, I have no regret.' Probably the word for accomplishment is 'siddhi' which is a very important Tantric word from which we get 'siddha', the accomplished person. 'Siddhi' is often translated as 'success' and 'siddhi' is of two kinds. Mundane siddhi especially that which takes the form of supernormal powers attained through the practice of meditation, and siddhi in the sense of supreme enlightenment itself. So, Rechungpa says: 'Using the Accomplishment of Dharma as a simile, I march forward in Immanence.' Immanence is also a specifically Vajrayana term. It's 'sahaja'. Sahaja. What does sahaja mean? Sahaja literally means congenital, or co-natal, born together with. It is what is natural to you. What is essentially part of you, though again, don't take this sort of expression too literally. It's what arises with you. What is inseparable from you. So the Vajrayana, especially in the Mahamudra, is greatly concerned with the - what shall I say? - with the importance of a non-willed, or non-wilful approach to reality. I think there's a little bit about that at the end here. Let's just have a look. [Pause]

Yes. On page 686 it says: *'The central teaching of Mahamudra consists of two major points, relaxation and effortlessness. All pains and desires are of a tense nature, but liberation, in contrast, is another name for perfect relaxation.'* So one can see also craving. We've been talking about non-craving; one can see craving in this connection. Craving is a sort of uncomfortable reaching out for something that you don't have. Something in which you feel yourself deficient. Something of which you feel you are short. So there is no relaxation here. Therefore the Vajrayana in general, the Mahamudra in particular, encourages you to adopt a relaxed attitude, an attitude of not craving after anything, not desiring anything, and that relaxed attitude is the key to the realisation of, so to speak, your true nature. Your true nature being that nature which you were born with. So if you adopt this relaxed attitude you realise that there is nothing outside yourself that you really need. In a manner of speaking you've got it all already, you don't have to do anything to attain it. You can afford to be perfectly relaxed and in the depth, so to speak, of that relaxation, you touch what you already are. That which you are all the time, and this is what is called immanence. You touch that which is immanent in you all the time. One doesn't want to adopt here a sort of substantialist or eternalist outlook. That is the danger here, with this sort of language, but this is the Mahamudra approach.

Subhuti: This relates to pleasure in a way. That pleasure is a sort of relaxation, a freedom....

S: Yes. If having experienced pleasure, or while you are experiencing pleasure, you reach out for it's repetition, well this is a sort of misuse of the pleasure.

Ratnaketu: You're tightening up and not relaxing and that is the opposite of what causes pleasure.

S: You all know that if you're very tense, looking forward to some good time or some particular pleasure, if you're not careful, it spoils the enjoyment of the pleasure when it actually comes. If you are all keyed up and all tense and afraid of missing it or afraid it won't happen or afraid it won't come along, well it's a torment rather than a pleasure. [Pause]

So; 'Using the Accomplishment of Dharma as a simile, I march forward in Immanence. Without fear and hope, I march ahead.' Because if there

is no craving there is no fear and there is no hope. If there is no craving there is no fear of losing the pleasure that you have or any hope for the pleasure that you don't have. So: 'In the Path of the Four Bodies, I march straight on.' The four bodies are the Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, Dharmakaya and Svabhavakaya. In other words, in the path of Buddhahood itself, I march straight on. These four bodies being, so to speak, the bodies of the Buddha.

'Though my accomplishment may be small, I have no regret.' So Rechungpa, in a way, here is laying claim to a very lofty attitude, a very lofty realisation indeed. It is very very difficult even to put it into words.

So then Rechungpa continues: 'Using the Jetsun Marpa as a simile, I walk forward in the Whispered Lineage. Without talk and words, I walk ahead; following The Path of Pith Instruction, I walk straight on. Though my spiritual provision is meagre, I have no regret.' So: 'Using the Jetsun Marpa', that is to say Milarepa's guru, 'as a simile, I walk forward in the Whispered Lineage.' that is to say, the Kagyupa lineage. That is the lineage to which I belong, to which I am spiritually affiliated, the lineage from which I draw my inspiration.

'Without talk and words, I walk ahead;' without being misled by words, concepts, I walk ahead, just getting on with my practice. Well, this is what he says. 'Following the Path of Pith Instruction, I walk straight on.' The Pith Instruction being the instruction which is given by the guru directly to the disciple applying the general principles, so to speak, of the Dharma to that particular disciple's specific situation and specific needs.

'Though my spiritual provision is meagre, I have no regret.'

Then: 'Using my Guru Milarepa as a simile, I march forward in Fortitude. Without Laziness and sloth, I march ahead; In the Path of Diligence, I march straight on. Though my perseverance may be small, I have no regret.' Perhaps in these two verses there is some reference to the actual characteristics of Marpa and Milarepa. 'Using the Jetsun Marpa as a simile I walk forward in the whispered lineage. Without talk and words I walk ahead.' As far as I remember, Marpa was a man of few words. In the same way: 'Using my Guru Milarepa as a simile, I march forward in Fortitude. Without Laziness and sloth, I march ahead;' Well, those were typical characteristics of Milarepa, his fortitude, his being without laziness and sloth. His being diligent. So: 'In the Path of Diligence I march straight on.'

Then he says: 'Using myself, Rechungpa, as a simile, I walk forward in the way of the Gifted Ones.' Well, he is a quite gifted person. I am not quite sure what expression in Sanskrit 'gifted ones' represents. 'Without deviation and wrong thoughts, I walk ahead;' That is rather a large claim to make, especially after the number of times he has rushed off to India, but anyway:

'In the Path of Veneration, I walk straight on.' Well, he has not always shown much veneration for Milarepa but anyway this is what he says.

'Though my prayer may be feeble, I have no regret.' So it's a real lion's roar on Rechungpa's part. But the question is, is he really yet a lion? At least is he really yet a fully grown lion? So what does Milarepa say? Would someone like to read those prose paragraphs?

"Your understanding is very good," Milarepa replied, "But you should know that a child grows better with its mother, an egg ripens quicker in a

warm place, and a yogi will never go astray if he lives with his Guru. Now you will not listen to my advice but insist upon going away. With my pity and love I will never forsake you. You should also pray constantly to me."

When Rechungpa heard these words, he shed many tears. Then he said, "I shall never, at any time, lose the faith and conviction that my Jetsun is Buddha Himself; so far, I have had no other Guru but you; hereafter, before I attain perfect Buddhahood, I will look to no other Guru. In the state of Bardo after this life, please also protect and escort me."

So, Milarepa isn't overimpressed by this admittedly magnificent song, this magnificent declaration of faith. He says, 'Your understanding is very good' Milarepa replied, "But you should know that a child grows better with its mother, an egg ripens quicker in a warm place, and a yogi will never go astray if he lives with his Guru.' So, what, in effect, is Milarepa saying? He is saying, well, spiritually you are still a child. Spiritually you are still an egg! You may be a yogi but you are not yet an accomplished yogi. You have a lot more to do, a lot more to learn. It would be better for you if you were to continue living with your guru but you won't listen to my advice. You insist on going away. But, he says 'With I my pity and love I will never forsake you. You should also pray constantly to me.'

So you see Milarepa's attitude, his positive attitude, to call it that at least, doesn't change whatever Rechungpa may do. His attitude remains completely creative in the highest sense at the highest level however reactive Rechungpa himself may be. But it's as though he says, but that isn't enough. It isn't enough that my attitude towards you remains unchanged. You should also pray constantly to me. You should try to develop a receptive attitude towards me. It isn't enough that I should be watching over you, and thinking of you and feeling compassion towards you. That isn't enough. You must also be receptive to me because only then can you truly progress. My compassion and love, he is saying in effect, will be helpful to you but only if you yourself take advantage of the opportunity that they offer. You've got to follow my instructions and that means you've got to be receptive. This is what he means by praying to him.

So: 'When Rechungpa heard these words, he shed many tears. Then he said, "I shall never, at any time, lose the faith and conviction that my Jetsun is Buddha Himself; so far, I have had no other Guru but you; hereafter, before I attain perfect Buddhahood, I will look to no other Guru. In the state of Bardo after this life, please also protect and escort me.' So he is saying, well, yes, I have been off to India, yes, I have sat at the feet of many teachers but it's as though he's saying, only you, only Milarepa, is really my Guru. It's as though he never really lost that faith, despite all his distractions and strayings. So therefore he says; even after death 'please also protect and escort me.'

So it's as though in the end he's got his own way, but nonetheless his better side emerges. His true faith in Milarepa emerges, even though, paradoxically, he is still not doing as Milarepa wants him to do. But nonetheless there is a very genuine link between them despite all those things.

Would someone like to read that next song? Rechungpa's song.

*'Pray, my Buddha Guru, the e'er compassionate one,
Pray escort your son, Rechungpa!*

*When I climb the mountain of the **View**,
I see the traps of Realism and Nihilism,
The bandits of bigotry in ambush,
And the "twin roads" steep and perilous.
Pray, my Father Guru, Buddha's Nirmanakaya,
Pray escort and protect me
Until I reach Perfection's Road.*

*When I climb the mountain of **Practice**, I see
The snares of drowsiness and distraction,
The perilous passage of constraint,
And the danger of misleading, wandering thoughts.
Pray, my Father Guru, Buddha's Nirmanakaya,
Pray escort and protect me
Until I reach Non-being's Plain.*

*When I climb the mountain of **Action**,
I see my old companion, desire,
Debauchery's perilous path,
And the strong robber, frivolity.
Pray, my Father Guru, Buddha's Nirmanakaya,
Pray escort and protect me until I reach
The pass of Freedom and Spontaneity!*

*When I build the castle of Samaya.
I see my knowledge is insufficient,
That my assistant is incompetent,
And that great are the dangers of discordance.
Pray, my Father Guru, the Buddha's Nirmanakaya,
Pray, escort and protect me until
I reach the pure base of Non-existence!*

*When I reflect on the Accomplishment,
I can see the long road of Samsara,
The perilous passage to Nirvana,
And the savage bandits of hope and fear.*

*Pray, my Father Guru, the Buddha's Nirmanakaya.
Pray escort and protect me until
I reach the home of the Four Bodies.*

*Great is Rechungpa's wish for travel,
Great his desire for pleasure and for comfort.
People in Tibet are impious,
The thief of hypocrisy
Is ready now to act.
Pray, my Father Guru, Buddha's Nirmanakaya,
Pray escort and protect me until
I return home from my journey!*

S: So this song is very similar to the other one, isn't it? It uses the same imagery. But do you detect a change in Rechungpa's attitude? What is that change?

Johnny: So much more humble.

S: It's much more humble. In the first song he says; 'I walk straight on, I have no regret.' as though he is going to do it all under his own steam, without any help from anybody. But here he is appealing for Milarepa's help and guidance at every stage, at every step. I mean, it's not that he's changed his ideas. He hasn't changed his basic ideas, he is still going to do those things, but he realises now that it's not so easy to do them perhaps as he had thought. He is not perhaps so strong as he thought. He still needs Milarepa's help and guidance. So he works that idea out in detail in terms of the same imagery as he used in the first song. So he says: 'Pray my Buddha Guru, the e'er compassionate one, Pray escort your son, Rechungpa. When I climb the mountain of the View, I see the traps of Realism and Nihilism,' This contrasts with: 'Using Dharma view as a simile, I walk forward in the Manifestation Void. With no thought of Nihilism or Realism, I walk ahead;' Very overconfident.

Now he says: 'When I climb the mountain of the View, I see the traps of Realism and Nihilism The bandits of bigotry in ambush and the 'twin roads' steep and perilous. Pray, my Father Guru, Buddha's Nirmanakaya, Pray escort and protect me Until I reach Perfection's Road.' It's not only a more humble approach. It's also a more realistic approach. He sees much more clearly where he is actually at. So there's not much really that needs commenting on here - we've dealt with most of it already. But there is something new. 'The bandits of bigotry in anguish', what do these bandits of bigotry represent? Bigotry with regard to what?

Subhuti: With regard to views.

S: With regard to views. Especially perhaps with regard to realism and nihilism or even The View itself. You can have a sort of dogmatic attachment to the view of the Middle Way itself. That's still more dangerous. I wonder what the 'twin roads' are? Could refer to realism and

nihilism or some other version of them, it isn't clear. But in any case, two extremes of some kind or other, between which one must find a middle way.

[End of side one side two]

When I climb the mountain of **Practice**, I see The snares of drowsiness and distraction, The perilous passage of constraint, And the danger of misleading, wandering thoughts.' So, 'the perilous passage of constraint'. There's a note here and the note says: *'literally does not mean constraint, but (adherently) facing the object i.e. the constant pursuing of objects in the outside world by the consciousness.'* Perhaps the best single word translation would be 'obsession'. The perilous passage of obsession. Do you see what Rechungpa is getting at? It's more than craving. It's the actual pursuit, the obsessional pursuit of external things. Having one's mind, one's consciousness, one's attention, absolutely turned outside. Being in pursuit of external things.

Ratnaketu: To distract yourself, continually keep yourself occupied so that

S: Well not only occupied, it's more in pursuit of something. You constantly see something desirable outside and you go off in hot pursuit of that. Very much as Rechungpa is doing by going to Weu. It's a sort of neurotically extrovert attitude. There is nothing good inside, whatever is good is outside.

_____: The word 'constraint' here almost gives the idea of being blinkered. A very narrow view of where you are going and what you want.

S: Yes, and also being compelled. You've almost no choice, no freedom. As soon as the object appears on the horizon, well, you are after it. It's almost an automatic reflex action on your part.

All right: 'When I climb the mountain of Action, I see my old companion, desire, Debauchery's perilous path, And the strong robber, frivolity.' You notice Rechungpa is speaking in terms of climbing mountain after mountain because that is literally how it is in Tibet. The many, many ranges of mountains, you cross one, go down into the intervening valley, then it's up, crossing over the other. So it's as though spiritual life is like that, it's crossing one mountain after another. First the mountain of the view, then the mountain of practice, now the mountain of action. So what's the danger there? - 'My old companion desire', that is to say craving, debauchery's perilous path and the strong robber frivolity!' It's as though Rechungpa has been very much a victim of pleasure. And 'frivolity?' One can understand what desire is and what debauchery is, but frivolity, why should that be spoken of as a strong robber? What is frivolity exactly? What is frivolousness?

_____: Activity to no purpose.

S: Activity to no purpose, but of what kind?

_____ : It's superficial.

S: It's superficial. It also appears, what?

Johnny: Joyous.

S: Joyous, yes. It's hilarious, slightly hysterical. You know the sort of state that people get into? [Frivolous laughter!] But why is frivolity called a strong robber? What does it rob you of?

_____ : Of energy.

_____ : Awareness.

S: Yes, of energy, of awareness, of mindfulness, of stability, of equanimity. Good heavens! [Laughter] What a terrible vice it is! It also robs you of seriousness, robs you of depth. But what makes people frivolous?

Siddhiratna: Either they can't settle down in something or there is an unwillingness to settle down.

S: Also there is a pseudo-positivity. There is no pain or suffering, there is a sort of pleasurable experience, but even the pleasurable experience itself is of a very shallow, superficial kind. It's a refusal to take anything seriously, making a joke of everything. Some people you find do that. You make some serious comment or try to raise some serious question and they just turn it into a joke. So why do you think that people do that?

_____ : To avoid the seriousness.

S: To avoid the seriousness. Not wanting to face up to things, not wanting to see things as they are.

Ratnaketu: To avoid making any commitment to see things as they are. Avoiding the reality of the situation.

S: But is it just that? Or is it a special way of avoiding that? You must have been frivolous yourself at some time or other. So just look back and try to think, try to see what was happening then. What were you really doing? Why were you being frivolous?

_____ : It's often the group or something like the group operating.

S: Yes. Can you imagine yourself indulging in frivolity all by yourself alone in your room?

_____ : Are you sort of putting up a barrier as well?

Ray: It tends to soften confrontation.

S: Yes. It's a turning aside of confrontation perhaps. There's a lot of bubbly energy that goes with it, slightly hysterical energy. Do you know what I mean? Why is it that one's energy gets all bubbly? I suppose it's because there's nothing solid to put it into, no really deep channel that it can flow along. You get this with very young people, don't you? You get it in schools, especially girls' schools, girls' boarding schools. So I've been told! [Laughter] You see it among young men too sometimes.

Anandajyoti: Sometimes being frivolous, if it is a regular habit, can be a means of escape from oneself, from conflicting emotions.

S: It's a sort of near enemy to playfulness and joyfulness. One doesn't want to squash frivolity and replace it by extreme gravity and austerity. That would be the opposite extreme. One wants to keep the lightness and playfulness and joy, but to get rid of the unmindful, unserious element.

One point we didn't attend to - you notice at the end of the first verse, Rechungpa says: 'Until I reach Perfection's road' Perfection here is probably an alternative rendering of 'siddhi'. Then at the end of the second verse he says: 'Until I reach Non-being's plain.' Do you think he really means non-being here? Do you think he means the plain of non-being as distinct from the plain of being?

Subhuti: I think probably beyond being and non-being.

S: Beyond being and non-being, yes. And then at the end of this verse he says: 'Pray escort and protect me until I reach The pass of Freedom and Spontaneity' It's interesting that that is mentioned in connection with desire, debauchery and frivolity, because frivolity in particular can look sometimes very much like freedom and spontaneity, but it isn't really that.

Subhuti: I think that sometimes one indulges in frivolity because you are not experiencing playfulness.

S: Yes, it's a pseudo-playfulness. Maybe you are trying to pretend to yourself that you are really playful when you are not. It isn't genuine playfulness, it's just frivolity.

All right then, onto the next verse: 'When I build the castle of Samaya. I see my knowledge is insufficient, That my assistant is incompetent, And that great are the dangers of discordance.' So, what sort of meaning or significance do you attach to this expression 'the castle of Samaya', the castle of pledge or pledges or vows, tantric vows? What is the outstanding characteristic of a castle?

Subhuti: It's secure, it's solid.

S: It's secure, it's strong, it's solid. So the purpose of the Samaya is to give strength and solidity and structure to your spiritual life.

Bob Jones: It also keeps things out.

S: It also keeps things out, yes. So: 'When I build the castle of Samaya. I see my knowledge is insufficient' Does he mean knowledge in a general sense or is it knowledge in respect of building the castle of Samaya? You could look at it in the latter way, because in order to build the castle of Samaya, in order to make pledges, in order to take Tantric vows, you need to know yourself, don't you? You need to know the extent of your own capacity, need to know your own strength, your own weakness. So: 'I see my knowledge is insufficient, that my assistant is incompetent.' Who is this assistant?

Siddhiratna: Is it something like his mindfulness or something?

S: Perhaps it's his own mind. 'And great are the dangers of discordance.'

Subhuti: Yes, there is quite a danger that you could make a vow without really knowing yourself, in which case you might have a strong reaction.

S: Yes, you don't get much co-operation from the rest of your being. There is the danger of discordance. As it were, so to speak, your lower mind refuses to carry out the orders of the higher mind.

So: 'Pray, escort and protect me until I reach the pure base of Non-existence!' So it's obviously not non-existence as opposed to existence. But why pure base? What is this base? It's probably the 'alaya'. But perhaps we can't take that too literally. Perhaps it refers to the base of the castle. The castle is to be placed upon non-existence, not on anything worldly. Perhaps the non-existence refers to the non-existence of any mundane element. The castle of samaya must have a purely transcendental foundation. Just like the Buddha's Vajrasana, the vajra seat, the vajra throne, the transcendental ground, the transcendental foundation of one's spiritual attainment.

So 'When I reflect on the Accomplishment, I can see the long road of Samsara.' Why is samsara called a long road?

Ratnaketu: It's endless.

S: You have been on it for countless lives. It's not only a long road, it's an endless road. You don't have to travel on it all the time, but nonetheless, it is an endless road. It's like a circular road - a ring road! [Laughter]

'The perilous passage to Nirvana.' Why is the passage to Nirvana, the passage to enlightenment, perilous? In what sense?

Johnny: Because you can always fall back.

S: Well, yes, there are many dangers and pitfalls on the way. You can get stuck in dhyana states, for instance. [Laughter] You can become

intoxicated with your magical powers! You can frivolously fly through the air!

'The savage bandits of hope and fear.' In what way are they savage bandits?

_____: They rob you of energy.

S: They rob you of energy. Perhaps we don't always realise the extent to which we are subject to hope and fear. These are very common emotions. Hope of something pleasurable, fear of something painful, obviously very much bound up with time.

Siddhiratna: Do you think he is actually relating it to the passage to nirvana as well. You hope you are on the right path and you fear that you might not be.

S: Could be that too. Hope that you have got hold of the right teaching, fear that you haven't.

So what about 'the home of the four bodies'? In what sense are the four bodies your home? This in a way continues or amplifies or develops the language of immanence. The four bodies, that is to say the four bodies of Buddhahood, or Buddhahood itself, is where you really belong. That is your true home.

Siddhiratna: What are the four bodies, Bhante?

S: Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, Dharmakaya and Svabhavakaya. The fourth representing the unity, or if you like, the harmony of the other three. [Pause]

So: 'Great is Rechungpa's wish for travel, great his desire for pleasure and for comfort. People in Tibet are impious. The thief of hypocrisy is ready now to act.' It's as if he is saying, well, after all, I'm a Tibetan and traditionally Milarepa and Rechungpa and other Tibetan yogis and gurus, regard the people of Tibet as being very irreligious. The people of Tibet also nowadays regard the people of India as being very irreligious, so where that leaves people in the West is very difficult to say.

I remember once when I was driving down to the plains in a Land Rover and I was sitting in front and just behind me there was a Tibetan, newly down from Tibet, spoke a little Hindi. We just happened to halt somewhere, near () at a crossroads or something and there was a policeman there, a Vihari policeman, controlling the traffic. So seeing me in a yellow robe sitting beside the driver, being a pious sort of policeman, he was really interested and he came up to the landrover and he started talking to me, and hearing that I was a Buddhist, he was very pleased, he was a Hindu and he started holding forth about Hinduism, about Brahma and Atman and realisation of truth etc., etc., for some minutes and then he went back to controlling the traffic. [Laughter] But then the Tibetan behind me was really shocked. He said, "That's extraordinary, that's terrible." he said in Hindi, "How bad. He was actually talking about religion." Now what do you think he meant by that? Well, his view was that religion was not to be talked about in that casual sort of way. It is to be spoken about on serious occasions. Only a real guru

should talk about those sorts of things. It's not Brahma or Atman or the Buddhist equivalents, that's not something that just an ordinary person can talk about in that kind of way. It shows that the man has got no real sensitivity to religion or spiritual things or the Dharma at all. That he is very irreligious! That was the 'Tibetan's view and it confirmed, no doubt, his belief that Indians were very irreligious people, which is what the Tibetans deeply believe. But clearly the Tibetans also believe this about themselves or at least they did in those earlier days. 'People in Tibet are impious.' 'The thief of hypocrisy is ready now to act.' It's as if he almost has his moment of truth. And he says, well, I have sung this song. Yes, perhaps I am a bit more modest, a bit more humble, but even now I am ready to be hypocritical. You see what I mean? 'The thief of hypocrisy, he's ready now to act. Pray, my Father Guru, Buddha's Nirmanakaya, pray escort and protect me until I return home from my journey.'

This is the first time, as far as I remember, that he has said anything about coming back. But perhaps now he realises that he has got to come full circle, he's got to come back, back to Milarepa in the end. So it's as though he's not thinking just in terms of going away any longer. Until now he has just been going away! No mention of coming back. But perhaps he is beginning to conquer this obsession with travel, this wish for travel.

And also you notice he says: 'Great is Rechungpa's wish for travel, great his desire for pleasure and for comfort.' Maybe travel and staying here and there with lay people on the way represents that sort of thing for him also. Perhaps he enjoys the social contacts which are incidental to travel. Because what's the alternative? Staying with Milarepa in the cave and doing nothing but meditating! But travel means seeing new places, meeting new people, being entertained, performing Tantric ceremonies, being greatly respected, fed with beautiful dishes, and meeting pleasant, attractive people. That's what travel means perhaps for Rechungpa. It appeals to the pleasure and comfort loving side of his nature.

You also notice that he said at the end of the previous verse: 'Pray escort and protect me until I reach the home of the Four Bodies.' and here: 'Pray escort and protect me until I return home from my journey.' So he is not only speaking of returning home in the literal sense, home to Milarepa, but also returning home, as it were, to his own original nature, which is Buddhahood. In other words, 'Pray escort and protect me until I gain Enlightenment.'

Well, any further points that require discussion or comment there? Anything that we have done this afternoon that requires any further comment? Anything not clear or at least reasonably clear?

_____: I wanted to ask about something on page 590 and a little bit before, the use of the word 'simile'. At the beginning 'Using the Dharma View as a simile.' What was meant by that?

S: Well, he is comparing this journey to the holding of the view itself. The view is that of manifestation void. So he speaks of his journey to Weu as being like going forward in the view of 'manifestation void'. In other words, he is comparing his journey to his spiritual life itself. Usually it's the other way round. Usually we compare the psychological to something material, but here he is comparing the material to something psychological. I believe this is called a psychological simile or psychological metaphor. Usually we say that the spiritual life is like climbing a mountain, but here he is saying that climbing a mountain is like the spiritual life or like leading the spiritual life and he works that out in detail.

Milarepa has asked him, 'How will you walk on your way?' So in a way that is an ambiguous question. It could mean how will you travel to Weu but it also could mean how will you practise the Dharma? So Rechungpa in his answer combines the two. He talks about his actual literal journey, but he describes it in terms of his practise of the Dharma. So in that way he answers the question, whatever it means, whether it is to be taken literally or whether it is to be taken metaphorically.

Bob Jones: Would you perhaps say something about the snares of drowsiness and distraction, Bhante, because I often find myself, as earlier this afternoon when I was quite drowsy and there was no obvious reason for it and I don't really want to be either It happens quite a lot.

S: So what is drowsiness? It raises that question, doesn't it? When, or how, does one become drowsy? Of course sometimes one becomes drowsy when one is just depleted of energy, one just doesn't have enough energy, so one becomes drowsy i.e. one becomes sleepy. There is that possibility. That's the simplest. Sometimes of course one becomes drowsy when there is an experience of conflict, especially unconscious conflict, a conflict between a wish to do something and a wish not to do something. Conflict can be a great drainer of energy, and sometimes one feels drowsy because one's energy is being drained away by conflicts, maybe unconscious conflicts, conflicts of which you are not fully aware.

_____: Could that occur where part of you wishes to do something, but due to social or some other kind of conditioning you are repressing it?

S: That could be, because that is still a kind of conflict. Energy is going into the desire to do that thing but energy is also going into, perhaps equal energy is going into, repressing that desire or holding that desire back. So there is a lot of energy going into the conflict, so much so perhaps in some cases that there is not much energy left for other things.

So if you are getting your normal food and sleep as far as you can tell, you are not over working, but still you feel devoid of energy, drowsy, tired, and perhaps if there is no deeply rooted disease as occasionally that is the case; then if all those possibilities are excluded, you may well conclude that there is some psychological conflict going on

Bob Jones: I frequently experience it as a sort of blockage when you feel like that, perhaps it can be something diverting or it can be something genuinely engaging, and immediately releases what has previously been trapped. And yet, it seems to imply in this verse that through the practice there is a way of unlocking that, and avoiding those snares.

S: Well with regard to specific practices, and especially with regard to meditation it is said for instance that if you are particularly prone to drowsiness, you should meditate in a brightly lit room, not in a dark room and you should meditate on, say if you try to visualise a particular Buddha figure, try to visualise one which is brightly coloured. Even surround yourself with bright colours, meditate in the fresh air. Before you start meditating, bathe your face in cold water. There are all these kinds of things that one can do.

On the other hand if you are prone to distraction, meditate in a dim light, in a slightly darkened room, don't have too many bright colours around,

have dull, or at least subdued colours around. It isn't actually said wash your face in warm water, but perhaps one could say that. And so on, maybe have a soft, warmer kind of atmosphere.

Anandajyoti: That would seem to imply, Bhante, that the two states are rather separate. Quite often I experience them as quite linked. You can be quite drowsy and you break out of it, but you only break through into distraction. You oscillate from one to the other.

S: That, of course, makes things rather difficult, doesn't it? I think what you have to do is to find something in which you are really interested and which engages your whole attention and all your energies. I think if you get very drowsy or very distracted or both drowsy and distracted in connection with meditation or any kind of spiritual practice or the spiritual life itself, then you need to delve pretty deeply into yourself and find out what is happening to your energy and whether there are any deep rooted or deep seated conflicts. Ask yourself whether you really want to do what you are at present doing or are trying to do. Ask yourself what is it that you really want to do. Sometimes it is very important to establish at least contact with that and acknowledge that, even though you may think that that particular thing that you want to do isn't a very skilful thing. But at least you have to establish contact with it and feel it and acknowledge it and then try and lead it in the right direction.

You might discover, for instance, that you don't really want to plaster walls, you might want to go and play. Strange to say. It doesn't mean that because you acknowledge whatever desires you have that you are necessarily going to indulge those desires, but at least you must acknowledge them and not block them off and not be unconscious of them.

Ratnaketu: I just remembered something that you said about being content and not going back into the past or into the future when you are meditating or just sitting. It ties in with distraction because you are not content just to sit and be with yourself, so you continually distract yourself.

S: Of course if you possibly can, if you feel drowsy sometimes, it's a good idea just to go to sleep and then see how you feel when you wake up. Sometimes things may sort themselves out in your sleep. Things may come to the surface, you may become more aware of what is actually going on. You might catch your mind just as you wake up and see what it is you really want to do.

Sometimes you can catch your mind just as you wake up. I don't know if anyone has had the experience, but very often when you wake up there is a moment, at least, when you are not thinking. Have you experienced that? Before you start thinking at all, before discursive mental activity starts, when you are awake, you are quite clearly conscious, quite aware, but no discursive mental activity arises.

Then the first discursive activity that arises is usually where you are. And then, the next usually is what you have got to do that day. So you should try to watch your mind and see what is your spontaneous reaction to the thought of what you've got to do that day. Now, if you wake up and you are in a clear bright state of consciousness, suppose that you suddenly think, "Oh, today I have to go to the dentist." Then just see what your reaction is, whether you are looking forward to the visit or not. Or think, "Today I have to knock that wall down," and then just see what is your reaction to that, your spontaneous reaction. That will perhaps tell you quite a lot about what you really want to do or what you don't really want to do. This is assuming, of course, that you do experience or can experience, this clear bright state of consciousness or awareness, at least

momentarily, when you wake up, before discursive mental activity starts, and assumes that you can follow the discursive mental activity as it arises. Actually, if you are careful, if you observe yourself, you will notice that this is, in fact, what happens. Even though the moment, the instant, of non-discursive awareness may be just momentary, it is there. With practice you can even prolong it.

So try to see when the thought of what you have to do that day occurs to you, what your spontaneous reaction is, because it will be spontaneous under those circumstances or at that time. If the thought of what you have to do spontaneously fills you with joy, that is very good. If it makes you feel really depressed and wretched well that's not so good. But usually you do have that experience and you just cover it up and immediately, think "Ah well, I've got to get on with it, I've got to do it. Well, of course, I like doing it really, this is just a momentary weakness." But actually it may not really be so. It may be your quite deeply seated attitude to that particular thing to be done. It may be that that attitude is underlying your conscious attitude all the time.

Ray: It seems that once you acknowledge a feeling then you can transform it.

S: There is of course the possibility of transforming it, yes. But not if you don't acknowledge it and don't recognise it and experience it.

_____: This also links in with being aware of one's dream state. That can also give one hints of what the situation really is.

S: Yes, right. Well, some people I know have from time to time had dreams of shouting at other people, other members of the community. But during the day, in the ordinary community life, they're as quiet and gentle and meek as anything, but they have dreams of shouting at other community members and getting angry with them! I wonder what that means! [Laughter] There was one Order Member, I won't mention any names, but he didn't only used to have dreams, but to talk in his sleep. One day, or one night rather, he was heard by somebody who was occupying the room above shouting, "What the FWBO needs is a completely new constitution!" [Laughter] And he said this loud and clear in his sleep. This was quite a few years ago, by the way.

Subhuti: Seems he was probably right! [Laughter]

S: Well, perhaps it was a prophetic dream.

Ray Bisson: But the experience of not wanting to, or not relishing what you have got to do when you get up, that is a symptom of conflict.

S: Well, if you are conscious that you don't want to do it, but nonetheless you see that it has got to be done and you accept that, and you accept the fact that you are not particularly happy about doing it, but that on balance yes it is better that you do it, well if you put yourself behind that understanding then there is no conflict. You accept the fact that you don't particularly want to do the job, nonetheless, you are perfectly willing to do it.

All right let's leave it there for today.

[end of tape]

[Day 4 Tape 1]

S: All right then, page 592. Would someone like to read those two prose lines, and then the whole of Milarepa's song to Rechungpa.

For your auspicious and successful trip," said the Jetsun, I shall sing you in farewell."

Do you know what my Transmission

Is? It is not bad, but good;

It is the transmission of Dorje-Chang.

May it bring good fortune and success

May my son Rechungpa be blessed with (good)luck.

Do you know who my Patron Buddha

Is? She is not bad but good;

She is the holy Dorje Paumo.

May she bring good fortune and success

May my son Rechungpa be blessed with (good) luck.

Do you know who are my Guards?

They are not bad but good. They are

The Ma Goun Brothers and Sisters.

May they bring good fortune and success

May my son Rechungpa be blessed with (good) luck.

May the View, the Practice and the Action

All bless you, my son Rechungpa!

May the Principle, the Path, and the Accomplishment

All bless you, my son Rechungpa!

May the Tsa, the Lun, and the Tig Le

All bless you my son Rechungpa!

May the Bliss, the Illumination, and Non-thought

All bless you, my son Rechungpa!

Most true is the Buddha, most true

*The Dharma and the Sangha.
May these three Gems bless you
Forever, my son Rechungpa!*

*Do you know who I am ?
I am called Milarepa.
May all Mila's blessings fall upon his son,
May Rechungpa soon exceed his father.*

S: "For your auspicious and successful trip," said the Jetsun, "I shall sing you in farewell."
Do you know what my Transmission is? It is not bad but good; It is the transmission of Dorje-Chang."

What do you understand by Transmission? It is sometimes translated as lineage. There was something about lineage in the last *Newsletter* wasn't there?

So Milarepa is asking, "Do you know what my Transmission is? It is not bad, but good;-it is the transmission of Dorje-Chang.
Who is Dorje-Chang?"

Ratnaketu: Vajradhara.

S: Vajradhara. So what does Milarepa mean by saying that his Transmission is the transmission of Dorje-Chang?

Ratnaketu: Is it that his particular school traces lineage back to Dorje-Chang?

S: Yes. Milarepa's guru is Marpa, Marpa's guru is Naropa, Naropa's guru is Tilopa, and Tilopa's guru is the Buddha Vajradhara, that is to say he had no human teacher, no human source of inspiration - his inspiration came from a higher spiritual level, the level represented by the figure of Dorje-Chang or Vajradhara.

But why do you think this question of transmission or lineage is so important for the Kagyupas and all the Vajrayana schools or is it important only for them? What is the place of transmission so to speak, in Buddhism as a whole? What kind of general idea or general principle does transmission represent?

Subhuti: A principle of communication.

S: A principle of communication but it's communication of a particular kind isn't it, or in a particular way?

Siddhiratna: Is it something to do with authenticity and purity?

S: One could say that. One could say that it is a means of preserving authenticity and purity, but then what is that means - or how is transmission that means? What is happening so to speak? One thinks in terms of this chain stretching back from Milarepa to Dorje-Chang. Transmission is spoken of, but what is transmitted?

Ratnaketu: The enlightenment experience?

S: The enlightenment experience one could say, but can the enlightenment experience be transmitted? What does one mean by saying that it is transmitted?

Subhuti: There is a sparking off.

S: A sparking off. But that is a metaphorical explanation, can one put it in any other way what actually happens?

_____: Is it a recognition by one person that they have had a similar experience to their teacher?

S: One could say that, though usually of course it's the other way around. The teacher recognising that the disciple has had or is having the same experience that he had or is having. Because how is the pupil or the disciple in the position to recognise whether his experience is the same as the teachers? It would be very difficult for him to judge.

In the Zen tradition or in the various Zen traditions it is considered very important that if you believe that you have gained enlightenment, that you should get the acknowledgement of your enlightenment experience by someone who has had his enlightenment experience acknowledged by somebody who has had his enlightenment experience acknowledged by back to the Buddha himself. So there is something like that in the Vajrayana, though it takes a somewhat different form.

The word transmission is used, I don't know how literally we can take that. Lineage is obviously a sort of metaphor derived from ordinary biological life, the analogy is that of the descent from father to son. So similarly there is a sort of spiritual descent from spiritual father to spiritual son, but in what does the continuity consist? Yes, there is a continuity of experience. One cannot say in the literal sense that the same experience is transmitted. Just as one can't really literally say that in respect of father and son, the same life is transmitted from father to son, that is a very metaphorical expression. But nonetheless, there is continuity, the son's life is of the same kind as the father's life. Just as the father is a human being, the son is a human being, so in much the same way, the disciple's life, when he develops spiritually, is much the same as the teacher's life, in this case spiritual life, not life in the ordinary biological sense.

So there is a kind of continuity. In Buddhism generally you could say, the idea of, not so much transmission perhaps in the technical Vajrayana sense, but the idea of tradition is very important. Sometimes that is spoken of too literally in terms of a handing down, or preserving what has

been handed down to you becomes a little mechanical and a little external. But it really means being true to and living up to and realising that which you have learned, so that there is so to speak a succession of people down the ages with the "same", inverted commas, realisation all the way down the line.

What the Buddha gained essentially was an experience, what the Buddha teaches is an experience, what the Buddha communicates is an experience. So to follow the Buddha's teaching means essentially to gain for yourself, in a way to regain to recapture, that experience so that you have a succession of people, a succession of teachers and pupils who are experiencing, who are realising the same spiritual attainment generation after generation. They constitute a sort of succession, there is a sort of transmission, there is a lineage. But one mustn't think too literally of something which is actually transmitted. As I have said before like a precious heirloom being passed down from one generation to another. It isn't a possession at all, it is something which is for want of a better term, sparked off or recreated afresh each time.

So in Tibet there are four main schools, that is to say, first of all the Nyingmapas then the Kadampas then the Kagyupas then the Gelugpas, that is the chronological order. The Gelugpa Order is of course the biggest and best known, and they don't differ really very much as regards their attitude to the Hinayana and to the Mahayana, but they differ considerably with regard to the particular line of Tantric transmission, the particular type of practice, the particular line of Gurus that they look back to or look up to.

And in the case of the Kagyupas they look back to the line which traces its origins from Vajradhara and Tilopa and Naropa.

Ratnaketu: Do all the other traditions trace these back to Padmasambhava?

S: The Nyingmapas of course trace their lineage back to Padmasambhava. In the case of, well I missed the Sakyapas who are also quite important, if four are enumerated it's usually the Sakyapas rather than the Kadampas. The Kadampas lineage goes back to Atisa and his teachers. The Sakyapas trace back to two or three teachers, mainly to one called Gom.Po.Gom. And the Gelugpas of course trace their lineage back to Tsongkhapa and his teachers. Though in Tsongkhapa's lineage of teachers there are many teachers of the Kadampa and Nyingmapa and Kagyupa lineages he has selected from. Possibly you could say that the Kagyupas attach even more importance to lineage than do the other schools, because as the name suggests, they are mainly an oral transmission, a whispered succession as it is translated here.

So if you don't rely upon books, if you don't rely so much upon doctrinal organisation, but only on the actual spiritual teachings orally transmitted, then transmission, lineage, becomes all the more important as in fact it does with the different Zen schools.

So Milarepa says "Do you know what my Transmission is? It is not bad but good; It is the Transmission of Dorje-Chang. May it bring good fortune and success. May my son Rechungpa be blessed with (good) luck." So Milarepa is as it were invoking the blessing of the whole school, the whole Kagyupa tradition on Rechungpa.

Then he says: "Do you know who my Patron Buddha is? She is not bad, but good; She is the holy Dorje Paumo. May she bring good fortune and success. May my son Rechungpa be blessed with (good) luck." Are you familiar with this idea of Patron Buddha? I don't know if Patron is really

a good word here, but one could say one starts so to speak, with the idea, to use that term, of enlightenment. Enlightenment is embodied in a human figure, it can be embodied in an historical figure, the figure of an historical personality who actually realised enlightenment as in the case of Sakyamuni. But also the ideal of Buddhahood can be embodied in an ideal figure, in this way you get what we call an archetypal Buddha, a Buddha that did not exist historically as a human being, but who represents Buddhahood as realised in an ideal manner free from the jurisdictions of time and space.

In this way you get Amitabha, Akshobya, Amoghasiddhi, Padmasambhava, Vairocana the five so-called Dhyani Buddhas, and of course many others. These are the best known. So each of these ideal or archetypal Buddhas represents the ideal of Buddhahood seen from a particular point of view, but essentially they all represent, they all embody, one and the same Buddhahood. So when one practises meditation in the Vajrayana, especially when one practices visualisation and mantra recitation, one may select from amongst all these different forms, all these different aspects, the particular aspect the particular form, the particular Buddha that appeals to you most of all.

That is to say you think of enlightenment, you think of Buddhahood specifically in those terms, that particular form is what makes Buddhahood most real to you one could say. So that you regard that particular Buddha form as your Buddha form - that is the Buddha for you or so far as you are concerned, and you make that particular Buddha figure the centre of your entire spiritual practice, especially so far as visualisation and mantra recitation is concerned. Though of course there are some whole schools that are devoted or dedicated to a particular Buddha like the Shin-Shu Buddhists of Japan who concentrate their attention entirely on the Buddha Amitabha, there are other similar cults, so to speak, of that kind.

But within the Vajrayana tradition of Tibet, different people following that same Vajrayana tradition may have a different Patron Buddha. One may make, for instance, Amitayus the centre of his practice, another may make Tara, another may make the black Manjusri and so on.

So Milarepa is saying that his Patron Buddha is Dorje Paumo, or Vajravarahi who is for the Vajrayana quite an important figure a female Buddha figure. Dorje Paumo or Vajravarahi which literally means the diamond sow which doesn't convey very spiritual associations to us, but it was otherwise apparently with the Indians and Tibetan Tantric Buddhists.

Anandajyoti: Is she a wrathful form Bhante?

S: Not necessarily no, not usually anyway. Many of the Patron Buddhas in the Vajrayana are wrathful, or rather there are quite a lot of wrathful Buddhas, Heruka forms and these are very often selected and very often of course with many heads, arms, legs and so on. For instance some particular lines of tradition, some particular orders even have Patron Buddhas for the Order as such. For instance the Gelugpas have Vajrabhairava, in Sanskrit, as their Patron for the Gelugpa Order as a whole so to speak.

So Milarepa is saying: "Do you know who my Patron Buddha is?"

She is not bad, but good; She is the holy Dorje Paumo. (Vajravarahi) May she bring good fortune and success! May my son Rechungpa be

blessed with (good) luck. Do you know who are my Guards?" Guards seems to mean Dharmapalas, protectors of the Dharma. "They are not bad, but good. They are The Ma Goun Brothers and Sisters. May they bring good fortune and success.

May my son Rechungpa be blessed with (good) luck." These Ma Goun Brothers and Sisters seem to be purely indigenous Tibetan deities that have been converted so to speak, to the faith, and now protect the Dharma. What does one think of this idea of Dharmapalas? I mean Patron Buddha is rather more easy to understand, but what about Dharmapalas, what is the significance of the Dharmapalas? It's easy to say, well yes, they are indigenous Tibetan deities converted to the Dharma and who now protect the Dharma, but what actually happens, how literally is one to take that?

Can one give it simply a subjective, as it were, psychological interpretation, or are there actual, so to speak, objectively existing entities that are called Dharmapalas that one can invoke to protect the Dharma. Can the Dharma be protected by any so to speak external force? One spoke the other day of the Dharmadhara, the upholder or holder or preserver of the Dharma. The point was made then that the Dharma holder or the Dharma preserver, preserves it only by embodying it in his own life. You can't preserve the Dharma in a purely external manner, so in the same way, how can you protect the Dharma? Can there be a sort of protector of the Dharma external to the Dharma itself, or external to somebody's practice of the Dharma. In what sense is the Dharma protected? You can understand protecting the books of the Dharma. If you are a King and if there is a Buddhist library, you can put a Guard on the door to protect the books and see that they are not destroyed or damaged. But in what sense can you speak of protecting the Dharma itself, how can you protect the Dharma? Or how can the Dharma itself be damaged? Where does the Dharma exist, in what sense does it exist?

_____ : It exists when it's practised.

S: So it exists when it's practised. So when is it attacked so to speak?

Ratnaketu: When nobody practises it.

S: When nobody practices it. So when is it defended?

Ratnaketu: When you teach it, when you practice it.

S: When you practice it. So can you have Dharmapalas in a literal sense, can you have anybody protecting the Dharma in a sort of external way. Is that possible? As distinct from protecting the books of the Dharma and so on, or protecting the institutions of the Dharma, or protecting even people who practise the Dharma? In what sense can you in fact have the Dharma itself protected by some external agency other than the person who actually practises the Dharma? Is that possible?

You can have after all, people, even those who don't practise the Dharma, helping to set up conditions conducive to the practise of the Dharma but that is about all you can have. So then who are these protectors of the Dharma? If they are to have any significance at all they can only be some aspect of the person who himself practises the Dharma. So what aspect are they? What aspect of the person practising the Dharma do they

represent. Usually in what sort of a way are the Dharmapalas represented?

_____: Are they a sort of inspiration to continue practising?

S: Yes but they are called Guards they are called defenders, so what does that suggest, what sort of aspect?

_____: They are normally fairly ferocious.

S: They are usually fairly ferocious.

Siddhiratna: Aren't they elements of the idea of Hiri and Ottapa?

S: One could say that. [Laughter]

Siddhiratna: They're at the gates of the mandala to protect from negative influence and promote positive influence.

S: Yes one could say that because in the Pali tradition, in the Theravada tradition, Hiri and Ottapa are called Lokapalas not Dharmapalas but Lokapalas. Did you know about that?

Everybody knows what Hiri and Ottapa are? Hiri and Ottapa are roughly shame and conscience. So shame and conscience are called the guardians or protectors of the world, now what does that mean? Are there figures or forces or gods called Hiri and Ottapa who protect the world? Well clearly isn't that is it? So in what sense do shame and conscience protect the world?

Well what it really means is that without shame and conscience there is no social order. Without a sense of certain things being right and certain things being wrong, or if you like certain things being skilful and certain things being unskilful, certain things being permitted and certain things not being permitted, there is no social order. So Hiri and Otopa are called the guardians of the world. They are not called the guardians of the Dharma, that is something that goes even further, but leave aside the Dharma, or leave aside spiritual life, there is no even, ordinary social life, no social order without Hiri and Otopa. So clearly Heri and Ottapa are not forces or figures external to society - they are aspects of human nature itself, which are essential to the creation of a social order, a humane social order.

So in the same way the Dharmapalas must be aspects of ourselves, aspects of our own effort to practise the Dharma, but what sort of aspect? There should be a clue to that given by the fact that yes they are usually wrathful, very often they are represented as being indigenous deities converted to the Dharma. So if they are guarding the Dharma from deterioration and if it can only deteriorate if we don't practise it, and if they represent aspects of ourselves, then what specific aspects do they represent in the light of all those features.

_____: They represent the more violent emotions, which give energy, give you a lot of energy to enable you to carry on practising the Dharma.

S: Yes but it seems to me that if they are described as guardians and protectors and if they are wrathful in aspect then it would seem that they are essentially the breakers down within oneself of the obstacles to one's own practice of the Dharma, obstacles which exist presumably on a relatively gross level and which therefore require a relatively gross energy, so to speak, to overcome them. The Dharmapalas interpreted as it were subjectively and psychologically seem to represent this kind of thing, this kind of aspect of oneself.

Siddhiratna: So the aspect of removing obstacles to your own evolution.

S: Yes the Dharmapalas represent that aspect of oneself which is as it were hard upon oneself, which is hard upon one's own weakness, hard upon all those things within oneself which prevent oneself from practising the Dharma.

Siddhiratna: That make them ruthless.

S: Yes in a way they are ruthless. They are ruthless because they are kind. [Pause] In Tibetan tradition they think of Dharmapalas quite literally as objective presences. Is there any sense in which one can think of them or any way in which one can think of them in that kind of manner?

Ratnaketu: Only in a sense of objective forces or energies that you can enlist to support external things like monasteries and co-operatives and things. [Laughter]

S: So in practical terms of one's own practice of the dharma, how would one develop let us say a Dharmapala aspect?

Ratnaketu: First of all being aware of your obstacles.

S: Yes, and dealing with them quite severely, quite. drastically

Ratnaketu: With determination.

S: But could one not say that this Dharmapala aspect has some external reference as well, with regard say to other people?

Bob Jones: Ones spiritual friends, or Kalyana Mitras.

S: Yes, yes because you could use your Dharmapala aspect to help them overcome weaknesses and so on, within themselves which were constituting or creating obstacles to their practice and experience of the Dharma. Or you could have a Dharma aspect with regard to those features of society which mislead people and make it more difficult for them to practise the Dharma. That aspect of your spiritual life which challenges the false values of society. That is your Dharmapala aspect, because those false values are encroaching upon the Dharma all the time in the sense that they are not just making it difficult for the Dharma or Buddhism to exist as an institution, they are discouraging people from

practising it.

Ratnaketu: So if you lived a life of encouraging people to practise then you would be a Dharmapala, because you were ensuring the.....

S : Yes well, simply by encouraging people to practise, you wouldn't necessarily be a Dharmapala. You become a Dharmapala only when you come up against obstacles, and you overcome those obstacles, whether within yourself, within other people, or within society at large.

Subhuti: What do Dharmapalas do before they are converted, what do they do before they are Dharmapalas?

S: Well if one thinks in terms of these Tibetan deities, they seem to be local gods and demons.

Subhuti: Are they always wrathful?

S: They are not necessarily wrathful, they are either, judging by the stories of Padmasambhava's encounters and other people's encounters, they are either sort of seductive or menacing. The masculine ones tend to be more menacing, the feminine ones tend to be more seductive though not always. Sometimes the feminine ones can be very menacing too, they are sort of turbulent natural energies, which are not sort of intrinsically opposed to the Dharma, but when they get out of hand they can very well obstruct it. They seem to represent something of that sort. They are powerful, this seems to be their dominant feature, they are powerful, and being powerful and being uncontrolled and being unconverted to the Dharma, they can, even though they might not intend to always, do a lot of harm to people.

Siddhiratna: It's almost as if they can be a bit like the elements as well, like wind or tornadoes or rain or something like that.

S: Whereas the pre-buddhist attitude is that these forces have to be placated, that's the best that you can hope to do, to placate them so that they don't do too much damage, to keep them happy and satisfied. But there is always the fear, always the danger that they will break lose, they will do damage.

But if they have been thoroughly converted and transformed well then there is no possibility of their doing any more harm, any more damage. Their powerful energies are placed at the service of the Dharma, so usually this sort of thing is spoken of in terms of what we would call mythology in terms of gods and demons and Dharmapalas and so on. But it does seem that the truth of the matter is rather psychological and spiritual, it is a question of the transformation of the turbulent energies within the human psyche itself.

You have within yourself all sorts of turbulent energies which are not bad, despite what Christian tradition says, they are not bad, but if they are not controlled wisely, if they aren't harnessed to an ideal, they can get very much out of hand and can even become very negative and destructive. They have to be converted, they have to be transformed and you have to use those sort of energies to further your own practice of the Dharma, to help others to practice the Dharma and to help society at large to become as it were more Dharmic.

Ratnaketu: In Buddhism there's no energy which is excluded or which is cannot be killed or shut up, it all has to be transformed?

S: Well certainly this the Vajrayana point of view, I won't say that the Theravada or even the Mahayana necessarily takes that view, or at least takes it in the explicit way that the Vajrayana does. But the Vajrayana certainly takes that view.

So the Dharmapalas represent those grosser energies, those more turbulent potentially destructive, dangerous energies, whether of external nature, or whether of one's own psyche, which have been transformed, converted if you like, so that they are no longer inimical to the Dharma but actually protect it and further it. But obviously inasmuch as the Dharma cannot be an external thing but an experience, it's essentially an experience within the individual that they protect and further.

Anandajyoti: Is it necessary do you think for one also to develop the Dakini aspect within oneself in order to prevent a Dharmapala as it were from getting out of hand, in order to truly develop the Dharmapala?

S: In this song of course Milarepa doesn't say anything about Dakinis. But usually Guru, Deva and Dakini go together, these are the three, as it were, esoteric refuges, the guru in the place of the Buddha the deva in the place of the Dharma, the dakini in the place of the Sangha. But here we've got Dharmapala too, but Dharmapala doesn't correspond to anything in the three refuges, but nonetheless there was often this sort of quarternerly in the Vajrayana of guru, deva, dakini, and dharmapala.

Clearly in a sense at least these represent different aspects of oneself or at least different aspects of one's spiritual life and spiritual experience. One could regard the dakini and the dharmapala as in a sense balancing each other, one could look at it like that but I don't know whether they are completely antithetical in that sort of way. There are dakinis and dakinis. Usually in this sort of context the term dakini an entirely positive sense, but dakinis can also be dakinis of a lower level, be sort of restless and wild and uncontrolled and all the rest of it.

One could say that the dakini represents one's more, as it were, feminine energy, the dharmapala represents the, as it were, more masculine energies. Both of these have to be developed, both of them have to be integrated, both of them have to be transformed and transmuted, one could look at it like that. It's as though I have mentioned in the past that the dakini represents in a way the principle of communication, this is looking at it in a very broad and general way.

The dakini corresponds to some extent with what Blake calls the emanation, and he says one communicates through one's emanation. That is to say without emotion there is no communication. There is no such thing as a purely rational, purely logical communication, communication in the full sense. One communicates with others, one empathises with others through the more developed more refined emotional side of oneself.

So this suggests that when one communicates one relates to the world as it were in a positive friendly way, one encounters a positive response from the other side, from the person with whom you are communicating.

[End of side one side two]

Subhuti: Where did Dakinis come from mythologically speaking what are they before they are engaged in dharma. Do they have to be engaged in the same way that Dharmapalas do. Do they have to be converted?

S: One doesn't find references as far as I remember to the conversion of the Dakinis. Though sometimes say in the life of Padmasambhava, Padmasambhava is represented as teaching them. One could say that is equivalent to a conversion. But it's as though before encountering Padmasambhava they were at least a little bit wild, a little bit undisciplined, though usually they represent energies more refined, more as it were cultured, even more spiritual than those represented by say the indigenous gods and demons of Tibet. But again sometimes the term Dakini is applied very loosely, and again in the life of Padmasambhava the term 'dakini' is applied to some very strange beings indeed.

Anandajyoti: Some of them appear to be very unrefined, totally wild and abandoned.

S: Yes. It is very difficult to reduce some of these symbols to a precise formulation, it is this or it is that. Jung makes this point with regard to what he refers to as the archetypes of the collective unconscious, that they cannot be too closely or accurately defined, they are not that kind of thing, so to speak. They are quite amorphous and quite fluid and multivalent and multifaced and all the rest of it. Ambiguous even sometimes, shifting. One shouldn't try to pin them down too much and say they are definitely this or definitely that.

But one does get the picture, reading these sort of accounts, of not only nature, but the human psyche itself, being sort of aswirl with all sorts of dangerous or potentially dangerous forces which one needs to come to terms in some way or other, over which one needs to exercise some kind of control, which have to be harnessed and disciplined. It is not a question of crushing them or exterminating them so much as of taming them and making positive use of them.

Anandajyoti: What do you think the most appropriate method is within our body of practices in the Friends for doing this sort of thing, for harnessing these energies to the Dharma.

S: In traditional Tibetan Buddhism, just in the same way that one meditated upon the guru, meditated upon the deva and the dakini, one meditated upon the Dharmapala or at least made offerings to the Dharmapala. So why do you think one did that, or why do you think one does that in Tibetan Buddhism, what is the significance of that? That you have an actual Dharmapala figure, or actual Dharmapala figures on your shrine so to speak and you even visualise them, recite their mantras and make offerings to them, what is the significance of that, so to speak within the broader psychological framework?

Anandajyoti: To be able to acknowledge those elements within you, to bring them into consciousness.

S: Yes to stir them up in a way. So in that sort of way, how could one do that within a context of Western Buddhism? Do these Tibetan figures have this kind of effect does one feel them in that sort of way. Do they have that kind of effect upon you or do perhaps certain historical figures have that sort of effect you?

Ratnaketu: I have found that certain ones do, especially the satyrs, those cloven hoofed little.....[Laughter]

S: The satyrs ah yes, well they haven't been tamed yet, Christianity tried to exterminate them but didn't quite succeed they lingered on, they were really sort of distorted and deformed as devils with cloven hoofs and horns and tails and all the rest of it.

Ratnaketu: I can associate with them.

S: You can associate with them,, that's all right it's a good start but they are not really sufficiently powerful are they, not sufficiently grand?

Siddhiratna: They have to be a mythological figure or are you asking for a historical figure?

S: Well in the case of Tibetan Buddhism the guardians are mainly, though not exclusively, what we would call mythological figures, a few come from legend or semi legendary history. So I am saying that supposing we can't respond to these Tibetan figures well, are there any mythological figures of a western nature that we could use in this way to stir up those sort of Dharmapala energies within others or, are there historical figures, figures from western history that we can use in that way?

Siddhiratna: I should have thought things like Vikings or ancient English Kings or Knights, Knights of the Round Table.

S: Knights of the Round Table, yes but what sort of inspiration do you get? It's quite easy to read about the Knights of the Round Table and get a bit stirred up but does it last very long or does it have any real deep effect do you think?. Does it really bring out that side of your character in a really effective sort of way?

Siddhiratna: You mean burning and pillaging? (laughter)

Anandajyoti: It seems as though it has to be someone who you personally would connect with quite strongly, the historical figure that comes to my mind is Blake.

S: You mean William Blake the artist or Blake the admiral? (laughter)

Anandajyoti: Was there a Blake the Admiral?

Subhuti: Which Blake the admiral? [Laughter]

S: Oh yes, there were at least two!

Anandajyoti: No the Poet and artist. He was really outspoken the whole of his life, he gets obstacles to what he saw as his own vision in society, he was really indignant and vehement and he didn't stand for any messing about as it were.

Ratnaketu: He doesn't seem to me a very wild figure. It's more like natural uncontrolled energies which Dharmapalas seem to represent more.

S: It seems as though one requires a figure onto which one can in a positive way project that unrealised side of oneself and in that way become better acquainted with it and eventually integrate it in harmony with the Dharma and use it for the advancement of the Dharma both within oneself and, so to speak, in society.

Siddhiratna: Do you think that modern cinematic heroes can be used or anti-heroes can be used for that kind of thing?

S: I think it would be rather difficult to use an anti-hero in that way.

Siddhiratna: Well I was thinking of someone like Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* or something like that [Laughter], or James Dean (laughter)

S: I don't know, because you need not only to identify with the energy but you have to bring the energy within the framework of the Dharma. So it seems to me that within that figure onto which you project these wilder energies unrealised within yourself, within that figure there has to be some nobler quality that you can connect at least distantly with the Dharma. You can do that a bit at least theoretically with King Arthur and his Knights. I doubt if you could do it with some of these sort of filmic figures. The energy may be there, the wildness may be there, but where is the nobility or the streak of idealism that could enable you to connect that with the Dharma?

Anandajyoti: Are there any figures that come to your mind?

S: One I have sometimes mentioned but I can't stress him very much really is Nelson. He seems to have had many noble qualities that is true, but perhaps on reflection the wilder energies weren't there to the degree that is so to speak required. Perhaps he is too disciplined, being a naval man. Or perhaps not that he was too disciplined, perhaps he represents a further stage of development, you need to contact your energies at a cruder level than he perhaps can represent.

Subhuti: Shelley seems to have been a bit like this?

S: Yes Shelley was a bit wild and turbulent.

Bob Jones: What about Siddhiratna's point about Napoleon?

S: I think probably when it comes to political figures you have to be rather careful, otherwise you might as well choose Hitler and be done with it! (laughter) And I don't know what you'd get people saying if you did that!

Subhuti: There was something a bit ridiculous about Napoleon as well, a fat man.

S: Yes, clutching his stomach and changing his emphasis.

Siddhiratna: I have a feeling that's English history's version.

S: Ah but then that is important because if that is what Napoleon means to you, well that is the psychic fact with which you have to deal.

Siddhiratna: Having read about him I've got a completely different idea.

S: You are not concerned with the facts of history as such but with the psychic image, you see what I mean? Because it is with your feelings that you have got to make the connection.

Ratnaketu: What about some things like Greek gods, Pan and these others?

S: But it depends again whether they mean anything really to you emotionally, whether you can really connect with them, whether you have a real feeling for them. The same with the Scandinavian gods, do you really have much of a feeling for Thor or for Woden, most people don't I think even if they would like to. There probably isn't much in our heritage of this type our feeling for the heritage is quite emasculated you could say.

Ratnaketu: There is always the Devil. (laughter)

S: Well maybe you have to fall back on him. There are figures for instance in ancient Britain like the Giant Man whoever he was, the San Abbas Man, there are several others, so one upon a time that element was there. But it seems we have lost our emotional connection with it, which probably is a great pity otherwise a figure of that sort could very easily have become a Dharmapala.

Siddhiratna: It seems then from what's being said it is not a question of actually taming them, it is not as if they have to lose their wild and turbulent energy but it has to be.....

S: It has to be harnessed.

Siddhiratna: rather than refined or gotten rid of.

S: Because it's as though for a certain practical purpose - we'll leave aside the subjective and psychological - but for a certain practical purpose

in the world you may need so to speak, a rather crude energy. Though I'm not too happy speaking in terms of crude energy and refined energy and all that, but speaking in those terms you might need a crude energy for a certain piece of work in the world, well you have got to have that energy available. But the work that you do with that energy has got to be within the general framework of the Dharma, that is to say that energy has to be harnessed, so to speak, to the Dharma, has to be converted as Padmasambhava converted the Tibetan gods and demons. Though it's as though when we talk about gods and demons in this sort of way we are really getting in touch with processes going on within ourselves at a semi-conscious or even unconscious level.

Anyway, Milarepa is saying - 'May they bring good fortune and success. May my son Rechungpa be blessed with (good) luck.'

So he has mentioned here the Transmission, the Patron Buddha and the Guards and then he goes on to - 'May the View, the Practice, and the Action All bless you my son Rechungpa!

Did we go into this yesterday the View the Practice and the Action? So the View the Practice and the Action comprise the Dharma itself from these three different points of view.

'May the Principle, the Path, and the Accomplishment All bless you, my son Rechungpa!' This is much the same in a way. Principle corresponds to View, Path corresponds the Practice, Accomplishment corresponds to some extent to Action.

Ratnaketu: Is this also, with the Principle, the Path and the Accomplishment, the noble eightfold path, where you have got perfect vision?

S: No it's not really quite like that, it's like there's the general principle, the path in the sense of the application of that principle, and the accomplishment, the result which you gain as a result of following that path. So one can look at the Dharma not only in terms of View, Practice and Action, but in terms of Principle, Path and Accomplishment. Sometimes it is spoken of as Cause, Path and Result, or Ground, Path and Result.

All bless you, my son Rechungpa. May the Tsa, the Lun, and the Tig Le All bless you my son Rechungpa!

There is a note on this - the Tsa means the nadis, the nerves, the channels along which this so called psychic energy passes, the Lun is prana, Tig Le literally means bindu and is usually understood to mean sexual energy. So the Tsa and Lun and the Tig Le, the nadis the prana and the bindu, these all represent energy, energy in it's different forms. So what therefore does Milarepa mean by saying - "May the Nadis the prana and the bindu all bless you my son Rechungpa" Or may you be blessed by them what does that mean do you think?

Ratnaketu: May you have plenty of energy.

S: Yes, may you be endowed with these energies.

Siddhiratna: Have free access to them.

S: Have free access to them.

Ratnaketu: May you be able to use them.

S: May you be able to use them.

Bob Jones: Why would he invoke sexual energies?

S: Well, one might say energy is energy, that all one's energies have to be directed into the path, into the spiritual life, perhaps even drawn out from their usual expressions and redirected into the spiritual life itself. [Pause]

One might say in a general way here with regard to these lines and also the previous verse, it seems as though in Vajrayana practice, projection occupies a very important place, what I might call positive projection, for instance with regard to the Patron Buddha, the visualisation of the Patron Buddha. You visualise for instance the figure of Amitabha, red in colour in the Dhyana mudra with the begging bowl in the hand, so what are you doing? Why are you visualising Amitabha in that sort of way? Or by visualising Amitabha in that way, with what are you coming into contact? What are you developing?

_____: Hidden aspects of yourself.

S: Hidden aspects of yourself. It's easy to say that but it is much more difficult really to do it to any depth, but this is actually what you are doing, you are, as it were, reminding yourself that these are your qualities. Of course I think one should be careful not to think that intellectually too soon, otherwise so to speak it doesn't work. What you have to think of is the Buddha out there, of a particular colour, in a particular mudra and so on. But the effect will be that it stirs up at least the beginnings, at least the germs, of certain qualities in you.

So it is as though operating as we do within the subject/object framework, we can get at what is within us only via something that seems to be without us, outside us. Do you see what I mean. It's as though we can only see what is within us by projecting it onto a screen which is outside us.

Siddhiratna: Like a mirror.

S: Like a mirror. So we get that with the Patron Buddhas, with the Devas, Deva is used here in the sense of Patron Buddha or Patron Bodhisattva. And we get it also with the Dharmapalas, we think about the Dharmapalas, we have pictures of them, maybe we visualise them too, recite their mantras, make offerings to them. In that way we experience the Dharmapalas as being out there, but that helps us indirectly to get in touch with those qualities within ourselves. Do you see what I mean?

And it's also much the same with these nadis and prana and so on. There are practices in which you visualise within yourself a channel a central

channel, you visualise energy mounting up through that channel, bursting through certain different psychic centres in the form of lotuses, you visualise those lotuses bursting open etc. etc.

So although you visualise that as taking place within you, to the extent that you visualise it and see it, it's outside you. So by visualising, by picturing, those processes taking place 'out there' you sort of stimulate something 'in here'. So this seems to be a general pattern certainly within the Vajrayana that you contact what is within you by projecting it externally but you can't do it in a sort of self conscious merely theoretical way, so that you have to forget all about the fact that in effect you are projecting for the time being, until the whole process starts really working. If you think about it in those terms too much, you will just inhibit it from happening altogether. This is our difficulty - we are too clever, we are too well informed we know too much, we know more than we are ready to know, our knowledge outstrips our being, we know how the trick works so it doesn't work for us (laughter). It only works if you don't know how it works!

Subhuti: Presumably within the Vajrayana the trick would finally be dissolved by the appreciation of Sunyata.

S: By experience itself yes, indeed.

Subhuti: Whereas for us there is a pseudo.

S: It is being dissolved intellectually before we have even begun to have any experience, so in a way even the search for equivalents in our own tradition, this is all quite artificial, it probably just won't happen that way. Hopefully patterns will spring up. We'll start actually believing in something like actually believing there's some force out there at Glastonbury on Glastonbury Tor is really there, you know, you can feel it, you might start having a genuine conviction of it and then it might start actually working you see and you gradually might bring that within the framework of the Dharma.

But if you go looking for it and trying to find something of that sort and find something within ancient British Celtic tradition, something corresponding with the Tibetan gods and demons then it probably won't work at all, you just won't be able to do that. So we do find ourselves here in quite a difficult situation.

In New Zealand you might be able to solve the problem by enlisting, not to say converting, some Maoris who still believe in the Maori gods and get them to bring their Maori gods over into the New Zealand FWBO. Most Maoris of course are good Christians and church goes these days. It's rather a pity but you might find a few who still worship the ancient gods, and convert them. But tell them, please bring your gods with you, we need them! [Laughter]

Subhuti: Advertise.

Ratnaketu: Pagan god wanted! (laughter)

S: But it's quite strange to exist in a culture where the countryside has been denuded of gods. You notice this in India - there is a sacred tree here and a sacred stone there, a little shrine here a little shrine there, it's a quite different sort of landscape a quite different sort of atmosphere, but here there is nothing. There are little Catholic shrines and saints but really it is not the same thing I'm afraid. I don't think we get many of those in England anyway, hardly any. We have got one here in Norfolk but it is not really quite like that.

Siddhiratna: Maybe it might be necessary to go out to places like Africa and South America where some of them might still be there. [Pause]

S: All right. Milarepa goes on to something more abstruse in a way. "May the Bliss, the Illumination, and Non-thought All bless you my son Rechungpa!" Bliss, illumination and non-thought are sometimes said to be the three main characteristics of Mahamudra experience. It is an experience of bliss, it is an experience of illumination and of entire absence of discursive thought. We talked about bliss and illumination yesterday didn't we?

So these are you could say the three principal aspects of the enlightenment experience. Milarepa is saying may these three bless you, may these three be with you, may you attain these.

Subhuti: In original Buddhism, the element of positive projection isn't harnessed or brought into play is it? Or is it?

S: Well yes and no. It doesn't seem to be incorporated within the framework of the Dharma, but there are lots of references to gods and goddesses. Even gods and goddesses intervening in the spiritual life of bikkhus, a bhikkhu may be meditating in a forest and he may be not getting on very well with his meditation, and a goddess who was a relation in a former life, appears and encourages him with some verses to get on with his meditation, you see what I mean? You get quite a lot of material of that sort in the Pali Canon.

Subhuti: It's actually so intrinsic that it's not adopted as a Practice.

S: Yes you can disregard it and say that's just the Hindu background as it were. It hasn't yet been..... well you can't say it hasn't been converted to Buddhism, it has, but it hasn't been addressed in a specifically Buddhist cultural form. Five hundred or a thousand years later that figure would have been a dakini, but it is just a goddess in this particular context, almost a Hindu goddess, a nature spirit.

Subhuti: So is there any phase of Buddhist history where this element is missing, was it there in all forms.

S: I think it's really there, but it's certainly there at it's richest, I would say, in the Vajrayana and particularly perhaps in the Buddhism in Tibet. But it does seem that when the Vajrayana developed in India it did take over all sorts of indigenous deities. You could hardly call them Hindu deities, in many cases they were just village deities existing on a level which was not even a level of popular Hinduism, because we mustn't forget that Hinduism, in the sense of Brahmanism, spread from the Punjab and gradually took over indigenous cults and that what we call Hindu

gods today weren't really originally in some cases Hindu gods at all, they were just Indian local deities which were taken over by the Brahmins and incorporated into the Brahmanical system just as the Vajrayana later on incorporated them into the Vajrayana system, into Buddhism.

Even some of the best known Hindu gods are said by scholars not to be of, so to speak, Aryan origin. Shiva himself is said to be of non-Aryan origin, to represent non-Aryana practices and beliefs. What about Kali? Where does she come from. She's the goddess of Eastern India, eventually incorporated into the Brahminical system and the Hindu pantheon. So there's a lot that is neither Hindu nor Buddhist but just Indian and represents a sort of common animistic reservoir from which different spiritual traditions can draw. So we don't have anything like that in the West any more.

Ray: Why do you think in Judaism when the idea of one god came about there seems to be such a purge against sort of nature spirits and paganism?

S: It's quite a big question. Some scholars associate with our whole shift in culture. Some associate it with a shift from matriarchy to patriarchy. I think that is rather dubious, but certainly you could say from feminine values to masculine values, because many of the deities and cults that Jews were so against consisted in the worship of goddesses which the Jews regarded as indecent rites and so on. So no doubt there's a sort of cultural aspect in the whole thing.

Originally it seems that all gods were gods of the soil. In ancient times the idea was very widespread that a god's jurisdiction was strictly limited, and if you crossed over from one country to another well you left your old gods behind you and you'd worship the new gods, the gods of the country in which you now lived. This was regarded as quite natural and quite straightforward. So if you were fighting for your territory you were also fighting for your god. If your territory extended the jurisdiction of your god extended. So originally it was a question of one god against another god, just as it was a question of one country or one state against another country or another state. But when empires developed you got the idea of there being one god over all the gods just as you've got one emperor let's say, over all the minor kings. But let us say supposing a particular state felt itself very hard pressed by its neighbours, as the Jews certainly did, then you'd be going all out to exterminate the other states and therefore exterminate their gods, and proclaim your state and your god therefore as the state and the god. So in the end the Jews came to the point where they didn't recognise their god as just the most powerful or the greatest of all the gods, but as the only god. This was you could say theological totalitarianism [Laughter] at its extreme! Which of course was inherited by Christianity and Islam. There's no room for anybody else's gods. You're not even satisfied to say that your god is the chief god or your god is the best god - your god is in fact the only god. So this sort of attitude, this sort of development led to what we call monotheism. This it seems is more or less what happened. It's a very dangerous thing to identify your local god, your tribal god, with the god of the whole universe, because that's as if to say well you rule the whole universe. Your god is not just the god of where you live, he's the god of the whole earth. So this gives you indirectly some sort of jurisdiction over the whole earth. It's only right and proper that you should try to extend the worship of your god over the whole earth because the whole earth belongs to your god. Everybody on the earth should be worshipping your god, because he's the god of the whole earth. All the other gods are false gods. People ought not to be worshipping them.

_____: (unclear)

S: Anyway Milarepa concludes by saying, 'Most true is the Buddha, Most true the Dharma and the Sangha. May these three gems bless you forever my son Rechungpa. Do you know who I am? I am called Milarepa. May all Mila's blessings fall upon his son, May Rechungpa soon exceed his father.' So on Rechungpa's departure Milarepa is invoking all these blessings upon him - the blessing of the Kagyupa tradition itself, the blessing of Milarepa's own patron Buddha, the blessing of his own guards, the blessing of the View, the Practice, the Action, the Principle, the Path, the Accomplishments, the Nadis, the Prana and the bindu, the Bliss, the Illumination and non-Thought, the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha; and finally, Milarepa's own personal blessing. And you notice he says, 'May Rechungpa soon exceed his father'. Now what do you think he means by that. Is it possible for Rechungpa to exceed Milarepa?

_____ : It must be.

S: Well it must be. So Milarepa is enlightened. So would it be possible for Rechungpa to be more enlightened than Milarepa? Can one speak of enlightenment in those sort of terms - bigger enlightenment or smaller enlightenment?, less enlightenment, more enlightenment - is this what Milarepa is meaning

Ray: You don't just stop when you gain enlightenment. You can't just say well I'm there, I will stand still, because you just fall backwards. You have to.....

S: But nonetheless you are enlightened or not enlightened, one could say.

Subhuti: Perhaps in terms of expression.

S: Perhaps in terms of expression.

Subhuti: Skilful means.

S: Skilful means. Perhaps in terms of disciples. May he have more disciples than Milarepa, may he be better known than Milarepa. May he do more for the dharma than Milarepa. Very likely Milarepa means something of this sort. But I think this is very important because what we usually find is that at each generation, so to speak, the disciples aren't quite up to the level of their gurus. You get maybe a very great guru and he has quite a good disciple but the disciple is not quite as good, perhaps not nearly as good as the guru. Well then that disciple has a disciple but he's also not quite up to the level of his guru who was formerly a disciple. So what is the result? That after four or five generations you've got very mediocre people indeed! So there's only one way of counterbalancing that and that is that in each generation the disciple should be better than the guru, should exceed the guru, go further than the guru. That's the only way to keep up the tradition.

So Milarepa seems to recognise that. So he says, 'May Rechungpa soon exceed his father'. That's the real way to keep up the Kagyupa tradition. You must do better than your guru. If you don't you've let down your tradition.

Siddhiratna: Why does he ask 'Do you know who I am?'

S: Well why do you think he does?

Siddhiratna: Is it to find out, like you were saying earlier, how much insight he has had or something like that?

S: Perhaps the clue is to be found in his reply. 'I am called Milarepa.' I'm just Milarepa. He doesn't even say 'well I'm your guru' or 'I'm an enlightened being', he just says, 'I'm called Milarepa'. Well perhaps he means even that it's not possible to know who I am, I am called Milarepa. I'm just me.

Anyway you'd better have your coffee before it gets cold.

Ray: What is meant the claim that some of the lamas that come over of this country in the present time are enlightened?

S: Well who makes the claim?

Ray: Well I've heard that they've made it (Unlcear) I'm not sure that enlightened is actually the term they use but I can't quite think of it now. I was wondering whether there were various stages that they try to achieve before...

S: I'm very suspicious about claims of any kind. I remember reading some years ago, not many years ago, copies of the *East-West Journal* published from California, and there were advertisements for all sorts of Tibetan teachers visiting the area, and the advertisement sort of described them as great enlightened masters and also an American master, and it was said that he had been described as the most enlightened teacher since Gautama the Buddha and he'd been described as such by no less a person than the Karmapa, etc., etc. So the context tells you - it's advertisement, so in a way it means nothing at all. You are just engaging in superlatives and indulging in superlatives. What does it mean? You're trying to get people to roll up, it's showmanship. It doesn't really have any meaning at all. So I think it can be ignored. You just have to go by your own experience of whatever the person concerned has to offer and its effect upon you and your spiritual life. That's all you can go by. Anybody can make a claim, anybody can put an advertisement in the newspapers or in magazines saying there will be a lecture or a course or a class given by so and so, an enlightened master. What's to stop you doing that? And of course people roll up for enlightened masters because they think it's exactly what they need, exactly what they're ready for. So it's really quite shameful the way a spiritual tradition has been commercialised like this. It is really quite disgusting almost. One needs to do no more than give plain facts. Say well a lecture or a course or a class conducted by so an so, a lama from so and so, give the name of his monastery. Fair enough. Or you could say an experienced meditation teacher.

[End of Day Four tape one, Day four tape two]

Bob Jones: In this context of lineage and such-like, do you see the Friends now as being the beginning of a tradition or the continuation of one?

S: Well I should hope so, but using the word tradition in the real sense, not just something as it were institutional, but a genuine stream of Buddhist life and spiritual experience. This is what one hopes, certainly.

But I think we should be very careful not to prematurely label ourselves as this or that, this particular form or Buddhism or that particular form of Buddhism. For the time being at least it is quite enough just to describe ourselves as a Buddhist movement or even the Buddhist movement if you like. Even 'Buddhist' is not altogether satisfactory, as I indicated at the beginning of my lecture the other week. You could say that a tradition never knows when it begins. It is seen as the beginning of a new tradition only in retrospect. So one shouldn't be too self conscious about starting a new tradition or something of that sort. It is not something that one can do deliberately. But very likely this is in fact what is happening. One can't perhaps say more than that.

Ratnaketu: There is a danger of wanting...we know it all, we have our knowledge, we want to have special images for our tradition and names, and labels and those sorts of things.

S: They may well develop but they can't be planned out just on a rational basis. But to go back again to what Rechungpa says, "May Rechungpa soon exceed his father". I mean most people assume it is enough if they are even half as good as their teacher or do even a quarter of what he did, but Milarepa is not encouraging that attitude. That you have got to exceed. It is not enough even to keep up to the same level or the same standard. You have got to go beyond that.

So if you are say a young mitra, and you become ordained and you start thinking, 'Maybe one day I could help set up a new centre', well yes, maybe as a beginning but you should think that well, so far in the FWBO about a dozen centres have been set up, in the course of my life I should set up at least twenty or twenty five centres myself (laughter). You should think in those sort of terms, not that if you can do just a fraction of what somebody else has done before you, that will be good enough for your modest abilities and capacities. No, that isn't nearly enough. You are probably underestimating yourself - because you've got off to a much better start with all sorts of support and help which the original people didn't have, and also maybe you started much younger. They came tottering along maybe at the age of forty or fifty - you have made it at the age of maybe seventeen or eighteen. You've got much more time to do everything! So you should think in terms of doing very much more than those who started up things; not just doing a small part of what they did, that's not nearly good enough. Things won't grow in that way. If say in this generation we start twenty centres, and the next generation say OK we'll start ten, even though maybe there's five times more people, then in the next generation it's only five, well after a hundred years you've died out! (Laughter)

So it should go on expanding all the time and people doing better than had been done before; writing better books, giving better lectures, having bigger and better centres, and going to more and more new countries etc. Anyway just a hint! (Laughter). So would someone like to read the next prose paragraph.

"The Jetsun continued, "In Central Tibet [Weu] a bitch will 'catch' your feet. At that time do not forget your Guru and your meditation."

S: So what is this mysterious remark? 'In Central Tibet [Weu] a bitch will catch your feet', Well of course, in Tibet on the outskirts of villages they often had very fierce and savage dogs because there was always the danger from robbers and bandits. Sometimes these dogs were chained up at the entrance to the village, sometimes they were allowed to roam loose at night. So there was always the danger of a traveller like Rechungpa getting bitten in the foot, or even caught in the foot, by one of these dogs, whether a dog or whether a bitch. But do you think that literal meaning is the real meaning? What do you think he's really getting at? Or what is he really saying? What do you think he means or might mean?

_____: It sounds as though he is quite likely to be caught by something! (Laughter)

S: Well we actually know because we have got hindsight that he became entangled with a certain lady. She's the bitch, [Laughter] she caught him by the feet. Why by the feet? Is there any significance in this?

_____: It stops him running away.

S: It stops him running away yes. Also the weakest part so to speak.

_____: Achille's heel.

_____: The lowest part.

S: The lowest part, yes. 'At that time do not forget your Guru and your meditation'. Why does Milarepa say that? What does he mean by this? If he is going to get caught, he is caught. Why does Milarepa say 'at that time do not forget your Guru and your meditation'.

_____: Almost like a lifeline, something to hold onto, to help you get out.

S: Yes, even if for the time being you are unable to get free, well at least hang on to your practice, in the hope that sooner or later you will be able to get free. So Milarepa seems to know Rechungpa's weakness, he knows the danger that lies in wait for him. Read that next prose paragraph.

"Rechungpa circled and prostrated before the Jetsun many times, and then set out on his journey. In the meantime, Milarepa thought, "Rechungpa will probably look back at me. If I do not stay here, he will be very disappointed when he finds me gone. I had better remain for a while." So he sat down, but Rechungpa never turned his head. Milarepa wondered, "Why does he not look back? Does he have any wrong ideas about his Guru and his brothers? At any rate, he is a man who can keep the Dharma and the Succession secret wherever he goes." Then, holding his breath, Milarepa [flew ahead] and overtaking Rechungpa, transformed himself into seven identical Repas standing before a huge rock shaped like a rearing lion. In order to test Rechungpa's intention, the seven Repas all sang together:"

S: 'Rechungpa circled and prostrated before the Jetsun many times, and then set out on his journey', that is to say he circumambulated as we find people doing with regard to the Buddha in the Pali scriptures. He went round him keeping him on his right hand as a sign of respect and prostrated before him many times and then set out on his journey. 'In the meantime Milarepa thought, "Rechungpa will probably look back at me. If I do not stay here, he will be very disappointed when he finds me gone. I had better remain for a while." So he sat down, but Rechungpa never turned his head. Milarepa wondered, "Why does he not look back? Does he have any wrong ideas about his Guru and his brothers? At any rate, he is a man who can keep the Dharma and the Succession secret wherever he goes."

So Milarepa wonders why he does not look back, that would seem to be the natural thing, to have your last look at your guru and your brother disciples who presumably are standing there around Milarepa, seeing Rechungpa off, but Rechungpa does not look back and Milarepa thinks maybe there is some misunderstanding in his mind, some wrong ideas about his guru and his brother disciples, but never mind at least he is a man who can keep the Dharma and the Succession - that is to say the whispered teachings - secret wherever he goes. But he just wants to find out what is really going on so he holds his breath and he flies on ahead and overtakes Rechungpa. Rechungpa of course does not see him; he is flying through the air presumably and he transforms himself into seven identical Repas, that is to say Kagyupa yogis, standing before a huge rock shaped like a rearing lion. Presumably these Repas don't look like Milarepa himself, they are just ordinary Repas. So in order to test Rechungpa's intention the seven Repas all sang together. So what did they sing, would you like to read that?

*"Listen Repa traveller! Who
Are you and who is your Guru?
Who are your forebears, what
Instructions do you know?
Which is your Transmission, what
Meditation do you practice?
Where's your temple, what's this mountain?
Can you name this rock?
Whither are you bound,
By who's order do you travel,
And in what way do you go?"*

Rechungpa thought, "No other Repa would say things like this to me; they must be transformations of the Jetsun". He then prostrated himself before the Repas and sang:

*Hear me, my great Jetsun Father!
You ask who I am. My name
Is Rechungpa from Gung Tang;
My Guru is Milarepa,*

*My forebears, Marpa and Ngopa
 My great grandfathers, Tilopa and Naropa,
 My Instructions are of the Dakinis' Whispered
 Lineage,
 My Transmission was founded by Dorje-Chang,
 My hermitage is on Lashi Snow Mountain.
 This hill is Biling Zurkha, this rock
 Is known as the Great Rearing Lion,
 The place to which I go is Weu,
 My Jetsun Guru gave me leave.
 This is the story of my journey.
 I pray you, Jetsun, for instructions"*

S: So Rechungpa thought, 'No other Repa would say things like this to me.' This seems so much like Milarepa's own style (laughter), 'They must be transformations of the Jetsun. He then prostrated himself before the Repas and sang: 'Hear me, my great Jetsun Father! You ask who I am. My name is Rechungpa from Gung Tang; My Guru is Milarepa, My forebears, Marpa and Ngopa' - Ngopa it seems is another teacher of Milarepa's. 'My great grandfathers, Tilopa and Naropa'. That is to say Naropa the teacher of Marpa and Tilopa the teacher of Naropa. 'My Instructions are the Dakinis' Whispered Lineage, My Transmission was founded by Dorje-Chang,' - Vajradhara. 'My hermitage is on Lashi Snow Mountain. This hill is Biling Zurkha, this rock is known as the Great Rearing Lion, The place to which I go is Weu, My Jetsun Guru gave me leave. This is the story of my journey. I pray you, Jetsun, for instructions'.

That seems quite straightforward doesn't it. Milarepa asks quite straightforward questions and Rechungpa gives quite straightforward replies. So it seems that Milarepa is reassured. Would you like to read the next two small paragraphs?

"Milarepa then withdrew all the transformation bodies into the real one and said, "I did this to find out why you did not even look back at me after you left. Now I know that you have not violated the samaya precepts. Since you have observed them properly, we will never separate from each other. You may now proceed to Weu..

Overjoyed at these words, Rechungpa bowed down at the Jetsun's feet and made many good wishes. Then he set out for Weu, and the Jetsun returned to the Belly Cave."

S: So 'Milarepa then withdrew all the transformation bodies into the real one and said, "I did this to find out why you did not even look back at me after you left"' - that is to say to find out whether there was any misunderstanding between you and your guru and fellow disciples - "'Now I know that you have not violated the samaya precepts.'" Now I know that you are in fact true to your spiritual commitments, there is no misunderstanding. "'Since you have observed them properly, we will never separate from each other.'" That is quite significant isn't it. What do you think Milarepa really means by that?

Subhuti: It's as if so strong a contact had been established that it transcends time and space.

S: Yes, yes. Rechungpa is now so faithful to his commitments that he is spiritually in harmony, spiritually in tune with Milarepa, so it doesn't matter whether physically speaking he stays or he goes. 'We will never separate from each other'. His mind, as it were, has become at one with the mind of Milarepa himself, at least in intention.

Subhuti: How was that to be deduced from his behaviour?

S: Well, how was this to be deduced?

_____: Was it to be deduced from his behaviour necessarily?

Ratnaketu: It might be because - like I have heard that Zen masters, that whatever answer you give them, they can know whether or not you are just saying it or whether it's just.... So no matter what Rechungpa had said, Milarepa would have been able to know whether it was real or not, whether he was....

Bob Jones: Perhaps just the fact that he wasn't fooled by the fact that there were seven Repas he didn't recognise, he saw that it was in fact Milarepa was sufficient evidence that he had not forgotten about him.

S: Yes, yes. Not only hadn't forgotten him but that he was truly in touch with him. This doesn't mean that Rechungpa is yet perfect you notice. He still has trials to face, difficulties to overcome, but at least he is attuned to Milarepa. He will never entirely lose contact with him.

So it isn't explained why he didn't look back, or is it explained why he didn't look back? Why did he not look back? There was no disagreement, there was no misunderstanding, but why then did he not look back?

Subhuti: Perhaps he didn't need to.

_____: Perhaps when the time came to go, he didn't really want to go.

S: It could be. But also yes, perhaps he didn't need to look back.

Subhuti: He carried them with him.

S: He carried them with him. If, as Milarepa says, 'We will never separate from each other', well what need to look back? It is also perhaps symbolised by the fact that Milarepa appears in front of him. Well could you say that Milarepa is behind, could you say that Milarepa is in

front? Milarepa is, so to speak, in Rechungpa's own mind because he himself at least to some extent has become at one with Milarepa. He doesn't need to look back. He is taking Milarepa with him, taking the fellow disciples with him. That's not so easy to do, of course. So, 'overjoyed at these words, Rechungpa bowed down at the Jetsun's feet and made many good wishes'. Good wishes here means aspirations - 'may I be reborn in such and such world and in such and such age, May I help all living beings'. Good wishes in that sense - Pranidanas. ' Then he set out for Weu and the Jetsun returned to the Belly Cave.'

Milarepa always seemed to go back to his cave, back to his hermitage, back to his meditation, whatever anybody else might be doing.

Bob Jones: I'm rather surprised actually. Quite often in Buddhist texts that apparently Enlightened beings continue to meditate. I would have thought that meditation was a means to getting enlightened - once you'd got there you wouldn't have to bother. (Laughter)

S: We find that the Buddha continued to meditate. All right, why did he? Well what happens when an Enlightened being meditates?

Subhuti: It's not so much carrying out the mindfulness of breathing or particular practices, as coursing in that particular state, enjoying his Enlightened state.

S: Enjoying his Enlightened state! You mean at other times he does not enjoy it? (Laughter) How is that possible?

Siddhiratna: Dwelling in it.

S: His meditation has got nothing to do with his Enlightened state. He is Enlightened. If you are Enlightened, for instance if Enlightenment is a further and higher and fuller development of say, vipassana, if even vipassana is a, so to speak, permanent achievement, well what to speak of Enlightenment? It is not something that you experience and you gain and you realise, and then you drop out of it from time to time and then you go back to it when you meditate. So what does happen when an Enlightened being meditates?

Ray Bisson: Is he always in a state of meditation?

S: No, not according to the Pali scriptures. Sometimes the Buddha meditated, sometimes he didn't, but he was always the Buddha, he was always Enlightened. So that suggests a distinction between Enlightenment and meditation. So what is meditation in this sense, when we say that the Buddha meditated what do we mean? We don't mean that he temporarily recaptures his Enlightenment experience, because that by definition as it were is permanent, he is always the Buddha. So when he meditates what happens if he is not recapturing that Enlightenment experience?

Subhuti: He's experiencing the dhyanas.

S: He is experiencing the dhyanas. So why does a Buddha bother to experience the dhyanas? After all he's Enlightened, why bother about the

dhyanas. They are not a means to Enlightenment any more.

Ratnaketu: Do they help him when he is in the world? When he is not meditating?

S: No, in a way they hinder him because if you are in the dhyanas you are not much use so far as the world is concerned. You are oblivious to the world even.

_____: Does the fact that the Buddha is in dhyana states somehow help other beings?

S: No, the dhyanas in themselves are purely mundane states. Hes probably much more helpful to other beings when he is not in the dhyana states and when he is meeting them and talking and teaching.

Ratnaketu: Is he just setting an example?

S: You could say that, yes, you could say it is setting an example. Certainly in Milarepa's case. But supposing there is not even a question of setting an example, supposing there is nobody around to set an example to.

Subhuti: He just enjoys dhyana.

S: Yes, he just enjoys dhyana! (Laughter) After all it's an extremely pleasurable state [Laughter], so why not dwell in a state which is more pleasurable rather than in a state which is less pleasurable? It's really as simple as that. The Buddha gives as clue in the Pali scriptures, where he says that in his extreme old age that the only time when the Tathagata is free from bodily pain is when he withdraws into Dhyana states. So this suggest that even when you are an Enlightened being you may still have to experience painful bodily sensations just because your Enlightened mind is, so to speak, linked with a physical body. But if you are a master so to speak of the dhyanas, you can withdraw from your body consciousness into the dhyana states, and by so withdrawing you will not experience those painful bodily sensations. So to dwell in dhyana states is a more, as it were, comfortable way of dwelling. And why should you not dwell more rather than less comfortably, or blissfully.

So this raises the point or rather it makes the point, that the fact that you are Enlightened doesn't necessarily mean that you won't suffer physically; you won't suffer mentally; it doesn't mean that you won't suffer physically. The Buddha did even after the Enlightenment, but the physical suffering does not affect the mind in any way. Does not affect the Enlightenment experience - there's no reaction. And though you experience the physical pain and physical suffering, in a sense it doesn't matter, because the Enlightenment experience is also there. But if you have got the opportunity of enjoying the dhyana states rather than ordinary bodily consciousness, especially if that bodily consciousness is associated with painful sensations, why should you not enjoy those higher dhyana states? It's the sensible thing to do. You are not a masochist after all.

Bob Jones: But does it not to a certain extent contradict the Bodhisattva vow, that the longer you spend in dhyanic states, the less time can be

spent helping other sentient beings?

S: That's true, except that in the terms of the Bodhisattva Ideal they speak in terms of, so to speak, staying in Nirvana, though that is only a manner of speaking; but, all right, supposing you are Enlightened, supposing you are a Buddha, and supposing you spend quite a lot of your time teaching and preaching, well you may be physically tired, you may need to withdraw into the dhyana states to refresh yourself, as it were, so that you have more physical and mental energy through which to communicate your Enlightenment experience. But if there's nobody around then there's no possibility of communicating with anybody, well why not then enjoy the dhyana states?

In fact you will tend to that quite naturally, you won't have to make any particular effort. After all you've no craving to draw your attention out into the external world. So if there's nothing in the external world particularly occupying your mind, well your natural tendency will be just to withdraw and to experience dhyana states, experience more satisfactory mundane states. So one can say that in the case of the Enlightened person, in addition to the actual Enlightenment experience, there is a natural tendency, so to speak, to experience more rather than less positive mundane states via the experience of the dhyanas. Do you see what I mean?

So left to himself, as it were, a Buddha just withdraws into the dhyana states, but the Enlightenment experience itself doesn't change. And when he is drawn out of those dhyana states to do something or speak to people, he is no longer enjoying the dhyana states, but the Enlightenment experience as such remains constant. The insight remains constant, the freedom from the asravas remains constant, the wisdom remains constant, the compassion remains constant, but the dhyana states are not actually being experienced.

There was a discussion among the early schools as to whether the Buddha was always in a state of meditation, a state of samadhi, a state of dhyana. Some schools believed that he was but the Theravadins, apparently reflecting the Buddha's own statements, maintained that he was not always in the dhyana states, but of course he was always the Buddha, his insight and his Enlightenment - they remained constant, they were permanent.

Ratnaketu: Anybody who is Enlightened, they can move freely through all the states, like all the dhyanas, or do they have to have.....

S: Well, in the case of the Buddha, it is said, and as I think we touched upon the other day, a Buddha came to be regarded as having a special equipment as it were, to fit him to become a Buddha, that is to say to rediscover the path at a time when it wasn't known at all. And the Buddha therefore is especially proficient in all sorts of ways that others don't need to be, so the Buddha it seems did have that proficiency of staying in any dhyana state as long as he wished and emerging from it only when he wished to do that. Many of the other disciples had that proficiency, but it does seem that not all of them had it in an equal degree. Some were merely enlightened (Laughter). Just as not all enlightened people perhaps can paint or compose music, well that does not affect their Enlightened states. Some can, some can't.

So it is almost as though some Enlightened beings have the capacity to move freely among the dhyanas, others don't. Perhaps it's a matter of temperament. Some Enlightened beings develop supernormal powers, others don't. Perhaps they don't have enough interest, perhaps being Enlightened is enough for them (Laughter). But nonetheless though that is the tradition, at least the Theravada tradition, it does seem to me that

an Enlightened mind, associated with the ordinary mundane psycho-physical organism, left to itself, so to speak, would tend to dwell in dhyanic rather than in non-dhyanic states. It's as though, just as most people require an effort to get into dhyanic states, the Enlightened being would require an effort to get out of dhyanic states, or move out of them only when he wanted to for a definite purpose. That is to say to communicate with other living beings; well other living beings, on the karma vichara level, in the karmaloka, because on dhyanic levels you can communicate with non-human beings i.e. with devas of various kinds.

Anyway how did we get onto that?

Subhuti: Why do Enlightened beings need to meditate.

S: It's the best way of living. Even if you are Enlightened, presumably to dwell in the dhyanic states is preferable to dwelling in the non-dhyanic state. Also perhaps we can say in Milarepa's case, he was setting an example, and had been instructed by his guru to pass his time in that way.

Subhuti: Could you not also say that if you are dwelling in dhyana, particularly fourth dhyana you are actually radiating a positive influence?

S: Yes, I am sure you could say that, I am sure that is what is happening, that you are contributing to the general, mundane, positivity of the world, of the universe almost, so that is certainly a contribution in itself.

It's like, to give a very gross sort of analogy, it is like a very wealthy man who has got quite enough money to live on for the rest of his life but who still goes on making money so that it can be put into circulation for the benefit of more and more people. [Pause]

Anyway there is a possibility of a little misunderstanding in connection with what's just been said, because I mentioned that a Buddha or even an Enlightened being would dwell in dhyanic state in preference to dwelling in a non-dhyanic state, because it was more blissful, but that his Enlightenment experience, his insight, would remain constant, so this almost suggests that the Enlightenment experience itself is not blissful. Or that insight is not blissful, but this is not in fact the case. It is said that in the Pali text *Nibbana paramam sukkham* - *Nirvana is the supreme bliss*, and in the context of the Vajrayana there is the description of the Enlightenment in terms of *Mahasukha*, again great bliss, although a different word for bliss is used. So how is this?

Is the bliss of the dhyanas the same as the bliss of Enlightenment? Actually Buddhist tradition, especially the Pali tradition, which perhaps deals with this more, says this is quite different. The distinction being, it is said that mundane bliss - and the dhyanas are still mundane even though mundane in a very refined way - mundane bliss is the product of the contact of a sense organ - either physical sense organ or mental sense organ - with a particular pleasurable object, but that transcendental bliss is not based on any kind of contact between object and subject, sense organ and sense object. It is a non-dual bliss as the Mahayana and Vajrayana might say. So it is a bliss in a quite different sense. We can't really from the mundane point of view have any conception about it. So that is why, for the Buddha, for the Enlightened being, the experience of transcendental bliss is so intense that any variation with regard to mundane pleasure and pain is very very marginal and insignificant indeed. But nonetheless bliss is better than non-bliss, pleasure is better than pain, even on the mundane level, and even from the standpoint of an Enlightened

being.

So this suggests on the part of Buddhism a quite different attitude to pleasure, mundane as well and transcendental, from what we usually find in Western religious tradition. Pleasure is wholly good in a sense. So even if you are Enlightened and you enjoy transcendental bliss, it is natural to dwell as well in mundane states which are blissful in a mundane sense rather than in states which are painful. I won't say painful in a mundane sense, because in transcendental states there is no possibility of painfulness at all.

So I didn't want to leave you with the impression that insight or Enlightenment was something colourless or neutral or certainly not suffering but perhaps not bliss. It is bliss, but of a totally different order, a bliss based on freedom from contact between subject and object, because the subject and object distinction has been transcended, rather than based on the contact of subject with object, sense organ with sense object. Anyway, that's by the way.

No, to go a little further, or to add something, you could say you can classify people in different ways. You have got for instance the ordinary unenlightened person who does not lead a spiritual life at all or even try to. What is his experience in these sort of terms? He has of course no experience of transcendental bliss, he has no experience of the bliss of the dhyanas which is much more intense than that experienced on the ordinary level of consciousness. On the ordinary level of consciousness he has some experience of bliss or pleasure of a very mediocre nature, and he has some experience also of pain, sometimes considerable, yes? That is the ordinary person's experience, in terms of pleasure and pain, both mundane and transcendental. Then the person who is on the spiritual path, but not yet on the transcendental path; he continues to experience on the karmaloka level pleasure and pain, but also he has some experience, maybe quite a limited experience, of dhyanic bliss. That dhyanic bliss is still mundane, but it's mundane in a more refined way, so he has a more pleasurable life than the ordinary worldly person. Also you might say, even on the level of ordinary conscious experience, because his attachments have been loosened and he has fewer disappointments and frustrations; even on that level he has more, you could say, even more pleasurable experience than painful experience, so he is better off in that respect too.

Then you might say that there is perhaps an advanced spiritual aspirant; he has a considerable experience of dhyanic bliss. Perhaps having developed a little insight, he has just a taste or so of transcendental bliss. Because he is spending much of his time in the dhyanas and therefore much of his time in blissful dhyaana states, he doesn't dwell on the ordinary conscious level much anyway so there is not much possibility of his encountering painful experiences on that level. When he is on that level at all his experience is usually pleasurable. So he has a much more pleasurable existence and blissful existence even than the beginner in the spiritual life.

Then, going very much further, the Buddha - the Buddha experiences all the time constantly, transcendental bliss. In addition he can experience if he so wishes the mundane bliss of the dhyanas, even though that is very very much less so to speak than transcendental bliss. On those occasions when he is functioning in the ordinary waking consciousness usually his state is pleasurable because of his positive mental attitude, freedom from the asravas. He experiences painful bodily sensations only as a result of illness or old age or other people's bodily attacks upon him, as when Devadatta wounded his foot.

So when the Buddha, so to speak, dies, when he gains Parinirvana, when he has no longer a physical body and no contact any longer with the physical world, his experience then, if you can speak of his existing at all or continuing to exist at all, is entirely blissful and the bliss is entirely transcendental. It's not even the mundane bliss of the dhyanas.

So you can look at these different classes of beings in these different ways, according to the extent to which they enjoy bliss, whether mundane or transcendental. So the important point is that the more you develop spiritually, the more blissful your life, the more blissful your experience. That it not that you should go after bliss, no, but this is the natural result, so to speak, the natural by-product. The more spiritually developed you are, other factors being equal, that is to say if you have no serious illness and so on, despite your spiritual practice, the greater the spiritual life that you lead, the more happy you will be, the more blissful you will be. So this is quite a thought.

Lama Govinda has made this point quite strongly in his book on the psychology of early Buddhism - '*Psychological Aspects of Early Buddhist Philosophy*' I think it is. That according to the Abhidharma there are more possibilities of blissful experiences than of painful experiences in the universe. The higher you go, the more blissful. So this is rather different again from the Christian perspective where even saints go through all sorts of tortured experiences because you get the impression they really tie themselves into knots. To be a saint means to tie yourself into a bigger and more elaborate and more complicated knot than anybody else. But in the case of Buddhism, as you develop spiritually you become more and more integrated, more and more simple, more and more clear, more and more free from thoughts and also more and more blissful, and the bliss culminates in transcendental bliss. In fact goes entirely beyond. You enter upon a bliss of a quite different order. So that is quite an interesting sort of reflection. That the more you develop spiritually the more pain and suffering are eliminated. Pain and suffering, according to Buddhism, are due to craving ultimately. No craving, no suffering. Which doesn't mean just a cessation of suffering but a positive experience of bliss, both mundane and transcendental and eventually only transcendental.

So this is why in the Dhammapada the bhikkhus do chant, 'the disciples of the Buddha, happily we live'. If you are not living happily you can hardly say that you're a Buddhist. You have got to live happily, whether you like it or not! (Laughter) Well, some people find it quite difficult to live happily, they think maybe it's not quite right, it's not really very religious or very spiritual, to live happily.

In the newspaper, I think it was yesterday, there was a photograph of a row of nuns welcoming the pope, they didn't look happy at all. They didn't even seem happy to see the pope, they were really grim. Well perhaps he was going to give them a wiggling, who knows?! (Laughter).

[End of side one side two]

All right so I'd like to read that prose section, bottom of page 594.

"That day some patrons came with food and offerings. But as soon as they learned that Rechungpa had left, they hid all the things they had brought for him in a brass basin in the recesses of a cave. Then they came to Milarepa's abode and found that he was already up. They asked, 'Revered Jetsun, usually you do not get up so early. What made you do so today?' Milarepa replied, 'Rechungpa left for Weu this morning, and I went down to the plain to see him off. Upon my return I felt a little sad, and I have been sitting here ever since.'

'Did you, Revered Jetsun, ever try to stop him from going to Weu?'

'Yes I did.'"

S: Let's deal with that first. 'That day some patrons came with food and offerings.' You remember at the beginning of the chapter, the patrons were giving better offerings to Rechungpa than to Milarepa, apparently because they thought more highly of him, because he had been to India. 'But as soon as they learned that Rechungpa had left, they hid all the things they had brought for him in a brass basin in the recesses of a cave.' They weren't going to waste their offerings on Milarepa it seems. (Laughter). They were strictly reserved for Rechungpa. Probably they were things which would keep, like barley flour and dried meat, so all right, they would stow them away there until Rechungpa came back.

'Then they came to Milarepa's abode', to his cave presumably, 'and they found that he was already up. They asked, 'Revered Jetsun, usually you do not get up so early. What made you do so today?'. Do you think it was really a question of getting up early? Can you imagine Milarepa lying in bed and not being able to get up? He probably gets up and meditates, or usually he just lies there and meditates, whether he is actually sitting up or lying down, well he's meditating. But they probably don't realise that. They think it is really a question of his sometimes getting up early, sometimes getting up late and so on. So 'Milarepa replied, 'Rechungpa left for Weu this morning, and I went down to the plain to see him off. Upon my return I felt a little sad, and I have been sitting here ever since.' Do you think Milarepa really felt a little sad?

_____: It does not sound like the sort of thing an enlightened being (inaudible through laughter)

S: No, but actually this is what you find in Tibetan Buddhist literature, there is no, as it were, inhibiting or ordinary human emotions. Ordinary human emotions have their play, so to speak, but against the spiritual background, but they are not inhibited, they are not denied. It's not that Milarepa is overcome with sadness, maybe he is not feeling really upset, maybe he is conforming almost to conventional usage. If someone goes away you feel a little bit sad, perhaps he doesn't mind feeling a bit sad. It's only a passing slight feeling. It doesn't disturb his basic meditative mood or his experience of Enlightenment. I don't know how literally we can really take this, but nonetheless it does illustrate the fact, as I said, that in Tibetan Buddhism there is no inhibiting or ordinary human emotion. A very free and even full expression is given to that. This is where I think Tibetan Buddhist literature differs very much from Indian Buddhist literature, and where perhaps we find it more appealing. It's more as it were human.

Bob Jones: So it would be wrong to read in hints of attachment into this and also that Milarepa seems to be regretting Rechungpa not looking back?

S: Yes. What does sadness mean? Ordinarily, if you are sad when someone goes away doesn't that suggest attachment?

Johnny: In his case it could be a compassionate feeling for Rechungpa.

S: It could be, yes, because he knows in a sense that this unfortunate experience awaits him in Weu, this dangerous bitch is waiting to bite him

and seize him by the foot and no doubt, she'll do that. He could feel a little sad on that account.

Subhuti: If you have been spending a lot of time with somebody isn't it natural when they go, even if you don't exactly feel sad, just to feel their lack, to feel that they're not there.

S: But on the other hand, if you have been with somebody for some time and they go, the sort of imprint of them on your mind is still there even though they are physically gone. So would therefore one feel sad that they had physically gone. What is happening? Presuming that one isn't attached. But do you feel some little difference, some little sadness when people go, what is that exactly, what is happening?

It's as though perhaps - this is a little speculative - it is as though a certain part of oneself, a certain aspect of oneself, has no longer got the freedom to exercise itself, you have become accustomed to relating to someone in a particular way that brought out perhaps a certain aspect of your character, your personality, your being. So it's not that you are attached to them but the possibility of that kind of communication, which could have been a very positive communication, is no longer there.

So what you are missing is not so much that person, though that also enters into it, but a certain opportunity of functioning in a particular way, of relating at least in a particular way. Of course very often that is on an ordinary level, very much tied up with attachment and so on, but it need not be. It may be that with a certain person you've been in the habit of talking quite intimately about the Dharma, and maybe when that person has gone, well there isn't anybody with whom you can talk about the Dharma in that sort of way. So you miss that person in that sense. You are sad that they have gone away because it means you are not going to have those Dharma talks or Dharma discussions with anybody else. So there is a sort of almost justifiable, almost positive sort of 'quasi-sadness', inverted commas. [Laughter]

Subhuti: It's more that you just sort of experience that lack, isn't it?

S: It's not just that person as it were in the abstract, but all they stood for, all they meant in your life.

So if Milarepa felt anything at all it must have been something of that sort that he felt, together with the fact that, well, perhaps there were unfortunate experiences in store for Rechungpa.

Also, of course, we have to bear in mind that in talking about, say, Enlightened beings we have only got our ordinary vocabulary, we can only use our ordinary words, say that they were disappointed, or that they regretted, or that they felt sad or even that they became angry. The Tibetans seem to have no hesitation in using these sort of terms about Enlightened beings in the confidence that they won't be misunderstood. We perhaps, or even in the Theravada tradition, they might hesitate to speak of the Buddha feeling sorry or regretting, they certainly wouldn't represent the Buddha as being sad, certainly not as being angry. Though sometimes we get the impression from the Pali scriptures that the Buddha spoke quite sharply sometimes, quite strongly, or that he even became annoyed; in the English translation at least that term is used, that the Buddha became annoyed by the chatter of the monks so he went off into the jungle. (Laughter) So the Tibetans don't feel any qualms about using that sort of language, they seem to feel confident that they are not going to be misunderstood, that people aren't going to think any less of

these great spiritual beings because their behaviour is described in these sort of terms occasionally.

But we are a bit, as it were, almost precious about preserving the spirituality of Milarepa, that Milarepa could never be sad, Milarepa could never get angry, the Buddha could never get angry. Do you see what I mean? Well maybe they couldn't, or no doubt they couldn't in the ordinary human sense, but there is something analogous to all that in their ordinary functioning for which we don't really have separate special terms, so all right we use the same terms that we use about our own sort of cruder states and experiences. If a Tibetan says for instance the Buddha then got very angry with Sariputra, he doesn't take that to mean that the Buddha gave way to the klesa, the poison, the defilement of anger in the same way for instance that anybody else might, but the Buddha acted or behaved or spoke in a way that was analogous to the experience of anger or what would be the experience of anger in our case. Otherwise how was he to get across to Sariputra that he's done something very wrong for instance, well just get angry with him.

Ratnaketu: You could even say that the other things attributed to Enlightened beings and Buddhas are mundane things... a Buddha has got great knowledge whereas knowledge is something mundane, or rather it's positive but on the Buddha, and you say that he's got knowledge where it's not really knowledge in the term that we think of knowledge.

S: Yes, the same with compassion. Then of course you are getting into very deep water because if it's something totally different from our compassion, well why do we call it compassion at all, what is it, have we got any idea about it at all? Well, compassion is the nearest thing in our experience to that, whatever it is in the Buddha's experience, and it gives us at least a glimmering of an idea of what the Buddha is feeling, but no more than that. So it's the same with saying the Buddha got angry, well the Buddha certainly doesn't get angry in the way that we do but there is some analogous sort of upsurge of energy on the Buddha's part in connection with that situation. The Buddha gets transcendently angry (Laughter).

Again you have to be very careful because you can rationalise, or pseudo-teachers and pseudo-enlightened beings can use this as a sort of rationalisation for really getting angry or really becoming greedy and so on.

Perhaps that is enough of that then. So 'Did you, Revered Jetsun ever try to stop him from going to Weu?'. 'Yes, I did.' Whereupon Milarepa sang:'....Right let's have that song.

*"Rechungpa, my beloved son, has left
For Weu. He never follows the advice
Of others but acts as he wishes.*

*He said that he would visit Marpa
And Ngopa's temple, see Loro,
Nyal, and the Samye Chapel,
And circle the holy Lhasa.*

I advised him thus:

*"When you put all your trust in your Guru,
What is the need for Joya Shagja?
When you meditate in a solitary retreat,
Why go to see Marpa and Ngopa's temple?
When you have learned the Whispered Lineage's
Instruction, why visit Loro and Nyal?
When you can amuse yourself by watching
The play of your own Dharmakaya Mind,
What need have you to see Samye Chapel?
When you have destroyed all your wrong ideas,
What need have you to circle Lhasa?
I repeat Rechungpa
Our beloved, has gone to Weu.
Had you, good patrons, then been here
You might by circling round have stopped him."*

S: So Milarepa is saying 'Rechungpa, my beloved son, has left

For Weu. He never follows the advice of others but acts as he wishes.' What do you think Milarepa is doing? It seems almost a sort of change of tune on his part. Bear in mind the situation, these patrons are thinking perhaps too highly of Rechungpa. Perhaps they are attached to him, perhaps they don't really understand him at all; so he says, 'He never follows the advice of others but acts as he wishes'. In a way he is pointing out to them what Rechungpa is really like.

'He said that he would visit Marpa and Ngopa's temple, see Loro, Nyal, and the Samye Chapel, and circle the holy Lhasa.

I advised him thus: "When you put all your trust in your Guru, what is the need for Joya Shagja?", that is to say the temples and images in Lhasa. 'When you meditate in a solitary retreat, why go to see Marpa and Ngopa's temple? When you have learned the Whispered Lineage's Instruction, why visit Loro and Nyal? When you can amuse yourself by watching the play of your own Dharmakaya Mind, what need have you to see Samye Chapel? When you have destroyed all your wrong ideas, what need have you to circle Lhasa? I repeat Rechungpa Our beloved, has gone to Weu. Had you, good patrons, then been here You might by circling round have stopped him.'"

So why do you think Milarepa says that? It's as though he is saying, well you are supposed to be so devoted to Rechungpa, and to think so much of him, well you could have stopped him going to Weu if you'd really wanted to - you could have just made a circle round him. What could he have done then? So he is suggesting perhaps that they don't really think so highly of Rechungpa as they had thought; it is just mainly a matter of words. And this is perhaps borne out by what follows. Just read that next prose paragraph.

""When a Guru grows old", said the patrons, "it is the primary duty of his disciple to attend him. Your Reverence has gone to every length to dissuade him, but still he would not listen. He is indeed shameless, with little consideration for other people." Milarepa replied pretendingly, "Yes, Rechungpa had no shame and no discipline". Then he sang:"

S: So what does this illustrate about these patrons?

_____ : Very fickle.

S: Very fickle, yes. So it does seem that Milarepa is just testing them, just sounding them out. It is as though the patrons are very glib; *""When a Guru grows old", said the patrons, 'it is the primary duty of his disciple to attend him'". They know all about that it seems! (Laughter) ""Your Reverence has gone to every length to dissuade him, but still he would not listen, He is indeed shameless with little consideration for other people"".* Perhaps they are a bit annoyed with him that he has gone off leaving them, (Laughter) so they put it onto Milarepa, they can't perhaps say we are rather angry with him for leaving us so they blame him for leaving his guru.

Ratnaketu: They know that when Rechungpa has gone they have only got Milarepa left so they have to please him (laughter).

S: Yes indeed, All right Milarepa sings again, so let's hear that song.

*""A son fostered, loved, and cherished
Seldom cares for his old parents.
Out of a hundred men 'tis hard
To find an exception.*

*An undisciplined disciple seldom
Helps his Guru when he grows old.
Out of a hundred men 'tis hard
To find an exception.*

*A lion white, he went to Weu; I was left
Behind abandoned like an old dog.
Yes, my son has left me for Weu.
Like a young tiger who forsakes
The fox, he went to Weu.*

*Yes, he has left his old father and gone to Weu.
Like a great vulture who forsakes*

A cock, he went to Weu.

*As a superb steed of Dochin
Leaves the asses from Jungron,
My son has left his old father and gone to Weu.*

*Like a wild and blue-horned yak
Deserting an elephant,
My son has left his old father and gone to Weu.*

*With body handsomer than a Deva's,
He went to Weu.
With voice mellower than an Angel's
He went to Weu.
With words sweeter than all music,
He went to Weu.
With mind brighter than embroidery,
He went to Weu.
Smelling more fragrant than [good] incense,
He went to Weu!*

The patrons then said "Revered Jetsun, you are indeed most compassionate toward him. On such a long, hard journey you must have provided a companion for him and made all necessary preparations for his trip. Please tell us about it."

S: All right so it seems that Milarepa is pretending, and in this song he compares Rechungpa with himself, in terms very favourable to Rechungpa, but first a few generalisations. He is still adopting the attitude of the poor old forsaken guru here, (laughter) so he says: 'A son fostered, loved, and cherished seldom cares for his old parents. Out of a hundred men 'tis hard to find an exception.' The old complaint of parents and elders - 'I've done so much for them, brought them up so carefully, given them a good education, they've no gratitude, they don't care for their parents, they just go off etc., etc. Amongst a hundred there is not even one who's much good in this respect.

'An undisciplined disciple seldom helps his Guru when he grows old. Out of a hundred men 'tis hard to find an exception.' And then he comes onto Rechungpa. 'A lion white, he went to Weu; I was left behind abandoned like an old dog. Yes, my son has left me for Weu. Like a young tiger who forsakes the fox, he went to Weu.' So he is comparing Rechungpa to the white lion, because after all the patrons have thought more highly of Rechungpa than Milarepa, comparing himself to the old dog, again Rechungpa to the young tiger, himself to the fox.

'Yes, he has left his old father and gone to Weu. Like a great vulture who forsakes a cock, he went to Weu.' So what a difference between the two

birds. 'As a superb steed of Dochin leaves the asses from Jungtron, my son has left his old father and gone to Weu.' He is just like a fine steed, but poor old Milarepa is just like an old ass.

'Like a wild and blue-horned yak deserting an elephant, my son has left his old father and gone to Weu. With body handsomer than a Deva's, he went to Weu.' Not like poor old Milarepa who is old and ugly. 'With voice mellower than an Angel's he went to Weu.' Well maybe Milarepa's voice is cracked with old age.

'With words sweeter than all music, he went to Weu.' The patrons don't like Milarepa's words. Rechungpa's words are much sweeter to them, than his. They think Rechungpa much greater. 'With mind brighter than embroidery, he went to Weu.' Maybe the patrons think Rechungpa's much more clever, much more enlightened than poor old Milarepa. 'Smelling more fragrant than [good] incense, he went to Weu!' Maybe Milarepa doesn't wash very often! (laughter).

So it is as though Milarepa is really rubbing it in; they have lost Rechungpa who is so much better and greater than Milarepa himself. But all the time of course he is working on the patron's minds, he has got a long term objective in view, he is going to correct their false notion. It is not that he particularly wants them to appreciate himself at his true worth for his sake. He has got nothing to lose, but it's better for them if they develop true spiritual insight and can tell who is more spiritually advanced and who is less spiritually advanced. It will be good for them if they had a proper appreciation of Milarepa so this is what he is trying to instill into them. It's not that he wants to run Rechungpa down but he wants them to appreciate what he is really like, and to appreciate the fact that he isn't in fact as advanced as Milarepa himself.

So 'The patrons then said "Revered Jetsun, you are indeed most compassionate toward him. On such a long, hard journey you must have provided a companion for him and made all necessary preparations for his trip. Please tell us about it." So in answer Milarepa sang:' So let's hear this song now.

*"He was well escorted when he went.
In time friends are always separated,
But Rechungpa's friend will never leave him;
She is self-arising Wisdom, My son
Rechungpa left with a fine friend.*

*Even good horses sometimes stumble,
But Rechungpa's will ne'er miss a step.
Riding the steed of Prana-Mind,
Riding on it, he set out for Weu.*

*Clothes at times are warm, at others cold,
But what Rechungpa wears is always warm,*

*For it is the blazing Dumo. Wearing
This superb dress, he left for Weu.*

*Food is sometimes good, and sometimes nasty,
But what Rechungpa eats is tasty at all times,
For it is the savory dish of Samadhi.
With this fine food, he has gone to Weu.*

*Jewels are the aim of thieves,
But Rechungpa's gems can ne'er be stolen,
For they are the wish-fulfilling Instructions of
the Whispered Lineage.
With these precious jewels he has left for Weu."*

S: So Milarepa says, 'He was well escorted when he went. In time friends are always separated, But Rechungpa's friend will never leave him; She is self-arising Wisdom, My son Rechungpa left with a fine friend.'

So in these verses interestingly he is praising Rechungpa, he is describing all the noble qualities, all the attainments, experiences, realisations, accompanied by which, so to speak, he left for Weu. He says 'In time friends are always separated' just like Rechungpa going away from me, 'But Rechungpa's friend will never leave him; she is self-arising Wisdom', that is prajna. Why do you think prajna is described as female rather than male? In Sanskrit the word is actually a feminine gender, so for that reason if no other it is spoken of as female, as a goddess rather than a god. So 'Rechungpa's friend will never leave him; she is self-arising Wisdom'. This suggests that he has gained some degree of Insight, some degree of prajna, some transcendental understanding, and this is of course something permanent. It's not like a dhyana experience that may come and go. So this friend will never leave him because it is a permanent aspect of himself now, a permanent attainment.

Ratnaketu: How is that self-arising?

S: Ah, how is it self arising? What does that mean?

Subhuti: It comes from within, it is not (inaudible)

_____: It is not dependant on externals, it doesn't arise in dependence on outside factors.

S: It arises in dependence on, your wisdom arises in dependence on your dhyana and your reflections, so in what sense is it self-arising?

Ray: It arises within the self.

S: Yes, I think the meaning is it arises of itself, so if it arises of itself why does it have to wait for causes and conditions? Why can't it just arise here and now?

_____: Because your mental states are too coarse to allow it to arise.

S: Yes, but then it requires conditions. If it requires conditions it isn't altogether self-arising. So what does it mean to say it self-arises?

Siddhiratna: Is it spontaneous or something like that?

S: But what does that mean, what does it mean to say that it's spontaneous? Well, it really represents a dilemma. You are trying to express the inexpressible. You have to follow a middle way here. On the one hand it is not that wisdom arises without a cause. Do you see what I mean? Wisdom as an experience, as a realisation, cannot arise without a cause, otherwise it could arise at any time, it could arise in a foolish man as well as in a wise man, a bad man as well as in a good man, in a dog as well as in a human being. So wisdom arises in dependence upon certain conditions, it seems. It doesn't arise not in association with those conditions.

But on the other hand, wisdom cannot be the product of those conditions because those conditions are mundane. It cannot be an extension of those conditions. Wisdom is transcendental so it has got to, as it were, arise in dependence on conditions and then again on the other hand, not in dependence upon conditions. So this fact seems to be expressed by saying it is arisen but it is self-arisen. That's in a way not very satisfactory, but that perhaps is as near as one can get to it.

Siddhiratna: So you're saying it won't arise merely because you set up the conditions for it to arise? Because you set up the conditions it doesn't necessarily follow that it will arise i.e. if you do your practice etc., if you study etc.

S: Oh yes, surely you have to be sure of that. It will arise if you set up the conditions.

Siddhiratna: Then that is not the same as saying self-arising then.

S: Well, if you take self-arising literally, conditions are quite irrelevant, but how can they be quite irrelevant because in that case no spiritual practice is needed, wisdom will arise when she arises.

Ratnaketu: Perhaps it's because, in a way, part of doing that practice is the actual wisdom, and so it's self-arising out of itself.

S: Yes, you could say that. Yes that would be an ingenious way of getting around it! (Laughter). To speak in terms of wisdom arising also suggests that you are thinking of it very much as a sort of an end product, separate from the process of production itself, but can you in fact think quite so literally in that way? In a way there is this whole sort of, this - what shall I say? - disagreement between different schools of thought in

India, about causation, that the effect is either identical with the cause or different from it. In some schools of Indian thought cause and effect are identical; in other schools quite different. But Nagarjuna's criticism is that in both cases causation becomes impossible. So the Buddhist solution is conditionality, not causation but conditionality. In dependence upon A, B arises. You don't commit yourself to saying either that A and B are identical or that they are different. So something perhaps a bit like that here. It's a question of, as it were, non-causal arising. In dependence on certain conditions wisdom arises, so to speak, of itself. It is not an effect in the sense of being identical with what went before. It is not an effect either in the sense of being completely different from it. Perhaps one could look at it in that way too.

Perhaps also to say that it is self-arising means it doesn't arise at all, because if it is self-arising, it arises all the time because the cause of its arising is always there, namely itself. So wisdom, you could say, never arises. It isn't something that either arises or does not arise. Why is that? Because wisdom is transcendental. In relation to the transcendental, the unconditioned, there's no time. Time belongs to the mundane world, so to speak. So if you speak of wisdom as arising, you are really putting wisdom in time, but is wisdom in time? There's a bit of a problem here. You might realise wisdom in time, but is wisdom itself in time? So to say that it is self arising really means that it doesn't arise at all, not itself, [Laughter] your realisation can arise but wisdom itself cannot arise.

So in order to realise wisdom you have to go outside time, there can be no attainment of wisdom inside time; there can be an attainment of the dhyanas inside time because the dhyanas are mundane, but wisdom and insight aren't things that happen inside time. This is why it is sometimes said that Enlightenment is instantaneous, not in the sense that it takes place very quickly, but in the sense that it's an experience that takes place outside time altogether. It's as though you are inside a sort of shell, and you just make a hole through, and whatever is outside is just outside, so what is outside is the transcendental, what is inside, limited and confined, is the mundane. So when you develop insight it's like you make a little hole in that shell and you start looking around outside it. When you are enlightened of course you destroy the shell altogether and there is no limitation at all.

Siddhiratna: Is wisdom the hole, as it were that you have made that allows....

S: No, wisdom is not the whole, except if you use wisdom in the subjective sense. Progressive attainment is the hole, the process of progressive attainment is the hole that you are making.

Siddhiratna: You seem to be talking about wisdom as a kind of energy or something like that, as an active thing. I always understand wisdom as being something akin to knowledge.

S: Well it can't be active in itself, because action implies time, and I have said it's outside time, but the attainment of it can take place in time. But on the other hand, it can't take time to attain it, because that would still bring the experience which is identical with the thing itself within time. So it's just that you, as it were, disappear from time, in terms of time you are not there any longer, you can say that you are outside time, though that really doesn't mean very much. So that is why the Theravada, cautiously, doesn't speak so much in terms of attaining the transcendental, but the cessation of the mundane. What happens after that, well not very much is said about that. Perhaps that in some ways is the wiser approach, though it is open to misunderstanding obviously. You don't speak in terms of an arising of wisdom, even, as a non-arising,

you just speak of cessation of ignorance. That is strictly speaking more accurate.

_____: Could that be one of the reasons why wisdom is sometimes feminine? Because in a sense it doesn't act, it's more passive (laughter). What I was thinking was that in the Vajrayana, sometimes you have a Buddha figure and a consort and the consort.....

S: Is just sort of literally clinging on! (laughter)

_____: It embodies wisdom and the Buddha figure is skilful means.

S: Yes.

_____: So that would be wisdom in action, in time....

S: Well upaya is action isn't it? Compassion is action, wisdom is non-active. These are analogies only, these are symbols. I don't think one can reason from them in a consistent sort of way. The whole difficulty is the relation between time and what is beyond time, the mundane and the transcendental. In what sense can the mundane realise the transcendental? In what sense can you speak of a progressive realisation of that which is in fact outside time? So you have to start questioning your very framework, that is to say the framework of a sort of dualism between conditioned and the unconditioned, mundane and transcendental. That is in fact what the Mahayana does, especially the Madhyamika.

Meanwhile Milarepa says 'She is self-arising wisdom' It suggests a sort of independence of wisdom, not dependent on anything mundane in the sense of not arising directly out of them, in the sense of being a continuation or transformation of them, something completely different. The hole does not really arise in dependence upon the shell in which you make the hole. If you see only a portion of the sky through the hole, in what sense does that portion that you see arise in dependence upon the hole that you have made?

_____: It's revealed.

S: It's revealed, but in itself it does not actually arise in dependence on the hole. It is self arisen. It has been there all the time. It is only revealed as it were progressively. You could look at it like that, but even that way of looking at things has its own difficulties.

Anyway maybe we'll leave it there for this morning as there's quite a lot to go into in the remaining verses.

[End of tape and session]

[Day 5 Tape 1]

S: All right, how far did we get with that song of Milarepa? We did the verse about the self-arising wisdom, didn't we, but we didn't do that next one ...

*"Even good horses sometimes stumble
But Rechungpa's will ne'er miss a step
Riding the steed of Prana-Mind,
Riding on it he set out for Weu."*

S: So, "Even good horses sometimes stumble But Rechungpa's will ne'er miss a step", So his horse, his steed, it seems is Prana-Mind. What do you understand by that? What is Prana?

Ratnaketu: Is it the subtle breath?

S: The subtle breath, yes, the subtle energy. And why do you think it's compared to a steed? (Pause). You know what a steed is?

Ratnaketu: A horse.

S: Poetic English word for a horse, usually a fire horse especially meant for riding. (Pause). Does it remind you of something, this expression, "The steed of Prana-Mind"?

_____: Wind horse!

S: A Windhorse of course, yes. So what does it mean - "Riding the steed of Prana-Mind"? So to speak, riding the steed of fully aroused and illuminated energy, one could paraphrase it like that. I think sometimes in the Pali Scriptures, virya is compared to the horse, virya meaning vigour or energy. What does it mean to say that Rechungpa's steed, which is the Prana-Mind, will never miss a step? What happens when a horse misses a step?

Ray: It stumbles.

S: It stumbles, so what does it mean to say that Rechungpa's steed of Prana-Mind will never stumble? (Pause).

_____: Does it mean that it's constant?

S: it's constant, it's smooth, it's continuous. When a horse stumbles, well he's momentarily pulled up, his gallop is interrupted. So in the case of the steed of Rechungpa's Prana-Mind there's no sort of stumbling, there's no interruption of its continuity, he's always making that smooth continuous effort, there's no snag. So that's a very difficult thing to do, isn't it, to keep up a smooth continuous effort just like a horse galloping steadily along at an even pace. I mean, what usually happens, of course, is that people make a quite concentrated effort for a while, there is a burst of energy, then they slacken off - maybe sort of sit down and have a cup of tea and a cigarette and just think what to do next, and this is

what usually happens. It's very difficult to keep up that uninterrupted energy. Usually I think one does it by setting oneself a fixed programme, like when you want to write something - perhaps you set yourself a quota of so many words or so many pages a day and just do it, otherwise it doesn't get done. Or, if you're removing earth at so many cubic feet every day, or whatever it is. In fact, if things follow their natural course the horse's gallop will of course get steadily faster and faster by virtue of its natural momentum as it were. So "Even good horses sometimes stumble But Rechungpa's will ne'er miss a step. Riding the steed of Prana-Mind Riding on it he sets out for Weu"

While we're on the subject of the wind horse - what does this symbolism mean, the wind horse bearing the Three Jewels on its back? You see it every day, probably, some of you, so what significance do you attach to this particular symbol?

Ratnaketu: I don't know whether it's quite true or not but I thought of the wind horse carrying the Three Jewels to be like the outward manifestation, like for us it would be the co-ops and communities and centres, carrying the Dharma to the world.

S: Well, it's carrying the Three Jewels in fact. Yes, one could certainly look at it like that. But you can also look at it in another way, of you being the bearer of the Three Jewels - you are the horse, or donkey if you like (laughter). You in a state of aroused energy, you're the noble steed that never stumbles. So the horse represents all the aroused energies, all the aroused positive mental states which are capable of being the bearer of the Three Jewels. In other words you can only carry the Three Jewels, you can only put the Three Jewels into practice, as it were, on the basis of your own aroused energy and I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that usually in most forms of the symbol, the Three Jewels rest on a lotus, don't they? So what does that signify, that in between the horse and the Three Jewels themselves there's this lotus, lotus-seat if you like?

Ratnaketu: Is it to show that the Three Jewels are not mundane whereas the horse is actually....

S: Yes, there is that. You could also say that the lotus represents the more refined energies, that the horse represents the grosser energies that have to implement the work of the Three Jewels in the world, that have to carry the Three Jewels out into the world as it were. But the lotus-seat on the back of the horse supporting the Three Jewels represents, one might say, the more refined positive energies such as those that you develop in meditation. You could even say - this is being perhaps a little fanciful but not altogether so - the Three Jewels represent something purely transcendental, or represent Insight, one could say, whereas the lotus represents the mundane at its highest pitch of positivity, represents you could say samatha, and the horse represents all those grosser energies and activities which make the experience of samatha, of meditation, possible. You see what I mean? So the horse is the grossest, the lotus is relatively refined and the Three Jewels are the most refined of all. And then of course the Three Jewels are surrounded by halos of flames - so what does that represent? (Pause). This represents their purifying and transforming influence on the world itself.

Subhuti: Perhaps morality, meditation, wisdom. The horse - morality.

S: Yes, you could say that, yes. Morality, meditation and wisdom, yes, meditation in the sense of samatha, yes, and morality in the broadest sense, both individual and social, yes. And of course he's pure white. Well he is in Padmapani's mural. His hooves are striking out fiery sparks. Lovely flames are issuing from his nostrils too.

Or of course if you wanted to be really fanciful, it represents the six paramitas. The horse represents dana, sila, ksanti and virya. He's got four legs, four [Laughter] hooves, you see. So first of all dana because he's bringing the Three Jewels, he's giving the Three Jewels. Sila, because he's a good horse! Ksanti, he's a patient horse, he bears the Three Jewels, he supports them, and Virya of course because he's the embodiment of energy. And then the lotus seat represents samadhi, and the Three Jewels represent the purely transcendental element of Prajna. Prajna as fully realised by the Buddha, Prajna as embodied conceptually in the Dharma, communicated through the Dharma, and Prajna as practiced and experienced by true disciples, the Sangha.

So if you might sometimes give a lecture on the symbolism of the Windhorse and you could bring all these things in. Sometimes people like having things explained in this way. Peoples' minds in some ways are really sort of quite innocent and child-like. If you just give them the Six Paramitas, well they might find it a bit dull if you are not a very inspired speaker, but if you can tell them that the four legs of the horse represent [Laughter] the first four paramitas, well they'll go down really well and they'll remember it. They'll never forget that. Sometimes one needs these little artifices so to speak in order to communicate the Dharma to people.

Anyway this all arises out of riding the steed of prana-mind, riding on it he set out for Weu.

_____ : Where does the Windhorse actually crop up in the scriptures? Is it in the Mahayana sutras?

S: It's definitely Mahayanistic yes, though again as I have mentioned, though there's no wind horse as far as I know in the Pali scriptures, virya is of course compared to a steed (pause).

Then, "Clothes at times are warm and others cold But what Rechungpa wears is always warm For it is the blazing Dumo. Wearing This superb dress, be left for Weu". We have touched on this already, haven't we, the Dumo, the chandali, the so-called psychic heat. There are two ways of looking at this. One is the actual psycho-physical fact that sometimes at a certain stage of meditation, physical heat is actually generated. I mean some of you might have experienced this. It is definitely a physical heat and it's generated as a result of your meditation, and it's physical because you yourself feel it, you yourself experience it physically in the body, with the body, and it's also perceptible to other people, it's not a subjective experience. If other people put their hand on you, they feel that your temperature is very much higher than usual. Has anyone ever experienced this? (murmurs of assent) - a little bit, yes. Sometimes it can be quite strong, quite intense.

Siddhiratna: I feel this very much, actually. I've had that quite a lot - just going into a shrine room and sitting down, having a blanket on then realising you just don't need the blanket because it's very very hot. It's not quite fever pitch but a bit like that.

S: Yes, so I don't know whether it's connected with temperament or anything of that sort but some people definitely do have this experience, others seem not to have it. I mean, experiences take different forms in the case of different people for various reasons. But anyway this is the sort of basic psycho-somatic fact, that in some cases the practice of meditation produces this sort of experience. It seems that in Tibet, originally in India - in India it wasn't so necessary - in Tibet at least, some yogis developed the practice of deliberately increasing the psychic heat, that is to

say, the physical heat generated through or as a by-product of meditation. And it is said that this development took place especially in Tibet for quite practical reasons, that is to say that the yogi might be meditating in a remote mountain cave - it would be very cold - so this was a useful practice for him to engage in. So this is Dumo in the ordinary sense, one might say. It's definitely associated with samatha, not with vipassana.

But on the basis of this sort of experience they developed another kind of practice in which one imagined, so to speak, one visualised rather, at the centre of the body a sort of fiery filament, and one practised step by step, stage by stage, thickening this filament, making it very broad, making it so thick that it practically filled the entire trunk. And when one further visualised, or if you like imagined, this fiery filament which was now expanded until it almost filled the trunk, as burning up all one's impurities, all one's defilements.

So in this way a sort of, well, philosophical significance or if you like a sort of vipassana element, an Insight element, was introduced into the practice. The sort of psycho-physical experience became the symbol of a sort of purely spiritual, even transcendental, experience or process, became the basis of it if you like. Do you see what I mean? So this was the full Dumo practice: you had on the one hand the actual experience of the so-called psychic heat or maybe it should be called the psycho-somatic heat; on the other you had a realisation of the significance of that, the spiritual significance of that symbolically considered. Do you see what I'm getting at? I mean, the description of the practice that I've given is grossly over simplified but it gives you just the rough, general idea. (Pause).

So, "Wearing this superb dress he left for Weu". (Pause).

"Food is sometimes good and sometimes nasty But what Rechungpa eats is tasty at all times For it is the savoury dish of samadhi. With this fine food, he has gone to Weu". In quite a number of places in Buddhist texts, including the Pali texts, the samadhi experience or dhyana experience is likened to food or even to ambrosia - it's a source of nourishment. What do you think is meant by that - is that to be taken literally? (Pause).

Ratnaketu: I suppose that experience would invigorate the body and mind.

S: Yes, it is invigorating, it is nourishing. One doesn't usually think perhaps of meditation in this sort of way but this is in fact what happens. So you have to be careful, from a spiritual point of view, not to allow yourself to become under-nourished - in other words, that you get enough vigour from your meditation (pause).

Ratnaketu: This word samadhi - sometimes I've heard the definition that it just means concentration or even contemplation, so that if you are thinking about a flower then I'm experiencing samadhi; and other times I've heard the definition that it's quite an exalted state.

S: Well, both are right. I've sorted this out in one of the talks in the series of "The Essence of Zen". In Pali, in the Theravada tradition, samadhi simply means concentration. But in the Mahayana tradition it's sometimes used almost in the sense of Enlightenment but read that particular talk - I can't remember which one it is in the five talks on Zen, "The Essence of Zen", you'll find it given there in detail.

So samadhi here, I imagine, is used in the sense of dhyana, or the Dhyanas. Do you think this is a useful way of thinking of meditation? That is

to say, as a food, or do you think it's too gross?

_____ : It suggests something to be used rather than an end in itself ...

S: Something to be used. It suggests also something you need, something that you'll die without. (pause)

Ratnaketu: It also reminds you that the effort is worth it, that there's this savoury dish...

S: ... the savoury dish of samadhi, yes. The thing is, you may not be a particularly good cook - yet! (Pause). So, "With this fine food, he has gone to Weu.

Jewels are the main aim of thieves But Rechungpa's gems can ne'er be stolen For they are the wish-fulfilling Instructions of the Whispered lineage. With these precious jewels, he has left for Weu." So why is it that Rechungpa's gems can never be stolen?

_____ : Because they're not written down.

S: They're not written down, they're not something external to himself. To steal his jewels, you'd have to steal Rechungpa himself. He's at one with them, he's practised them, he's realised them. (Long pause).

All right, would someone like then to read the next prose paragraph?

"While singing this song, Milarepa appeared a little sad. The patrons said, "Since Rechungpa has left you without showing the slightest affection, you, Jetsun, should also forget about him. Besides, Shiwa Aui, Sevan Repa, and many other disciples are still here. They can attend you just as well." "Yes," replied the Jetsun, "there are many Repas, but one like Rechungpa is hard to find. There may be many patrons, but it is difficult to find one with true faith."

S: So Milarepa is preparing to teach them a bit of a lesson, yes? So he, "Appeared a little sad. The patrons said, "Since Rechungpa has left you without showing the slightest affection you, Jetsun, should also forget about him", so what does the patron's principle appear to be? Well, tit-for-tat! He forgets you apparently - you forget him - fine Buddhists they are!

Ratnaketu: An eye for an eye.

S: Yes, an eye for an eye. But, "Besides Shiwa Aui, Sevan Repa and many other disciples are still here. They can attend you just as well." So in other words they are saying the sort of thing that Milarepa wants them to say because he's coming to his point soon. He says, "Yes, there are many Repas but one like Rechungpa is hard to find. There may be many patrons, but it is difficult to find one with true faith. Please listen to my song." Now he, as it were, has got them where he wants them. He seems to have sort of led the conversation in this direction quite deliberately.

All right, would someone like to the whole song, let's hear it as a whole first. Oh dear! That's the longest song so far isn't it?

*"The Nyan Chung Repa of Gung Tang,
The Ngan Tson Dewa Shun of Jenlun,
The Sevan Jashi Bar of Dodra,
And the Drigom Linkawa of Dhamo -
These are the four sons
I cherish as my heart.
Of them Rechung, my long-time
Companion is most dear.
I think of him and miss him much now he has gone.*

*The word-conditioned "View" is nominal.
Though people call it "View,"
'Tis but a word.
It is most hard to find a man who can
Cease to be distracted by Duality;
It is most hard to find a man who can
Absorb himself in the sole Realisation!*

*The "Practice" that cannot widen
The mind is nominal.
Though people call it "Practice,"
'Tis but a form of Dhyana.
It is most hard to find a man
Who can merge both Dhyana and "Insight";
It is most hard to find a man who knows
How to work on the vital point of mind.*

*When the mind's "Action" is now dark,
Now light, it is but nominal.
Though people call it "Action,"
'Tis a deed of involvement.
It is most hard to find a man
Who can conquer worldly desires;
It is very hard to find a man*

Who can complete the Dharma practice.

*Observance of discipline when feigned
And artificial is but nominal.
Though people call it "Discipline,"
'Tis nought but mockery.
It is most hard to find a man
Who never violates his oath;
It is very hard to find
An honest witness of his mind.*

*"Accomplishment" when longed for hard
Is a notion (cherished by fools).
Though people call it "Accomplishment,"
'Tis nothing but delusion.
It is most difficult to find a man
Who can plumb the abyss of Reality;
It is most hard to find a man
Who on the real Path can stay.*

*The Pith-Instructions may seem
Most profound on paper;
They are but written words.
It is difficult to find a man
With diligence and Perseverance;
It is most hard to find a man
With direct teachings from a Lineage.*

*The Gurus who involve themselves
In worldly life are nominal;
They only bring entanglements.
Small are people's faith and veneration.
It is most difficult to find a man
Ever relying on an accomplished Guru.*

The merits of ostentatious faith

*And veneration are nominal,
For they change and are short-lived.
Where Karma's bad prejudice is strong,
It is hard to find a man
Who fears and cares for nothing.
It is most hard to find a man
With the Three Determinations.*

*The small temple on the outskirts
Of a town is but nominal.
Though people call it "Temple,"
It is really part of "town."
Always there is great craving for
Amusement and distraction.
It is most hard to find a man
Staying long in hermitages.*

*The head of a restrained young monk
Is stiff and hard like stone.
Though people call him "disciplined,"
He is but acting in a play.
It is hard to find a man with Perseverance,
It is hard to find another
Observing the strict priestly rules.*

*The handsome belles of Nya Non
As patrons are but nominal,
For they are deceivers and seducers.
Poor and low is woman's comprehension.
Hard indeed is it to find a patron
To serve one and make all the offerings.*

*The faiths of evil-doers are in their mouths;
The faiths of you patrons are in your private parts.
I, the Yogi, in my heart have faith.*

*When a rock grows old
Grime encrusts its face;
When a stream grows old
Wrinkles cover its bed.
When a tree grows old
Its leaves soon fall off.
When a hermitage grows old
Water and plantains disappear.
When a yogi ages, his Experience
And his Realisation dimmer grow.
When patrons grow old
Their faith soon wears out.*

*Some patrons are like peacocks
Who pretend and swagger.
Some patrons are like parrots
Gossiping and gabbling.
Some patrons are like cows -
They think you a calf or goat.*

*My patrons, it is getting late,
It is time for you to go,
Besides, in the cave beneath,
The sack of flour in the bowl
By mice is being nibbled;
The cake of butter has been tossed
And is now rolling on the ground;
The vixen has upset the wine,
The crows have scattered all the meat,
So run fast and hurry (home).
Patrons I will vow to see you soon.
In a happy mood you may leave me now."*

The visiting patrons were nonplussed. They looked at one another timidly, and nudged each others' elbows. Too filled with shame to say a word, they all went home. As the Jetsun had unmistakably exposed the truth, they felt guilt and deep regret; but also, as a result, their faith in him was firmly established.

S: So, "Please listen to my song." He mentions four people - I don't expect you to remember their names. "These are the four sons I cherish as my heart. Of them,"Rechung my long-time companion is most dear. I think of him and miss him now Miss him much now he is gone." Do you think Milarepa is really missing him? I mean in what sense is he missing him? He can't exactly be telling a lie, can he? Or is he pretending to the patrons - if so, why? Is it possible for an enlightened being to miss anybody?

_____ : Is it a little like what you were talking about yesterday when he said he was sad at Rechungpa's departure.

S: Yes, it must be something like that. (Pause). Anyway, perhaps we need not dwell on that. That is, as it were, just introductory. Then he says: "The word-conditioned view is nominal. Though people call it a view 'tis but a word It is most hard to find a man who can Cease to be distracted by Duality; It is most hard to find a man who can Absorb himself in the sole Realisation!" So, "The word-conditioned view is nominal." What is meant by view? We have gone into this haven't we - do you remember? What is a view? (pause).

Bob: The schoold to which he belongs.

Subhuti: Philosophical

S: Mm, it's one's ... well, the philosophical basis of one's practice or it's the conceptual formulation or the systematic conceptual formulation of the theoretical basis of your practice or as we might say roughly, your philosophy, the philosophy of your practice. This is what is meant by view. So "The word-conditioned view is nominal." Now what does this mean? What does it mean to be word-conditioned, what is a word-conditioned view?

Siddhiratna: A concept?

S: No, it is word-conditioned, conditioned by words.

_____ : Does it mean doctrinaire or too dogmatic?

S: Yes, it does involve that probably, being doctrinaire and dogmatic but exactly in what way?

Subhuti: It doesn't flow out of experience whereas the view is the expression of an experience. You can hold the view without having the experience that it

S: Yes, well in a sense you can't hold the view, right? So if you do hold, in a manner of speaking, the view without having had the experience, how must you hold it?

Ratnaketu: Only in the sense of intellectual thought, of words ...

S: Well, you must hold it sort of provisionally, yes? You must hold it realising that the words don't really express the concept, the concept doesn't really express the reality, that the view is only a pointer, it's only a finger pointing to the moon. But if you start taking the concepts literally, if you start taking the words literally then you become word-conditioned. Your view becomes word-conditioned. It is no longer able to function as a view, it is no longer able to function as the basis, the theoretical basis, of your spiritual practice. It's become an end in itself, hence "nominal". It's not really a view. So, "The word-conditioned view is nominal. Though people call it a view 'tis but a word..."

Ratnaketu: This is like thinking of sunyata and you think that it exists but there's sometimes the word sunyata ...

S: Well of course it happens all the more if you're dealing in translations. You have, for instance, 'sunyata' translated as 'emptiness' so you seize hold of this word 'emptiness' and you take it literally and you think of it as being actually empty. You think of it as being the opposite of fullness. Do you see what I mean? In this way you become conditioned by words, your view becomes conditioned by words, you get entangled with the words which express the view and in this way the view ceases to function as a view. It's no longer open-ended, so as a view it is only nominal, and even though people call it a view, even although it is generally regarded as a view it's just a matter of words. So in this way you can be well-versed in, as it were, Buddhist philosophy - the view or views of Buddhism - but not be seriously concerned with that which they are trying to communicate, not seriously concerned with what they are actually trying to get you to practice, yes? So your view then is nominal, it's not really a view - it's just a system of philosophy that you happen to have studied or to have familiarised yourself with. You might even believe in it, in a sense, but if you don't see its practical function, its practical relevance and act upon that then it isn't really a view so far as you are concerned - it's just a system of profane philosophy. The words are all there but so far as you are concerned they've lost their real meaning. (pause).

You find this among Buddhists sometimes nowadays in the East, that certain words, certain phrases, certain teachings, have become a sort of shibboleth. For instance, Buddhists in Ceylon are firmly convinced that the Buddha taught 'no-soul'. I mean, if you try to say a good word for 'soul', well you'll incur the wrath of orthodox Theravada Buddhists. They are very attached to this doctrine of 'no-soul' and if they talk about it in English they will talk about it as a doctrine of 'no-soul' in the quite literal sense; that there is no soul in Buddhism. And if you try to discuss that or you ask them what they really mean, they can get quite upset. I have related an incident of that sort in 'The Thousand Petalled Lotus', an incident from the experience of one of my own teachers - Bhikkhu Jagadish Kashyap - do you remember? - when he was in Ceylon, a young monk and he was giving a lecture once on anatta and he made that point that anatta meant 'no-self' or 'no-soul'. So he said in order to understand what 'no-self' meant you had to understand what particular conception of the soul the Buddha was negating. So he was trying to explain this; so Sinhalese bhikkhus who were present became very upset and started shouting at him, "We don't want your Hindu philosophy here!" Because knowing he was an Indian, they thought that he was trying to bring in the dreaded atta doctrine into their pure Theravada Buddhism. They just didn't get the point of what he was trying to explain, so for them anatta had ceased to be a view - it had become a sort of dogma to which they were attached, it had become for them a matter of mere words.

So this is very often what we find happening - "Though people call it a view 'tis but a word." They've been ensnared by this word anatta, they've

taken it quite literally whether in Pali or in English as 'no-soul' and if you even tried to explain what sort of soul the Buddha was negating, or anything said about soul at all, it was a sort of betrayal of Buddhism and they were against you.

_____ : It ceases from being operational.

S: Yes, it becomes an end in itself. So Kashyapji was shouted down, he wasn't allowed to continue his lecture - which wasn't very Buddhistic, and the monks who shouted him down thought that they were preserving Pure Theravada Buddhism.

[End of Side one Side two]

S: But then Milarepa goes on to say, "It is most hard to find the man who can cease to be distracted by duality." So why does Milarepa speak about duality here, and being "distracted by duality," (Pause).

Ratnaketu: Well his view previously was the non-differentiation of sunyata and rupa.

S: Yes, yes. I mean the Mahayana, and the Vajrayana, is very much concerned with non-duality, but can you really speak about non-duality? When you speak about non-duality, what is happening? You are saying something about something - so you have got two things, you've got a duality. You cannot make, actually, any statement about non-duality which is not dualistic. So if you don't take, so to speak, the spirit of what is said, if you pay more attention to the letter you will read, so to speak, non-duality. dualistically; you will be distracted by duality. So, "It is most hard to find a man who can cease to be distracted by duality"- it is very hard to find a man who will take the view of non-duality in a genuinely non-dualistic way. If you're not careful you'll be caught up in the concepts, the words, about non-duality, become attached to them and in that way you'll be distracted by duality. (Pause).

We find this that the whole time that we're discussing so-called Buddhist thought and especially if one is discussing the unconditional, the transcendental, or the Void, it's so easy to get caught up in one's own words and to forget that these words are just only pointers and one has to take the spirit of them, try to look at what they are pointing to rather than look at the words themselves or the concepts which the words express. (Pause).

Well then Milarepa says, "It is most hard to find a man who can absorb himself in the sole realisation". What is the "sole realisation"? It's the realisation of Enlightenment, the realisation of non-duality. If people can be distracted by duality, well there's no question then of their realising non-duality. The matter is sort of summed up in the words of one particular translation of the *Awakening of Faith* by saying, "We use words to get free from words, until we reach the pure word-less essence" - reality itself cannot be described in words, but we have to use words to help ourselves get free from words until we have an actual experience of that which is beyond words. So Milarepa is saying much the same thing here, though we must be careful that instead of using words to get free from words, we use words in such a way that we get further entangled with words, never become free from words and never realise the pure word-less essence or reach the pure word-less essence.

You know that I sometimes say that in Buddhism we use language poetically rather than scientifically, we take it as hinting at something rather than as stating facts. (Long pause). One shouldn't of course think that there is a word-conditioned view and another view which is not word-conditioned. All views are expressed in words but a view is said to be word-conditioned when the words in which the view is expressed are taken literally so it is not so much the view itself that is word-conditioned as the person who uses the view or who adopts the view or professes the view. (Long pause).

All right, then the next verse: "The 'Practice' that cannot widen The mind is nominal. Though people call it "Practice", 'Tis but a form of Dhyana. It is most hard to find a man who can merge both Dhyana and "Insight"; it is most hard to find a man who knows how to work on the vital point of mind." So, "The practice that cannot widen the mind is nominal, Though people call it "practice", 'tis but a form of Dhyana." So, what is meant by this widening of the mind, or expansion of consciousness, we could say? (pause). Why, or in what sense is dhyana unable to widen the mind?

Ray: It's not insight?

S: Well how is that the widening of the mind, the expansion of consciousness through dhyana is only nominally practice?

Subhuti: It's just an attenuation ...

S: It's just an attenuation, it's also a temporary expansion. Having been expanded the mind can contract. While you are in the dhyana state, yes, the mind is greatly expanded. But when you're not in the dhyana state your mind is contracted again. So this suggests that the true practice is in fact insight - unless you're developing insight you're not really practising, which is quite a strong thing to say but this is in fact or in effect what Milarepa is saying. Practice, dhyana practice, without insight is only nominal. We are only going through the motions so to speak of expanding your consciousness - you are not really expanding it if you are not expanding it permanently. As soon as you stop meditating it will contract again, so permanent expansion of consciousness, or in other terms - permanent transformation of the being - comes about only as the result of insight. "It is most hard to find a man who can merge both dhyana and insight". Either people have got the experience of dhyana but not an experience of insight or they have got not an experience of insight but a knowledge of the words in which insight is given expression, a knowledge of Buddhist philosophy, let us say, and no dhyana. So, "It is most hard to find a man who can merge both dhyana and insight", who on the basis of dhyana can develop insight and then thus truly, permanently, widen his Mind or expand his consciousness. (Pause).

We seem to be coming back quite a lot to insight in the course of this retreat for one reason or another - perhaps because Milarepa himself emphasises it so much. So from this verse it emerges that the only real practice is the development of insight. If you're merely experiencing dhyana states from time to time, well that practice is merely nominal; it's not a real practice, it's not a permanent practice, not a lasting practice, not a practice that really transforms you, transmutes you. it's only a practice which temporarily modifies your state. One almost comes to the conclusion that the only real Buddhist is an enlightened Buddhist! (laughter).

_____ : Do you think, Bhante, that within the Friends, that we do enough to develop insight?

S: Well, I mean, assuming that everybody is not yet enlightened clearly not enough has been done - (laughter) - you see what I mean? I suppose you mean what is humanly possible, because one can't do it all at once. Well, everybody has to ask himself, 'Am I really doing enough to develop insight either by meditation or through study or in other ways, through being in a Right Livelihood situation that gives indirect support, to my more intense spiritual practice?' and so on. (Pause).

Ray: Did you mean that sometimes you can spend so much time in a Right Livelihood supporting that you don't get enough time ...?

_____ : I think that it's partly to do with just a conscious orientation towards the fact that that is what one's trying to do and not losing sight. Only if you do that then the Right Livelihood situation is only then really useful

S: Yes, indeed.

_____ : ... otherwise it's not going to transform....

S: If one thinks in terms of growth and development then one has to think also in terms of a growth and development from which one does not fall back. One doesn't want to have, say, this week a spiritual development which you lose next week. But so long as one's experience is confined to dhyana or samadhi this is in fact what happens. The only thing that can fix the development, the only thing that can make it permanent, that can make it constant is insight. So if one is thinking in terms of development one is surely thinking in terms of permanent development, not a development or attainment from which one backslides every now and then. So if one is thinking in terms of development, real development at all, one is necessarily thinking in terms of insight. Or one can say one is thinking in terms of stream-entry. (Pause).

Ratnaketu: Is study very important to the development of insight? Sometimes I've sort of got the impression that what you did was do a lot of samatha meditation and just waited

S: Well, samatha meditation provides the basis. But then you need, as it were, material for reflection so that insight may develop and I think that material for reflection you can derive from the study. That doesn't mean that you've got to go over in your mind everything that you've gone through in a study group. You can select certain leading topics, topics that particularly appeal to you and turn those over in one's mind, reflect on those after one has had a degree of samatha type experience. It may be just a sentence or two that you turn over in your mind. You take it like a sort of koan, almost like a mantra. (Pause).

Bob Jones: Is it possible to have what might be called flashes of insight or are they something else?

S: Well, I think I've said somewhere that insight usually comes to begin with in flashes. One can perhaps compare it to dreams or rather to the recollection of dreams. Sometimes when you wake up you just sort of catch the tail end of a dream, you just see it for an instant and then it's

gone and even though you rack your brains you can't recall that dream. So your insight is just like that. I remember once a critic - who was that? - it was Haslett I think said that seeing Kean's acting, acting Shakespeare, was like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning; the page was just lit up for an instant and then it was all dark. So the flashes of insight are rather like that. A flash of insight sort of lights up the whole of existence, but before you can grasp it it's gone and your mind is sort of working 'Well, what was it? What did I see?' But it's too big for the mind to grasp. The flash of insight is no longer there so that the illumination is no longer there just as the dream is no longer there, it's just gone. So you just get the tail end of it, just a vague recollection it's about a mountain, that's all, you can't remember anything more than that or you just get a feeling left over from the dream, that's all that's left. But just for an instant you see the whole dream and then it's as though the mind closes, or the unconscious mind closes - you don't see anything more. So the flash of insight is like that - just for a fraction of a second the whole of reality is revealed to you, your Mind sort of cracks and opens up and then [claps hands] it closes together again and you can't remember anything perhaps because what you've seen is so big that the mind just can't contain it. You've got no time to translate it into conceptual terms, in a sense you've got no time even to experience it! That's the flash but with practice the flashes become more and more frequent and maybe each flash lasts a longer time and you just begin to get some idea of this vast landscape of reality. You just begin just to recognise certain leading features. One could say yes it is very much like seeing an unfamiliar landscape at night lit up by occasional flashes of lightning. You just see yes, well there's a tree there, there's a mountain there - that's about all you've managed to pick out, otherwise it's just pitch dark, it's all blackness. You don't really see anything until maybe the day starts dawning and that, to continue with the comparison, is when you start becoming enlightened - until then it's just these flashes of insight, just for one instant, lighting up everything, but not long enough for you to do more than just, well, at best just pick just pick out just one or two features and perhaps remember them, it's something like that. But yes, it starts with flashes of insight.

Subhuti: In what way would stream-entry fit into that analogy?

S: Mm, Stream-entry is sort of measured by breaking of fetters so you've got another analogy here. So how do you translate one analogy into terms of the other? Well it's as though, and this is just as it were off the cuff, it's as though you were walking forward through this darkened landscape and stream entry is when there have been enough flashes for you to see where the major ditches are and to avoid them. (laughter)

Subhuti: It's the beginning of some coherence. Up to that point the flashes are sort of completely discrete but with stream entry there's ...

S: Yes, a certain continuity, a certain coherence (pause).

John: What is likely to cause the flashes in the first place, assuming you're not undergoing a serious meditation, you're not sort of engaged in spiritual practices ...

S: But you are. It very rarely happens that insight to any degree develops unless you have a basis of spiritual practice, say, and especially a basis of samatha. They don't really just happen like lightning flashes happen in reality, so to speak.

John: I was just thinking of reports of people sort of having overwhelming visionary experiences.

S: Yes, people can, but that may not be a vipassana experience.

John: So that's something distinct.

S: Mmm. This is not to say that so to speak formal meditation is necessary. I mean, what does meditation mean? It's essentially concentration of all one's energies, an integration of all the energies of one's being. That may not necessarily happen when you're technically sitting and meditating, you could be sitting quietly under a tree not actually thinking about meditating but it might so happen that you became very concentrated, your energies became unified or harmonious, you might start to turn over certain things in your mind and you might in that way develop insight. But I would say that more often insight is developed more often than not in connection with actual formal meditation but it is certainly not confined to that sort of situation. I mean, it's important to understand what meditation essentially is. It's essentially this unified and heightened consciousness.

You know yourself that if you're reading a difficult book, say a book about philosophy, sometimes you grasp what you're reading quite well and other times not at all; when you grasp what you read quite well, understand what you read, then it's when you're in a very sort of concentrated state and there's no distraction, you concentrate easily on what you're reading; sometimes that just doesn't happen, so when it doesn't happen you don't understand what you're reading so well, you seem to be not so much in tune with it, not in harmony with it. So the relation between samatha and vipassana is something like that. When your energies are concentrated, then when you take up some topic of reflection you can understand it much better, much more deeply, so much so in fact that you understand it with your being, not just with your intelligence. Since you have, so to speak, understood it with your being it transforms that being, there is a permanent modification of the being as a result of what you understood, as a result of your insight. And if that insight is sufficiently strong, then, in the traditional terms, certain fetters are broken. You see through certain things for good.

_____: I think somewhere, Bhante, you've described insight in a slightly different way, in terms of not necessarily in flashes but it's only when you look back, only when you look back after a period of time you see that you have in fact changed and that might have (led?) to insight having risen.

S: Well of course sometimes there's just a series of small flashes which don't amount to much individually so they don't bring about much individual change but say over the months or over the years they may bring about change so you see that only in retrospect. But if you have a really brilliant and blinding flash, well that may bring about a quite dramatic change quite suddenly and that of course you will know at the time, you won't have to look back then in order to see it.(Pause).

So, "It is most hard to find a man Who can merge both Dhyana and "Insight";It is most hard to find a man who knows how to work on the vital point of mind." What do you think is this vital point of mind? Presumably it's something to do with the sort of practice that Milarepa has been talking about. Well since he says first, "It is hard to find a man who can merge both Nirvana and insight, It is most hard to find a man who knows how to work on the vital point of mind" that would suggest that merging both dhyana and insight is in fact the vital point of mind. I must admit that this is a guess here, the text isn't really clear but I think it's a quite reasonable guess - that that is the vital point

of mind, merging these two, blending these two, harmonising these two.

Bob Jones: Does it mean that insight wouldn't then be likely to arise in dhyanic state?

S: The traditional teaching is that one experiences the dhyanas first, the absorptions first, and then develops vipassana by taking up a traditional doctrinal topic and reflecting on it with one's absorption-imbued mind. But reflection means discursive mental activity. Discursive mental activity is found only in the first of the four dhyanas, therefore it is said that having experienced the dhyanas, let's say having experienced the four dhyanas, the four rupa-dhyanas, having practised absorption to this extent you, so to speak, return to the first dhyana, you start up discursive mental activity again and this discursive mental activity takes the form of directed reflection on one or another of the doctrinal categories or teachings of the Dharma, which categories or teachings form a sort of basis for sparking off the development of insight, do you see what I mean? Because first of all, say, the Buddha had the experience of insight or he had the experience, let us say, of wisdom, of enlightenment - so this experience he sought to communicate or to express or to hint at, or to indicate. So he did this, from one point of view, through words, so that the words of the Dharma, the words that make up the Dharma are meant to direct our attention to a certain kind of experience, to hint at a certain kind of reality. So there is a sort of connection as it were between those words and the reality to which they point. They are the best words that the Buddha could find, the words that were most able to express his experience, or the best words that Milarepa was able to find.

So, having suffused the mind with the absorptions, having come down so to speak to the fourth dhyana, having got discursive mental activity going, one takes up one of these formulae, one of these doctrinal categories, one of these teachings, in which the Buddha has given expression to some aspect of his realisation of the Truth and with one's mind which is now more sensitive and more integrated and also more powerful one tries to make the leap as it were from the formulation, the conceptual formulation in the form of the doctrinal category and so on to the experience of which originally it was the expression. The doctrinal formulation or whatever, is the bridge between the two. Do you see what I mean? It's just like when you read a poem - by reading the poem you capture or you re-capture the experience or the feeling that the poet had when he wrote it but you have to be quite receptive. So you have to be receptive to a still greater degree when you turn over in your mind the words in which the Buddha expressed his experience of Enlightenment or Reality, you have to be very receptive, so that when you turn those words over in your mind you may get from the words themselves to the experience which the words try to communicate and actually have that experience for yourself. So you can have that degree of receptivity and also that degree of energy and unification of being, only through samatha. So you practise samatha first and then, as I have said, with that samatha-suffused mind or consciousness you take up the reflection on those combinations of words which express or which indicate the Buddha's realisation or what the Buddha is pointing to. This is the sort of classical procedure.

Bob Jones: Does that not mean then that this couplet could just as easily have said, "It is most hard to find a man who can develop insight?" Why is it necessary to talk of merging the dhyanas and insight?

S: I think perhaps Milarepa wants to warn against trying to develop what some schools call "dry insight", that is to say insight developed without going through the dhyanas. The central tradition of Buddhism maintains that this is not possible. But there have arisen schools which maintain that you can develop vipassana, insight, without, as I said, going through the dhyanas, but that sort of vipassana would seem to be just

an intellectual understanding. There are some traditions of modern so-called vipassana practice which put you simply through certain what they call vipassana exercises and don't encourage the development, the practice, of samatha, in fact discourage or even look down upon it or dismiss it as very inferior elementary stuff indeed. Among these vipassana teachers - they differ quite a lot - some have now admitted some element of samatha. But others just still won't admit it at all. So they get you just sitting and going through the categories of the Abidharma and this is supposed to constitute an insight experience. (pause).

So it is quite important to understand the difference between samatha and vipassana, how they are related and how the whole system so to speak works.

_____: What, Bhante, would be the Mahayana approach to developing insight. Would it be turning over...?

S: It is, in theory, so to speak, exactly the same. In the case of the Hinayana, insight is usually developed by reflecting on the three lakshanas, that is to say, dukkha, anatta and anitya, and through these finding one's way into or through the three vimoksa-dvaras, the three doors of liberation - I hope I've explained these in detail in *"The Three Jewels"*. But in the case of the Mahayana it is usually some kind of sunyata meditation, on the different kinds or degrees of sunyata. In the case of the Yogachara it is reflection on the truth of the One Mind.

_____: The implication seems to be that it's quite important to have quite a strong conceptual grasp of the Dharma. I've been feeling in the course of a few days here that personally I have quite a, in some respects, quite a passive approach to study, that in some respects I should try and I hear, for example, you explain things quite a few times but realise that my own grasp of them, even on a conceptual level, is very weak and that perhaps I'm a little bit passive in that respect, that I could do a lot more basic spade-work.

S: Well what then you should probably do is to give more talks, because preparing talks really clarifies one's ideas and you really come to know what you understand and what you don't understand.

_____: It provides a sort of objective situation that you have to meet so you have to know.

S: Yes, right, yes, that can be very useful. (Pause). It doesn't mean..... in order to develop vipassana you don't need a thorough understanding of Buddhist philosophy in all its aspects. You need a thorough intellectual grasp of certain basic fundamental things - that's all you really need. I mean, even if you had simply a clear intellectual understanding of the fact of death, even that would be enough to develop vipassana, having so to speak emerged from your dhyana experience. You could go a long way just with that if you really were, as it were, convinced about the fact of death and saw it intellectually quite clearly exactly what that involved. You could make that the subject matter of your reflection and your insight development. (Pause).

Subhuti: What about the visualisation practices, they have some element of ...

S: Oh yes indeed. The element visualisation practice, that is to say the one in which one returns one's personal, say earth element to the earth

element in the universe - this is a vipassana Practice directly attacking the notion of a stable ego.

Subhuti: The visualisation practices of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas - do they contain a vipassana ...

S: Ah yes these do. If one simply visualises the figure and as it were mentally reproduces the figure then this is just samatha but if you reflect on so to speak the significance of the figure and feel that, then that becomes a vipassana practice. For instance, if you visualise the figure of Avalokitesvara and if you just visualise the image and reproduce that accurately in your mind and really see that, well that is just samatha. But if you start reflecting that Avalokitesvara is the embodiment of compassion and you start feeling that compassion and you start developing the bodhicitta, that you aspire to develop compassion and to help all living beings, and if you also further reflect that you've generated this visualised image through your practice - it has arisen in dependence on causes and conditions - and all things are like that - they arise in dependence on causes and conditions, therefore they are not ultimately real - in this way also you develop insight. (Pause).

Of course it should also be said that usually when you do the visualisation practice you start off with the clear blue sky and that this, of course, represents an experience of sunyata. So strictly speaking if you do the practice fully you should not just visualise the clear blue sky but as it were think of sunyata, think of reality as beyond words, beyond concepts, as non-dual etc., etc., and then on that basis or against that background visualise the figure of Avalokitesvara or Amitabha or whomsoever which is then a sort of concretisation of the voidness, a particular aspect of it, for purposes of more specific practice. So if you visualise the figure of say Avalokitesvara as a concretisation of the voidness, then that is a kind of vipassana practice. It's a sort of, well, not only transformation of the voidness but yes, one could say an aspect of it. I've used the expression 'concretisation' and if you reflect, 'well this particular rupa of Avalokitesvara is not different from the sunyata from which it has been conjured forth' then that, I think, is a practice of vipassana. So in this way there are a number of ways of practising or developing vipassana in connection with visualisation. (Long Pause).

One could say that vipassana can arise by sort of association: if the figure of the Buddha is before you, say, visualised and you have a strong feeling for it; if it represents the ideal, well, to that extent you are in contact with the ideal, you feel the ideal, even realise the ideal, to that extent also vipassana arises. Perhaps we should be careful not to speak of vipassana in too exclusively intellectual or conceptual terms. (Pause).

_____: Can I put the light on?

S: Yes. It's also tea-time.

[End of Day 5 tape 1] [Day 5 Tape 2]

S: All right, Milarepa says:

"When the mind's "Action" is now dark,
Now light, it is but nominal. Though people call it "Action,

'Tis a deed of involvement. It is most hard to find a man
Who can conquer worldly desires; It is very hard to find a man
Who can complete the Dharma practice."

What is meant by 'action' here? it's put in inverted commas which suggests it's a technical term. One has this triad of view, practice and action.

Ratnaketu: Is this your day to day working out of your view, your practice?

S: The day to day application of your practice. It's your practice in the most detailed, down to earth sense, what you actually do. Well, you could say your practice is meditation, but it isn't really that. What you actually practice, that is to say your action is a specific kind of meditation. Or you don't just sort of practice morality, it's specific precepts that you've undertaken to observe. But Milarepa says, "When the mind's "Action" is now dark, now light it is but nominal," what do you think 'dark' and 'light' mean here?

Bob: Inconsistent.

S: Yes, I mean, it is a case of inconsistency, but 'dark' and 'light' are apparently used in the sense of meritorious and demeritorious or rather demeritorious and meritorious. One gets this kind of terminology in the Dhammapada even, the dark represents that which is unskilful, light that which is skilful. So when the mind's action is now, let us say, skilful and now unskilful, it is but nominal. For instance, when your action, say which consists in the observance of the precepts is now skilful and now unskilful, your practice of the precepts, your action is only nominal. So how can your practice, say, of the precepts be only nominal?

Ratnaketu: Is this because it's not a natural outflowing which would be a continuous process, it's only when you remember to act skilfully, and so you are acting rather than being.

S: No, I don't think one can take the English word 'action' too literally here to get that sort of meaning. It's more like your moral observance, your observance of the precepts is unskilful when you are going through the motions externally, no-one can fault you, you're technically observing the precept. But the appropriate mental state, the appropriate motivation is simply not there. For instance, you may, if you are a monk, be observing the precept of not taking food after midday, so actually you do not take food after midday, but the question arises, why? Well, your motivation may be entirely so that people may think you're a very good monk, so that people may think you are very strict, so that they may revere you more, honour you more. So this would be an unskilful 'action', inverted commas, an unskilful practice of that particular precept or observance. Do you see what I mean? So if sometimes you are really observing, sometimes not really observing, then your action is just nominal. So when the mind's action is now dark, now light, it is but nominal. Your action is only real if you keep it up all the time. Of course ultimately, you can do that only with the help of insight, so again insight comes into the picture.

"Though people call it "Action", it is a deed of involvement." Involvement with what? Well, involvement with the world, involvement with the group. If, for instance, as in the example I mentioned, if you as a monk are refraining from eating after 12 o'clock only in order to secure the

respect of the laity, then that's a deed of involvement, you're being caught up in mundane group attitudes. That is not action in the spiritual sense at all, it is not an application of your practice.

Ratnaketu: It's doing the opposite, almost, to what it is intended to do.

S: Yes, indeed. "It is most hard to find a man who can conquer worldly desires; it is very hard to find a man who can complete the Dharma practice." Worldly desires are very difficult to conquer, worldly desires will persist even under a pseudo-religious form. It is very hard to find a man who can complete the Dharma practice without the Dharma practice turning into a pseudo-Dharma practice. Do you see what Milarepa is getting at? Because the gravitational pull is at work all the time.

Siddhiratna: Bhante, is this anything to do with the notion that you can get caught up with rites and rituals and miss the point, as it were?

S: Yes, you can go through the external motions forgetting the real meaning and real purpose of what you are supposed to be doing. For instance, you might have got it into your head that if, say, you are a community member, you should meditate every morning. Well that's fine, but meditating every morning perhaps has come to mean for you not actually doing your best to enter into a certain mental state when you are sitting in the shrine room, but just going into the shrine room every morning and just sitting there, upright with your blanket around you for an hour and then going out, well then you've done your bit then. That is just going through the motions. It's very easy to fall into this. You're not making a real full effort every time you sit or every time you do the puja, or whatever it may be.

So therefore Milarepa says, "The mind's "Action" is now dark, now light." Sometimes you do make a real effort, sometimes you don't, sometimes you just go through the motions. So though most people call it action, it is a deed of involvement, it's only involving you further in the samsara, it's not helping you to follow the spiral path that leads out of the samsara. It's only a reinforcement of your essentially mundane attitude.

So "it is very hard to find a man who can complete the Dharma practice" - this is very true. I've met in the East so many monks and I'm quite sure when they became monks they were very sincere, perhaps they really did think in terms of Enlightenment or the spiritual life but by the time they reached middle age, they had forgotten all about that - they settled down into being monks as into a sort of ecclesiastical career. So they don't complete the Dharma practice. They continue to go through the motions of Dharma practice but there is no reality in it, they've come to a standstill. So that can very easily happen. What to speak of monks in the Buddhist East, it can happen right here in the FWBO if you're not careful.

Ratnaketu: It's really hard to keep that freshness.

S: Yes. It has been sometimes remarked that very new people have got a sort of freshness and enthusiasm, that people who have been around for say four or five years don't have - that is really unfortunate. But, one can understand that, but one really has to try to maintain that freshness and enthusiasm year after year.

Ratnaketu: How do you think one can do that, keep being fresh, and that sense of wonder?

S: Well, it's by just taking a new look every time. And not saying oh it's the same old Four Noble Truths, the same old mindfulness of breathing, no, don't think like that, tackle it afresh every time. Do it as though you've never done it before. Well actually you haven't ever done it before. It's new each time.

Johnny: Just become aware of what you're doing, rather than just not thinking of what you're doing.

S: Yes, really putting yourself into it, really doing it. Otherwise one almost develops the attitude, 'Ah well - done the metta bhavana so many times ... what again!' as if to say, "it's about time I had a new meditation". [Pause] But especially when you're doing the same thing, in a manner of speaking, over and over again, as in a sense you have to do when you're following a standard procedure or practice, it's very difficult not to get the impression it's the same old thing over again, it's old hat, you know it all, you've done it all, it's very difficult not to get into that way of thinking. "It's very hard to find a man who can complete the Dharma practice," that is to say without it ever becoming a routine. (Long pause).

So in the next verse, Milarepa continues the same line of thought: "Observance of discipline when feigned And artificial is but nominal. Though people call it "Discipline," 'Tis nought but mockery. It is hard to find a man Who never violates his oath; It is very hard to find An honest witness of his mind."

Discipline could mean here vinaya. So a distinction is made between feigned discipline and artificial discipline. What do you think that means, feigned discipline and artificial discipline?

_____: One's from the intellect and one's from the emotions.

Bob: When you feign something you actually pretend to do it but you actually don't, but when you do it artificially, you do it, but you do it from the wrong motives?

S: Well, not necessarily from the wrong motives. I'd say that when discipline is feigned, there are the externals of the discipline but without the appropriate inner attitude, perhaps even, an opposed attitude. But when it's artificial, you are going through the motions in a manner of speaking, in order to help yourself to develop the appropriate attitude. Do you see what I mean? You may as a discipline, refrain from taking life, but actually your temperament may be really bloodthirsty. But you know that you've got to develop skilful mental states of not wishing to harm any living being, so in order to help yourself do that you actually observe a discipline of deliberately refraining from harming living beings, so that that mode of behaviour will put you into, eventually, the corresponding mental attitude. This ties up - probably you've noticed - with the twofold sila, which is mentioned in all Buddhist traditions, including the Theravada tradition. Do you remember this? The two kinds of sila, or morality, the natural and the artificial, so to speak. Bhakati sila and Samutti sila. Bakati sila is natural morality, that is to say, that morality which you naturally observe because you are in a certain mental state. Artificial morality is that morality you observe as a discipline in order to develop a certain mental state.

So here a distinction seems to be made between feigned discipline, where you go through the motions, but make no attempt to develop the appropriate mental state, and artificial discipline where you go through the motions, as it were, in order to help yourself to develop the appropriate mental state. So Milarepa is saying that the only real discipline, or the only real morality, so to speak, is the natural morality, the natural discipline, that which springs directly out of insight, which is the direct expression of what you actually are. He even goes so far to say that not only feigned but even artificial discipline is only nominal, is only a mockery. "It is most hard to find a man who never violates his oath." Here he is speaking, so to speak, within the Tantric framework, he is thinking of the samaya precepts, the special Tantric precepts which are like oaths which one takes to maintain the practice and so on. He says it is very hard to find a man who never violates that oath. Because a man may swear to practise but only too often the practice is nominal, it's feigned, it's artificial. You very rarely find a man who really honours his pledge, really observes the samaya precepts.

"It is very hard to find an honest witness of his mind". Where do you think this idea of witness comes in?

Subhuti: Whether your actions express your mental state.

S: It's also I think bound up with the way in which you usually take the samaya pledge. It's as though you make a sort of oath in front of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and you call upon the guardian deities of that particular tradition to, so to speak, punish you if you break your oath, so the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and guardians - they are witnesses. So, "It is very hard to find an honest witness of his mind." This is a bit obscure but it could mean that it is very difficult to find a man who's own mind honestly bears witness to what he is really like, and, what he is really doing, whether he is really observing or not. Perhaps one can look at it in that way, the wording isn't altogether clear.

Siddhiratna: Could it also mean something like conscience?

S: Something like conscience, yes, because conscience is a sort of inner monitor it's sometimes said. So in a way this is very much all connected with insight because it's all connected in a way with that second fetter, the fetter of the dependence upon sila, that is precepts and vrata - vows, religious observances, as ends in themselves, for their own sake, going through the motions or what I called in my lecture superficiality. I think I said that superficiality was one of the curses of the modern age didn't I? Well you can say it's certainly one of the curses of spiritual life. People do things superficially, not with their whole heart and soul, so to speak. They just go through the motions, usually for the sake of some kind of group conformity or group approval, and so on.

Bob: It seems a bit hard to say it's either superficial or a mockery to adopt a certain moral code because you know that's what you've got to do and it's the only way you can do it.

S: Well perhaps one should remember to whom Milarepa is speaking. He is speaking to these rather wretched lay folk who are rather mean and very nominal Buddhists indeed and perhaps he is being really severe on them for a definite reason. But it is a bit strong to say that even the artificial practice of the precepts is a mockery, that is a bit strong. But nonetheless this is what Milarepa says, in other words he wants to really wake people up to the uselessness of purely external observances, or merely

external observances. He wants to make them realise that insight is the real thing, that the fetters really have to be broken. Even artificial discipline is far from being enough. [Pause]

Then Milarepa says, "'Accomplishment' when longed for hard Is a notion (cherished by fools). Though people call it 'Accomplishment,' 'Tis nothing but delusion. It is most difficult to find a man Who can plumb the abyss of Reality; It is most hard to find a man Who on the real Path can stay."

What is this accomplishment, what Sanskrit word do you think this translates?

_____ : Siddhi?

S: It's probably siddhi. It could be used to render samapati- but it's probably siddhi. Is there a glossary at the end? Let's see if accomplishment is listed in the index. Yes it probably is siddhis because it says in the index, 'worldly, miraculous powers'. So siddhis are of two kinds, it is almost exclusively a Vajrayanic term. There's the mundane siddhis or supernormal powers and the transcendental siddhi which is Enlightenment itself. So Milarepa says accomplishment, siddhi, when longed for hard is a notion cherished by fools.' The word siddhi conveys the notion of power also. There is a book on the Vajrayana by John Blofeld called, "*The Way of Power*" and I remember when I was in Malaysia I visited certain places, and I think it was on the way to Ipoh, a town in Malaysia, I was told that there were a lot of wealthy Chinese Buddhists there, and they had been very keen on inviting prominent Tibetan lamas, to visit and give them initiations, and I was quite interested by this, and I was told by my informant that these wealthy Chinese Buddhist business men were interested in these initiations because they thought it would give them power, or powers, or siddhis. So people have got this vague idea that by following the Tantric path or getting Tantric initiations you get siddhis, you get powers.

And in their mind perhaps the spiritual and the mundane are sort of confused; if you attain these siddhis, these accomplishments, then you become more successful in your worldly life, you become richer and more famous and all the rest of it. So this is perhaps the sort of thing Milarepa is getting at - 'Accomplishments when longed for hard is a notion cherished by fools.' It's foolish people who are saying, 'I'd really like to develop these siddhis', or 'I'd really like to develop these powers.' This is their sort of attitude, 'Though people call it "Accomplishment," 'Tis nothing but delusion.' They are not really concerned with siddhi, they are not really concerned with Transcendental siddhi, certainly not really concerned with Enlightenment. They are concerned with something else, it is all a cloak for worldliness. So he says it's just nothing but delusion.

'It is most difficult to find a man who can plumb the abyss of Reality.' Very difficult to find a man who has really achieved the supreme accomplishment.

'It is most hard to find a man who on the real path can stay,' that is to say the path of true spiritual development, even the Transcendental path. It is very easy for people to go astray and go haring after things like siddhis, powers. In other words what Milarepa is saying is that it is very difficult to have a true conception of what spiritual life is really all about. He is especially, it seems, criticising the conception of spiritual life

really in terms of worldly success. In India you find that the most successful gurus are those who promise or appear to give their disciples some kind of worldly benefit or blessing or other, I mean this was, or is, very much the Maharishi's approach. I was under the impression that perhaps the Maharishi had been misrepresented by his critics, but I heard him myself on the radio one day being interviewed and he actually did say that if you were a millionaire and you did TM well you'd become a millionaire twice over. So That indicates the sort of appeal that he makes, to be more successful in your worldly life, all this and heaven too! One could say that he does it as a upayakausalaya, but you have to use this sort of upayakausalayas very carefully indeed - skilful means. You have to be a real Bodhisattva to use that sort of upayakausalaya. Mr Chen used to give me a really horrific example of this, I don't know if you know much about Mr Chen - he's a rather earthy sort of person, but he used to tell some rather earthy stories. One was about a Bodhisattva's Upayakausalaya, and you really have to be a Bodhisattva to engage in upayakausalaya to this extent.

Apparently there was a Bodhisattva and a woman fell in love with him and she declared that if that Bodhisattva did not agree to have sexual intercourse with her then she would commit suicide! So, what is a Bodhisattva to do? So, Mr. Chen says, well yes, all right the Bodhisattva agreed, and he had sexual intercourse with her and satisfied her fully. But then, being a Bodhisattva what did he do? By his magic power he caused to spring from his penis a series of razor blades and he then revolved his penis within the vagina of the woman, and in that way gave her a taste of real dukkha. And when she [Laughter] had had this real taste of real dukkha he explained to her that pleasures like sexual intercourse were inseparably associated with suffering and that therefore one should be detached from them. And in this way he led her onto the path to Enlightenment. [Laughter]

So one should not engage in those extreme Upayakausalayas unless you have those sort of supernormal powers. [Laughter] This was the point of Mr Chen's story. So it's all right to say, well I'm speaking to worldly people in this sort of way and telling them that if they follow the spiritual path they will be more successful in their worldly life, well it's all very well to say that you are doing that as an upayakausalaya, but are you really a Bodhisattva and is it really working in that way? Or are you simply giving people's worldly life a religious excuse, a religious rationalisation, a religious veneer? - instead of leading them from the worldly to the spiritual. A Bodhisattva needs to be well equipped with razor blades! Magically produced razor blades at that. So, "It is most hard to find a man who on the real path can stay." It is so easy to get misled by all sorts of bypaths, all sorts of imitations of the real thing, all sorts of ego trips, as we say. [Pause]

All right, next verse. "The Pith Instructions may seem Most profound on paper; They are but written words. It is difficult to find a man With diligence and perseverance; It is most hard to find a man With direct teachings from a Lineage."

So "The Pith Instructions may seem most profound on paper, they are but written words." You know what pith instructions are. They are essential teachings, teachings in which the essence of the matter is stated especially as directly related to the needs of the disciple. So when these pith instructions are written down on paper they may seem very profound, but after all when put on paper they're just written words. "It's very difficult to find a man with diligence and perseverance," that is to say a man who's ready to practice what is written down. "It is most hard to find a man with direct teachings from a Lineage." Milarepa seems to be contrasting the Pith instructions on paper to the direct teaching from a Lineage.

Perhaps you've noticed this, when you read, say, a Buddhist text, a Buddhist scripture, it may seem very profound, well it is very profound. But

it's very difficult to take hold of it, very difficult to know how to practice it, how to apply it because it is so general, or even because it is so profound. So it's as though Milarepa is saying that even Pith Instructions on paper are not really enough, they are just written words, what you need is someone with the diligence and perseverance actually to practice and especially perhaps a man who is relying not just on the written word but on the instructions which he has personally received and which are appropriate just to him. In other words, general teaching is not enough, the general teaching you get in books is not enough, you need specific instructions, given by someone who knows you and someone who can apply the general principle to your specific case. This is what Milarepa is in fact saying.

Siddhiratna: Is it sort of like the academic teaching as opposed to the whispered teaching?

S: Not even just academic, because it can be the scriptures themselves. One can read so many very good books on Buddhism, so many good books on Zen, it's all very profound, it's very wonderful. But, you just ask, 'How does this apply to me?', 'what do I do about this?' and there's no clue, there seems to be no way in. But the direct teachings from a lineage, that is to say from a teacher who is personally in touch with you, and can give you what you need, who can boil down the ocean of the teaching as it were, just into a few drops and give you those right on your tongue as it were, well that's what you really need. I mean quite a lot of people feel after going through a lot of perhaps very good books on Buddhism, where are they going to start, what are they going to do? It's far from clear, even books which purport to teach you what to do -These are not very clear. It may be about meditation, all about meditation, the ABC of meditation but there are all sorts of practical questions that usually these sort of books, however detailed they may appear to be when you just read them, don't actually give. They may not even explain exactly how to sit cross-legged or what to do with your tongue or your hands or how long you are to sit. You may not get all these instructions. Or what you do when you get a sore back or what you do when your nose starts itching, all sorts of questions of this sort that seriously concern the beginner, that he worries about, but you don't find them in any book of instructions, usually, about meditation. You need therefore some direct instruction.

Or even if you read something of a more philosophical nature there are all sorts of doubts that arise, all sorts of difficulties that the book itself is unable really to answer, so you need a sort of living book, you need someone who can talk with you and clear up the difficulties in accordance with your personal misunderstandings.

Bob: So you're interpreting direct teachings from a lineage just on the basis of Kalyana Mitrata and everyday ...

S: (interrupting) Well direct teachings from a lineage in principle means direct teachings in the form of actual instructions or advice to you in the light of the general principles of the Dharma given by someone who is more experienced than you, and who knows you perhaps better than you know yourself. This is really the essence of this matter within the framework of Kalyana Mitrata. [Long Pause]

You might just imagine to yourself, how would you go about it if someone asked you to write short instructions on how to ride a bicycle, even that would be quite difficult, to put down in such a way that the instructions were clear and complete and by practising them someone could actually learn to ride a bicycle. Even something as simple as that, what to speak of practising meditation or practising the Dharma or leading the spiritual life.

Then Milarepa says: "The Gurus who involve themselves In worldly life are nominal; They only bring entanglements. Small are people's faith and veneration. It is most difficult to find a man Ever relying on an accomplished Guru." Milarepa's mentioned in the preceding verse lineage so that naturally brings him to the topic of gurus. So he says, "The gurus who involve themselves in worldly life are nominal", that is to say they are only nominally gurus. But what do you think Milarepa means by involving themselves in worldly life?

In what way can a so-called guru involve himself in worldly life? Well he can become just an ecclesiastic, working hand in glove with the authorities, with the powers that be, concerned with power, pomp, prestige, and so on. He can be concerned with making money, with personal aggrandizement and so on.

_____: Did that happen a lot during Milarepa's time?

S: I think yes, judging by some chapters of the Songs of Milarepa and the Life of Milarepa, yes indeed. It's a permanent tendency. The gravitational pull is always at work, it never takes a holiday. "Small are people's faith and veneration." What do you think that means, faith and veneration for whom?

Subhuti: For the guru.

S: Well probably for true gurus. People don't have much faith and veneration, genuine faith and genuine veneration. It's something else, and that something else attaches itself to the merely nominal gurus. You have a guru who is in fact just the head of a group, so people just attach themselves to him as to a group leader. They don't have much in the way of faith and devotion, they've just got this need for security and dependence. To find someone with faith and veneration, to find a man who ever relies on an accomplished guru is difficult. It's as though Milarepa is saying people would rather have a nominal guru than a real one. Well don't forget what it all started from - them thinking more highly of Rechungpa than Milarepa because Rechungpa had gone to India! This was the mistake that they made., They were impressed by the fact that he'd been to India, so they didn't have much in the way of faith and veneration, it was something quite different that was at work. So Milarepa is saying, so to speak, that people aren't looking for a real guru, they aren't looking for someone who will really guide them on the spiritual path. They'd much rather have a nominal guru who will be the head of their religious group, and who will give a blessing on everything that they do.

Ratnaketu: They want a sort of authoritative father figure? One which will suit their needs.

S: One who will tell them authoritatively to do what they want to do. Who will sanctify it, will give it a blessing. If you read history, not even religious history but just ordinary history, secular history, time and again so- called religious people, ecclesiastics, have stepped in just to give their blessing to what ever the government or the King happened to be doing, to sanctify it, to make it all right, to give it God's blessing, even unfortunately, sometimes the Buddha's blessing. The King wants to go to war, all right, the priests and the ecclesiastics will tell him he's fighting God's war, it's a holy war, they will bless him, bless the army, bless the troops, bless the weapons and so on. The King wants to get married

again, wants to get rid of one wife, take a new one, yes, the ecclesiastics will give a blessing to that, they will find a way, they will find a reason and a justification for it. Tell the King he is doing a very holy thing.

People are very willing to compromise and temporise, and this is one of the great characteristics of Milarepa, he just never compromises. There is no compromise whatever in his life, I mean after he became the disciple of Marpa. Well, even before he didn't compromise, when he was wicked, when he was bad he was thoroughly bad, there's no misunderstanding about it.

Ratnaketu: So really you should stick to your ideals exactly, not even compromising for something that looks like it might be good.

S: Yes, what to speak of compromising with something which definitely doesn't look very good. But it's not easy, people think you're a bit eccentric or you're being difficult or being pedantic. Perhaps sometimes you will be because it's very difficult to understand what is genuine fidelity to the Ideal and just being a bit pedantic and difficult, but perhaps it's better to be pedantic and difficult rather than risk compromising the Ideal. As with a simple thing like vegetarianism - say when you go to see old friends, they know you're a vegetarian but they don't sort of bother to give you vegetarian food, they say well I didn't think you'd bother about a little thing like that, I thought Buddhists were broad minded. Do you see what I mean? You will get this sort of situation to deal with, but you have to say, "No, I'm sorry but I just can't eat it, I appreciate the fact that you've prepared this lovely steak but it is my principle that I am a vegetarian." They will think you're just being difficult, just being awkward, even narrow minded, or they will even start trying to argue with you, Well, you didn't kill it, you didn't ask for it, so even if you eat it there is no sin on your part," but you'll just going to have to say, "No, I'm just going to stick to my principles."

_____: Otherwise it weakens you.

S: Yes, otherwise next time you come, well of course they'll give you steak again and well you have accepted the situation that whenever you go there to see those friends, well you eat a steak and then other friends hear about it and then, "Well you take a steak when you go to their house, why not when you come to mine?" Or you take a steak when you go out to dinner, why not when you are at home in your community? Then you haven't got a leg to stand on by that time.

[End of side one side two]

Siddhiratna: Milarepa's not going to be a popular guru is he?

S: No, I don't suppose he is, well in the end someone is going to try and poison him, or actually to poison him, that's how he ends according to Rechungpa's biography. Not that he minds, he knows he has to die someday. But sometimes it is said, this is something I heard quite a lot in India that one speaks about gurus and disciples but if you're not careful the disciples in the end lead the guru by the nose. This is because having disciples is important to him so he has to placate them and go along with them in order to keep them. He can't take the risk of losing them by being straightforward and telling them where it's really at and what they are really like and what they are really doing. But Milarepa doesn't mind taking that risk, he's giving these so-called patrons a really good telling off.

Ratnaketu: That's why the spiritual community has got to be independent. So that it can stick to its ideals.

S: Yes, Milarepa is leading a simple enough life for him to be independent of them. If it comes to the point, he doesn't even need food. But if you are dependent upon the lay community, you have to dance according to their tune. And this is one of the reasons why I have felt that the FWBO should be economically independent, in the sense that it is not dependent entirely upon donations, otherwise there is a means of control all the time. I mean supposing, just for the sake of argument, the FWBO was dependent upon donations. So we are entirely supported by well-meaning people who liked our work but who weren't exactly Buddhists and supposing they opened the latest *Newsletter* and they didn't like Subhuti's article, so someone might make a phone call to Nagabodhi - "Well if you are going to publish that sort of article in your Newsletter, I'm afraid we can't support your newsletter or your Movement any longer." So then what sort of position are you in? But, however people dislike that sort of article we can just thumb our noses at them because we are not economically dependent on them! It's as simple as that, if they pay the piper they will expect to call the tune, inevitably. I mean I had good experience of this when I wrote my biography of Dharmapala. It was going to the press and the proof sheets happened to be on the general secretary's table and a Hindu member of the governing body saw them and happened to look at them and there was some reference to Swami Vivikananda there whom Dharmapala had known, that he did not like, that he thought reflected upon Vivikananda, so he insisted that that was removed and there was nothing that the general secretary or myself could do about it, because this Hindu was a member of the governing body of the Mahabodhi Society, which is of course ostensibly a Buddhist organisation, and there were many other Hindus on the governing body, in fact had a majority, as was mentioned in Subhuti's article. So, certain lines of my biography were censored because the Mahabodhi Society was relying greatly on the support of these Hindus who were sympathetic with Buddhism to some extent, but not completely.

And a whole editorial which I wrote for the Society once was suppressed in the same way because the governing body didn't want to upset the government of India and they thought my editorial might, and they wanted to continue to enjoy the support of the government of India, which meant of course the financial support.

So financial independency is very, very important for a spiritual movement. It has of course its own dangers because of course you may have to get involved in worldly affairs. I think that's a lesser danger, especially if you apply the principle of Right Livelihood. But lay supporters will always try to call the tune. That is why control in every sense, every sense including financial control must be in the hands of the spiritually committed and no one else. So if sometimes I'm a little insistent on certain points with regard to the FWBO it is in the light of considerable experience in the past. And I'm putting into operation lessons which I learned many years ago and most of them not in England. [Pause]

All right, next verse: "The merits of ostentatious faith And veneration are nominal, For they change and are short-lived.

Where Karma's bad prejudice is strong, It is hard to find a man Who fears and cares for nothing. It is most hard to find a man With the Three Determinations." "The merits of ostentatious faith and veneration are nominal, for they change and are short lived." What is ostentatious faith and veneration?

_____: Showy.

S: Showy. It's faith and veneration that are meant to impress, meant to impress other people. So these are merely nominal for they change and are short lived for they are not based on anything real, they are not real faith, real veneration, and when the occasion for their demonstration is passed well then they too will pass. If you only want to impress people with your faith and veneration well when there are no longer any people around then you won't bother with your faith and veneration.

I remember a very interesting example of this sort of thing. I think it was the last Summer retreat that I attended at Keffolds before going off to Cornwall. I just happened to be sitting in a corner of the garden and just observing some people who were sitting on the lawn and meditating and I remember there was one young woman in particular sitting and meditating and she didn't know that I could see her and see the others, so I was just observing and I saw there were a number of them sitting together, about five or six and there was a young man, whom she didn't at that time know, just sitting near in a sort of line next to her, his eyes were closed, her eyes were closed and after a few moments I saw her eyes open and then and back. I saw this going on for about half an hour, every few minutes she kept opening her eyes and swivelling them to the left. He was of course oblivious to all this. Clearly she was hoping he would do the same thing and their eyes would meet. But nothing happened, he was a bit of a mutt! [Laughter] He just kept on meditating and this was an example of ostentatious faith or ostentatious practice. There she was, sitting on the lawn, very upright, her hands in her lap, sitting very solidly but every few minutes her eyes would open. and you'd almost hear the click as they swivelled round left and sort of stared at him fixedly for a while but nothing happened and back she went into her meditation again, not realising that this was all visible and could be seen by other people.

So it's that sort of thing. She was sitting and meditating for sort of show. So people do lots of things like that, they chant loudly, louder than anybody else, for a show or they sit on, do a longer meditation, even though it's really hurting them like hell, and not meditating at all, but it looks good, it's impressing people. Well one could give endless examples, perhaps there is no need.

"Where Karma's bad prejudice is strong, it is hard to find a man who fears and cares for nothing." Hard to find a man who doesn't care what anybody thinks, who doesn't bother to keep up appearances, who doesn't mind being misunderstood. This is a great feature of the Vajrayana, especially in its later phases, the sort of crazy yogis, the really unconventional ones, who don't mind what anybody else thinks about them, who do all sorts of weird, crazy things - well they seem weird and they seem crazy but there is usually some sort of meaning and some purpose in them. But it's almost a subtle fetter to be attached to what other people think about you, or to wish that other people should think that you are a good religious person, that you are really on the spiritual path. It's a subtle fetter to have that sort of desire.

Siddhiratna It sounds a bit like Han Shan doesn't it?

S: Yes. Then Milarepa says it is most hard to find a man with the Three Determinations, and there is a note about those at the end, the Three Determinations. The translator himself isn't sure what they are but he says presumably these Three Determinations are *1) to determine to rest ones mind on the Dharma, to rest Dharma on poverty and to rest poverty on death.* Well that is quite striking isn't it, so how does one determine to rest one's mind on the Dharma? That's probably the most obvious of the three. One determines to have no other real interest than the Dharma, to take refuge only in the Dharma, to commit oneself fully to the Dharma and to rest the Dharma on poverty. How does one rest the Dharma on

poverty?

Ratnaketu: Giving up everything.

S: Giving up everything for the sake of the Dharma. Not letting worldly possessions and the pursuit of worldly goods get in one's way in the most literal and rigorous manner. And then resting poverty on death, how does one rest poverty on death?

Subhuti: The realisation that everything's impermanent.

S: Everything's impermanent, so what's the use of accumulating possessions anyway. So to determine to rest one's mind on the Dharma, to rest Dharma on poverty and to rest poverty on death. "It's most hard to find a man with these Three Determinations." So this verse speaking about the merits of ostentatious faith and veneration being nominal don't forget is addressed to these same patrons. The veneration that they are showing to Milarepa is just nominal, they're not really devoted. They brought those offerings for Rechungpa and when they found that Rechungpa wasn't there, they just hid them away. They didn't bring anything for Milarepa, or brought perhaps very little for Milarepa. It's a bit like the case I mentioned of the French Buddhist nun in Kalimpong who used to go along to her gurus and make the three prostrations and as she was getting up from her knees she'd start telling them what to do. So that wasn't real faith or real veneration.

So it's very easy to find lay people who keep up the externals of religion, keep up the externals of religious observance including showing respect to gurus and so on, but it's just ostentatious, it's just an outward show. Perhaps they just see the guru as just a sort of group leader or something of that sort.

Ratnaketu: The Dharma becomes an ornament to oneself.

S: Yes, you find it even among Tibetans, I mean one of the things I noticed was that among rich, aristocratic Tibetans, thangkas became a drawing room ornament. They were beautifully mounted in brocade and with roller ends of silver and gold, and they became a drawing room ornament.

All right I think I'll do one more verse and then conclude because we have taken in quite a lot of material and this one may require a bit of discussion.

"The small temple on the outskirts Of a town is but nominal.

Though people call it "Temple," It is really part of "town."

Always there is great craving for Amusement and distraction. It is most hard to find a man Staying long in hermitages." So what sort of situation do you think Milarepa has in mind here? The small temple on the outskirts of the town. Though people call it "Temple" it's really a part of "town", it's only nominally a temple. We don't have much of this sort of thing in England do we? I mean well in Protestant Christian countries anyway. But you find this, you easily find it in India, I mean among Hindus and also among Buddhists. On the outskirts of a town there is a temple and maybe there is a monk or someone of that sort, a holy man, looking after it. But what is it really, it's just a place where the lay people

come and make their offerings and pray for worldly blessings, where they come to talk and gossip, it isn't really a spiritual centre at all, not really a temple, not really a monastery, certainly not a hermitage. It's simply a part of the social and cultural life of the town.

In other words the gravitational pull has done its work. Sometimes of course the town creeps inside the temple. I remember when I was in Italy some years ago and visited some big cathedrals, but inside they were just like religious supermarkets. I mean there were so many stalls and so many counters, some of them manned by monks in some cases, and so many cash registers ringing away. I remember the Cathedral of Padua which is connected with Saint Anthony of Padua who worked various miracles, and there's an enormous sort of supermarket in the cloisters, I think it was, with dozens of monks behind the counters in their brown, I think it was Franciscan habits and there were Saint Anthony of Padua T-shirts, and Anthony of Padua combs and Anthony of Padua fountain pens and Anthony of Padua shaving mugs and everything. Everything that you get in *Woolworths* or *Marks and Spencers* you got there, it was just the same except that it was stamped with Saint Anthony of Padua. So commerce had really invaded that place, the town had really invaded that particular temple or rather cathedral. So this is the sort of thing that happens, the temple becomes a sort of social centre.

Ray: How does this correspond between our centres and those sort of social attractions?

S: It depends what you mean by social attractions.

Ray: Well, in the sense of a beginner's night, when beginners come along for the first time, I mean that's virtually what it is.

S: Well I'm not so sure about that because what do they come along for? They come along for say a talk about Dharma presumably, they come along just to experiment with meditation, so even though there is a social element in a sense that you have a cup of tea and a biscuit together, but the main purpose however sort of attenuated, however sort of muted, is spiritual. I would say that it would become a sort of social centre if you just had socials, you just had dances for instance, without any thought of the Dharma or introducing the Dharma element, like they have in church halls for instance, which often do just become social centres. But even so, even that limited social aspect we have to watch because it can grow and people can come more for the sake of the tea and buns than for the talk on Dharma or for the experimental meditation. One has to watch all the time to see that that social element is really subserving the Dharmic purpose.

Ray: But haven't you said somewhere before that it's quite important to give an atmosphere of a positive group.

S: This is true, but what is the positive group, what makes the positive group possible? I don't think you can have a positive group for very long without some sustaining spiritual principle, even though it may be in the background on certain occasions. So you introduce people to the positive group and yes, we do have a positive group, but what makes the positive group tick is the spiritual principle behind it so sooner or later people have to understand that and realise that and accept that, that you can't just have a positive group.

Ratnaketu: Especially once people walk into the shrine room, then you are on the spiritual community's grounds.

S: Yes, they know at least that there's a shrine or shrines on the premises. Perhaps they've seen them, so even though they are just having a biscuit and a cup of tea they will realise, if they've any intelligence at all, that there is more to it than that.

Ray: Do you think it's acceptable sometimes say to be hard on someone who's been coming for a long time and who doesn't get the idea that there is a spiritual basis to what's happening?

S: I think they would have to be really obtuse not to. Perhaps I underestimate their lack of intelligence. [Laughter] Well maybe they are so used to having the cross and the holy water in the background and just carrying on with their mundane activities in the foreground, perhaps they're used to that sort of situation in which case we must make it clear that our shrine is not just nominal, the Buddha image is not just nominal, we really do take these things very seriously, you can't be a nominal Buddhist, well not in the FWBO anyway.

This is one of the things really why I like to see in the shrine rooms only meditation and pujas and not other activities, so it's really definitely that even if you are chatting outside quite comfortably with a cup of tea, once you walk through those doors ...

S: Right, definitely a demarcated area, I think this is necessary. So if one has for instance, a co-op meeting, well a co-op meeting is connected obviously with the principle of Right Livelihood. Right Livelihood is part of the Eightfold Path. This should be made explicit, or referred to, or people should be reminded of this in some way or other from time to time so that they never just think they are working in a co-op, forgetting that it's an application of the Right Livelihood situation, forgetting that Right Livelihood is part of the Eightfold Path, and forgetting that the Eightfold Path is the Path to Enlightenment. It's so easy to get peripherally involved or to lose sight of the overall context. It's very easy for the spiritual life to be sort of... I won't say just secularised, but made worldly - to take a worldly form, even a worldly character.

_____: Do you think that that's because there's a need in most religions to make it as popular as possible to satisfy the group requirements?

S: Yes, that's true, well clearly every religion, to use that term, wants to have as many followers as possible. If you take it at its best, it believes it has the truth, it believes it has something useful and necessary for humanity, so it's only necessary that it should try to share it with as many people as possible. But sometimes people become carried away for their desire for numbers, that's when the group element really does enter in, they want to have a big group, a powerful group, so they don't really have a clear conception of the spiritual community and sometimes they'll go to any lengths to swell their numbers, use any sort of means. I've seen this in India among Christian missionaries - they'll bribe people to become Christians. Quite cynically they'll say, "Ah yes, we know they're not sincere, but their children will be brought up as real Christians. We'll see to that because they'll go to Christian schools. etc."

So on the one hand, say in the case of the FWBO one does want as many people as possible genuinely to come in, but one doesn't want just to have a bigger positive group for the sake of having a bigger positive group. In fact you won't have - you won't even have a positive group in the long run, because that spiritual element will have been so diluted that group influences will take over. [Pause]

So, "The small temple on the outskirts of the town is but nominal, though people call it "Temple" it is but really part of "town." Though people call it religion it is really part of samsara. There are so many extensions and applications of that. So one has to be very very careful that a spiritual movement doesn't become in fact just a worldly movement. That happens then people start to think of numbers and power and prestige and what other people think. Always there is great craving for amusement and distraction and people will try to find that in the temple. They say, "Well all these old meditations we have, they are really dull, lets jazz it all up a bit. Let's have a dance for young people, Let's have a disco night," etc., etc. Well this is what many churches are doing; this is their policy, it hasn't worked very well I think.

Subhuti: Piyasilo was saying this was happening in Buddhist temples in Malaysia.

S: Oh dear! ... mm. So, "It is most hard to find a man staying long in hermitages." People prefer, or even some monks and priests prefer, a little temple in the town, it's a much more attractive proposition with visiting layfolk and with wealthy patrons with whom you can have a little gossip, or with whom you can go out, and so on. This is a very common pattern, obviously.

Ray: Integrity is important.

S: Yes, indeed. Any further questions on what we've done this afternoon? We've covered quite a bit of ground actually in one way and another.

_____: Would you say this is a fairly comprehensive list of the kind of difficulties and distractions that you're likely to encounter?

S: I think it is. I mean Milarepa is talking to these patrons and from the highest level almost, so to speak, to the lowest he is insisting on genuineness and integrity and the real thing, and not just going through the motions. It's all a sort of extended commentary on the second fetter and how to break it and not become enslaved by it, one could say that. The fetter of purely external precepts and religious observances. You could even say that culture is the greatest friend of religion and also its greatest enemy.

Siddhiratna: How does it become its greatest friend?

S: Well for instance, take painting, take the arts, the visual arts, well you use the visual arts or you employ the visual arts to beautify your religion, your religious buildings, and to inspire people and attract people. But before you know where you are these things have become an end in themselves and people are coming to see the beautiful paintings and admire the skill of the painter, and they're insensitive to the spiritual message or spiritual significance. Do you see what I mean? Well we find this in England, I mean lots of people go to beautiful old cathedrals but most go to admire the architecture don't they? It's the same to some extent with Buddhist temples in the East.

Siddhiratna: It's quite tricky isn't it when you bring in the notion of indirect methods as well. You do begin to blur the lines.

S: Yes, even say with something like yoga which you could say was a bit of an indirect method. Well you could have people coming along to yoga classes who never get interested in the Dharma even though you might have started the yoga classes partly as a means of attracting people

to the Dharma. Sometimes it doesn't work like that, they remain firmly with the yoga, they only go as far as that. We certainly found that with karate classes at Pundarika didn't we; we had dozens of people coming to them but hardly one ever seemed to have thought of becoming interested in meditation.

Siddhiratna: It's curious isn't it. I think you said something, or I'd read something which said wherever Buddhism goes, there goes culture too.

S: Well that is true because culture does have a refining influence on the emotions and that does really help from the point of view of spiritual development, but only too quickly that all can become an end in itself. Not that one has to therefore discard the culture, but at every step make sure the culture is really being used as an expression, as a means and is not becoming an end in itself. It just requires constant watchfulness.

For instance you could develop Sukhavati into a real showplace, magnificent images and magnificent frescoes and so much so that you might think, "It's a pity to use the place because you might damage the images or the frescoes! So we'll just keep it and there could be a stream of visitors to London. It could become one of the sights of London, the Sukhavati Buddhist temple and you could probably live on the proceeds, and have half a dozen caretakers living there and people touching up the frescoes." So the significance of the place would have become purely cultural. No one would be meditating there, there would be no Dharma teaching there, there would just be a magnificent temple in East London which hundreds of people would visit every day. Well this has happened in many parts of the East, many of the temples are being used in this sort of way. They've become tourist attractions. The temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok - even Bodhgaya to a great extent is a tourist attraction. A lot of people who go there are not Buddhist and who do not go there with particularly devotional feelings. It's one of the sights on the tourist circuit in Northern India. Let's leave it there for today.

[End of day five, tape two - day six tape one]

S: I think we are right in the middle of Milarepa's rather strong exhortation to the patrons, the lay supporters. It's the verse near the bottom of page 599. In the previous verse Milarepa spoke about the small temple on the outskirts of a town being just nominal, it's really just part of the town. In this verse he says: "The head of a restrained young monk is stiff and hard like stone. Though people call him "disciplined," He is but acting, in a play. It is hard to find a man with perseverance, It is hard to find another Observing the strict priestly rules."

So the head of a restrained young monk is stiff and hard like stone. What do you think that means?

Ray: What we would call blocked!

S: Blocked? Mmm, you could say, but why should he be blocked?

_____: Not letting his negative energies out. Could that be what it means?

Johnny: He's trying to be spiritual.

S: He's trying, yes. He's stiff presumably with tension because Milarepa does say that he's a restrained young monk. He is in some way or to some extent making a genuine effort but perhaps he is thinking too much in terms of keeping up appearances. He's thinking too much in terms of looking like a monk rather than being like a monk. So, 'The head of a restrained young monk is stiff and hard like stone. Though people call him "disciplined", he is but acting in a play.' It is not clear from this whether in the terms of the previous verses his conduct is feigned or artificial. You remember that distinction? But in either case it seems he is 'But acting in a play. It is hard to find a man with perseverance, it is hard to find another observing the strict priestly rules.' So again in a way Milarepa is concerned with keeping up appearances. One may be keeping up appearances in a sense with the best of motives, but that is not enough. He is only acting. It isn't a real observance.

Sometimes people have this sense of or consciousness that they're acting a part. This is the way in which Milarepa describes the restrained young monk, that he is only acting in a play. So when, or under what sort of circumstances does one have this sort of feeling that one is only acting, it isn't real?

_____ : When there is no sort of emotional strength behind the action.

S: Yes. No emotional strength. So the young monk maybe be genuinely observing the rules but perhaps has got no feeling for the spiritual life. This is perhaps the sort of situation that Milarepa is referring to. Anyway that's obvious enough. No need to dwell on that. Then in the next verse he says:- "The handsome belles of Nya Non As patrons are but nominal, For they are deceivers and seducers. Poor and low is woman's Comprehension. Hard indeed is it to find a patron To serve one and make all the offerings." I Suppose everyone knows what a belle is with an 'e' on the end. It's another French word for you Ratnaketu (laughter). You learn all sorts of things on study retreats don't you. So, 'The handsome belles of Nya Non as patrons are but nominal for they are deceivers and seducers.' What sort of situation do you think Milarepa has got in mind?

Ray: Perhaps they haven't got any real interest in the Dharma and perhaps they are just attracted to him as a...

S: Yes, well it is well known in all Buddhist countries that lay people after all go to the temples, go to the monasteries, make offerings to the monks and very often young women go not so much out of faith in the Dharma or faith in particular monks, especially the elderly monks but because perhaps they have been attracted by one or another of the young monks. So they might go along and make offerings, but the purpose of their visit is not really to make an offering, it is just to have a little chat with a particular monk. This is quite often the case. I remember a Burmese monk telling me a story about that. I met a Burmese monk in Bombay many years ago, in the early '50s, and he was an exceptionally good looking young monk - he must have been about 24 or 25 - and he told me that a short while before when he was in Burma, he had been living in a temple, a monastery that is, and every day an old woman used to come along and make offerings. That is to say bring him his daily food and so on. After a while he said her young daughter started accompanying her. So this went on for some weeks and after a while again the daughter used to come without the old mother. Then after a few more weeks had passed the young daughter sort of had a conversation with him and said that she had fallen in love with him and her mother had quite a bit of property. She was the only child. What about disrobing and what about the two of them getting married and settling down. They could lead a very happy and comfortable life. He wouldn't have to work as the

property was enough to support them both or support all three of them. So would he please consider the proposition (laughter).

So he said that he told the girl all right, I shall think about it but you'd better come with your mother in future. So they both came along, the next day and he said that he told them that he had thought it over and had decided no, he wanted to be a monk. He didn't want to disrobe and get married. So he said the girl was very disappointed but anyway she took it quite well and that was that and shortly afterwards he thought he'd better leave that particular temple and eventually he'd come to Bombay. Not the very best of places one would have come I would have thought but anyway he came to Bombay. So in this instance the girl acted relatively straightforwardly and honestly but some of them aren't like that and it's probably that kind of woman that Milarepa has in mind when he says, 'The handsome belles of Nya Non as patrons are but nominal, for they are deceivers and seducers,' . Under pretence of devotion they approach the monks and try to deceive them and seduce them.

Then of course he makes a statement which some people might regard as an over generalisation that, 'Poor and low is woman's comprehension.' What do you think he means by that? Bear in mind the sort of women that he's talking about. It's as though he's suggesting that they don't have an appreciation of the spiritual life. Their aim is not to support and help and co-operate with men who are leading it but only to pursue their own interests. What they are unable to comprehend Milarepa is saying is that there are at least some men who have a higher ideal than simply self-indulgent pleasure or home and family life and success in the world. Sometimes they just can't understand that. So 'Hard indeed is it to find a patron to serve one and make all the offerings.' He's speaking no doubt not only about women patrons but men patrons too. It's very difficult to find one who is genuine. Who really wishes to support one in one's spiritual life, to look after one and make all the offerings.

_____ : suppose one reason it's hard is if they really understood what it's all about they would probably not be a patron, but perhaps be doing it themselves.

S: Becoming monks themselves, yes. So this is one of the reasons why I feel that the traditional distinction between the monk and the layman, if unduly insisted upon, so to speak, becomes quite unfeasible because the situation in some Buddhist countries is that you've got people supporting others who are leading the spiritual life but not making any real effort to lead it themselves. And on the other hand if you don't have a real understanding of what the spiritual life is about you can't really support others who are leading the spiritual life. Really you can support others leading the spiritual life only if you are leading it yourself. If you don't understand in what the spiritual life consists and if you're not really able to support others who are leading the spiritual life, you'll be thinking of the spiritual life in terms other than it truly is. You'll be in the end in a very extreme case, virtually paying somebody else to lead your spiritual life for you. Or you'll be trying to gain some sort of worldly advantage from somebody else's leading of the spiritual life. For instance as when the lay people in Buddhist countries provide monks with the necessities of life in the hope that merit will thereby accrue to them and as a result of that merit they will increase in worldly prosperity.

It does seem that in the Buddha's day there was much less distinction between the lay followers and the monk followers than afterwards became the case. So it really boils down to this, that there really can't be a lay Buddhist in the old fashioned sense. I think I've found in the East that the genuine lay Buddhists are very rare, because if you are really genuine in your Buddhism as a layman, the chances are that you are inclined to the monastic life yourself. Perhaps the only thing that would hold you back being having to look after say aged parents who might not be able to survive without you.

The question which arises is why should those who do not wish to lead a spiritual life themselves, why should they support those who do wish to lead a spiritual life. The only reason in almost all cases is that they do so in order to obtain some worldly advantage. So their support in a sense cannot be a true support. Very rarely is the monk being supported simply because he is leading a spiritual life. He is being supported for the sake of some by-product of that spiritual life which will be of advantage to the lay person. In Tibet in the case of not only the monks but the high ranking Lamas, they are often supported for the sake of blessings and material prosperity and for the sake of Tantric ceremonies for the protection of the crops from hail and all that sort of thing.

So it is as though throughout the ages there has been this as it were temptation for Buddhist monks to ensure support by rendering people in fact secular services of one kind or another. Do you see what I mean? So that you very rarely get a situation in which the monks are actually supported because they are leading a spiritual life. They are usually supported because they are able to render some benefit or other of a material nature to the community. So there is always a sort of pressure from the community for them to spend perhaps more time fulfilling that particular function than getting on with their spiritual life itself. The popular monk is the monk who spends a lot of time with the lay people usually, or is able to bless the lay people in one way or another, is able to render them some worldly advantage. So I think this is one of the reasons why we shouldn't have a hard and fast distinction between the monk and the layman. I mean the man who gets on with the spiritual life, allegedly, and the other who supports him while he's getting on with the spiritual life.

So I think, as in the case of the Western Buddhist Order, the distinction between monk and layman must ultimately break. That is to say monk and Buddhist layman, I don't mean monk and ordinary layman, monk and Buddhist layman must eventually break down. You have someone who is, so to speak, neither monk nor layman. He's not a monk in the sense that he does work, and traditionally Buddhist monks don't work and he is not a layman because traditionally Buddhist laymen don't take the spiritual life very seriously themselves. So you have the advantage of having the worst of both worlds! (laughter)

Siddhiratna: The person who's working, Bhante, is also, you said slightly earlier, that one's working to support the other but he is not just merely working, he is actually practising the spiritual life as well isn't he?

S: The one who is working?

Siddhiratna: Yes.

S: No, in most Buddhist countries it doesn't work out like that.

Siddhiratna: I was thinking in the West.

S: Oh, in the West. Well you can only make work a part of your spiritual life if you see work in terms of Right Livelihood. If you do that, well then yes work can be integrated with the spiritual life. The difficulty of course is that most ordinary lay people are not very willing to observe

the principles of Right Livelihood. It's only someone who takes the spiritual life really seriously who is willing to observe the principles of Right Livelihood. In most Buddhist countries the principles of Right Livelihood are not really very well observed. But people think they can make it all right by donating some of their ill gotten gains to the monks and supporting them.

Siddhiratna: It sounds a bit like conscience money.

S: Yes, except that often they have no consciences. A friend of mine went to Honolulu some years ago and found that all the places of entertainment, night clubs and so on, were owned by a wealthy Chinese Buddhist who was president of all the local Buddhist societies. He was very shocked. It isn't easy to practise Right Livelihood strictly, and you would have to be really very committed to the spiritual life to want to do that. It's a sort of commitment that you don't find among the average nominal Buddhist.

Siddhiratna: I've got a feeling Bhante that it's actually quite hard to practice Right Livelihood and make a profit.

S: Well we shall have to see. (Laughter). I think though my impression is through reading the minutes I get, that it's not so much the Right Livelihood itself that tends to diminish profits, so much as lack of efficiency and proper organisation and so on..

Ratnaketu: Willingness to really give yourself to that situation sometimes as well.

S: Sometimes that as well, but probably more often it's lack of know how and thoroughness and proper planning, proper management and all the rest of it, those sort of things. One gets the impression that very often in co-ops people work very hard indeed, that their labour is not made sufficiently intelligently use of.

Also, if one if thinking in terms of Right livelihood, it's not just Right Livelihood. I mean, someone who is say working in a co-op also needs to keep up his meditation. It isn't a question of if you practice Right Livelihood that's enough by itself. It isn't. It's very helpful but it's not an all sufficient means of spiritual development. So if you take Right Livelihood seriously, and your spiritual life seriously, well that'll only take you out of the ranks of ordinary, traditional type of Buddhist layman. But you won't be exactly a monk because you are working and traditionally monks don't work except of course Zen monks and some monks in China and Tibet perhaps, but the more classical Indian ideal of a monk is that he is supported by the lay community. That he does not work. So I think that particular pattern has broken down to some extent in the East with the Chinese and Japanese monks and Zen monks in particular, though it certainly hasn't broken down really in the Theravada countries but I think it has broken down so far as we are concerned.

Anyway, I'm afraid Milarepa goes on to say still harder things about the patrons. He says: 'The faiths of evil-doers are in their mouths; The faiths of you patrons are in your private parts. I, the Yogi, in my heart have faith.' He's talking about faith. So what does he mean by saying, 'The faiths of evil-doers are in their mouths?'

Siddhiratna: They're paying lip service.

S: Presumably he is speaking about a country or a community or a society where everybody is Buddhist, which is ridiculous. Everybody is a

nominal Buddhist. Everybody is supposed to be a Buddhist. So he says, 'The faiths of evil-doers are in their mouths.' I mean these people are supposed to be Buddhists. They say that they're Buddhist, maybe they even make offerings, but they have no real faith. Their faiths are in their mouths. Their profession of Buddhism is purely verbal. This is what he is saying and unfortunately you do find that situation in many Buddhist countries. So how do you think that situation has come about?

Ratnaketu: Because if you are born a Buddhist and you grow up and you're brought up to be a Buddhist just as you are brought up to be a human being, or something like this, you don't have to do anything, you are already a Buddhist.

S: So the question arises, can you be born a Buddhist? This is what is not sufficiently realised, that you're not a Buddhist just because you're born into a Buddhist family. You have to start afresh. You grow up with the opportunity of contact with Buddhism, but that doesn't make you a Buddhist. So this is not sufficiently stressed because Buddhism has become a sort of form of the group culture. It's part of your cultural heritage. You are born into a Buddhist family, and a Buddhist country, so you are a Buddhist. Almost regardless of what you do. So, 'The faiths of evil-doers are in their mouths.' In a Buddhist country even a thief, even a murderer considers himself a Buddhist. There is an interesting thing arisen in an interesting discussion or correspondence arisen in the papers, at least in *The Times* recently. It has been discovered that amongst prisoners in jails, a far higher percentage are Catholics than Catholics constitute of the population. I don't know what the respective percentages are but supposing the percentage of Catholics of the population is, say 10%.

_____ : 11%.

S: 11%, but the percentage of Catholics with regards the prison population is..

_____ : 25%

S: Is 25%. Yes, so that tends to show that their Catholicism is very nominal indeed. But it also tends to show that there is a greater proportion of nominal Catholics than, say, of nominal Protestants or nominal Jews. So the question has been raised, why is there such a high percentage of Catholics in the prison population? So some Catholics have tried to argue that, well, the Catholic Church is for the sake of the wicked. It is especially meant to help the wicked and the sinners and not the righteous. But you've had these people with you since birth, you've baptised them, you've taught them in your schools in many cases, but what happens to them? A few Catholic priests have been sort of openminded enough to suggest that maybe we haven't taught them Catholicism in the right sort of way, but no-one seems to have considered that Catholicism itself might be the cause of the trouble. That it tends to make criminals howsoever taught.

So the other day I mentioned that culture is the near enemy of the Dharma. So one can see it in this sort of instance. When the whole population of the country considers itself as being Buddhist, so here that means Buddhism has become just part of, or form of, the national culture. You participate in it or belong to it or it belongs to you simply by virtue of your birth. You have lost sight of the fact that Buddhism is a spiritual path which you must follow as an individual, as the result of your individual commitment. I mean I have even heard people say to me in India that, well, they're Buddhist by birth, Buddhism is in their blood. How can Buddhism be in your blood? It's ridiculous. The way some of them speak it's as though if you were to take a Buddhist baby away from its parents at birth and, say, brought it up in some foreign country, when it will start

speaking it will start speaking Pali. (Laughter). That is almost the suggestion.

Bob: Is there no sense in which you could argue that one might somehow have chosen to be born into a Buddhist family because of the attraction.

S: It is argued like that but actually one doesn't see much evidence of it. In any case the only thing one can say is that one has chosen to be reborn into circumstances or in a situation where the Dharma is known, where it is possible, but I can't believe that the entire population of Buddhist countries has been born there as a result of that sort of choice, because being provided with the opportunity they don't seem to bother about taking advantage of it. Maybe in some cases that is so but the majority just seem happy to be there, be surrounded by Buddhist culture and that is enough, they seem to feel.

Ratnaketu: I suppose it would take quite an effort to actually cause yourself to be born in a particular situation. In a situation where there is Buddhism, so if you really did do that then you would, if you've got the determination and energy to do that then you would take it up.

S: No doubt there are some genuine Buddhists. I was almost going to say even in Buddhist countries but perhaps one shouldn't be quite as cynical as that - or perhaps quite so honest as that! (Laughter). No doubt there are Buddhists born in Buddhist countries who from a very early age take the Dharma very seriously indeed. Like Anagarika Dharmapala. Perhaps - we don't know - but perhaps some of them did aspire to be reborn in a Buddhist country.

Because of that aspiration, having been reborn in a Buddhist country they take full advantage of whatever facilities are available. But one certainly can't believe that the majority of inhabitants of a Buddhist country have been reborn in that country because they desired to lead a good Buddhist life. They show very little sign of that.

Ray: In some Buddhist societies you get, say, the eldest son becoming a monk don't you. As if that seemed to be a way round it. I was thinking in those early societies they would have seen it as difficult financially, economically, to

S: Well in many Buddhist countries it has become the thing to do. It's a sign of respectability that the family has a son who is a monk. Just say as among Irish Catholics, they like to have at least one priest in the family, don't they, at least one of the sons should become a priest.

Ray: I would have thought originally, it did actually serve a useful purpose.

S: Well you can't send anybody, you can't just give a son to the monastery really. It has to be the result of his own individual aspiration. You can encourage and you can even train and educate him, but a father who has not himself decided to lead a spiritual life is unlikely to influence his son in that direction, I mean for purely spiritual reasons. If he does encourage the son it is more likely to be for reasons of family prestige or some kind of cultural reason.

I remember Sinhalese Bhikkus talking to me about this and some of them felt very resentful that they had been handed over to the Sangha by

their parents. One of them, I remember, said to me, "Well, here's my parents staying at home, living in the world, having a good time, whereas I have to live in the monastery and earn merit for them by giving up all those pleasures." He strongly resented this. Almost as though he felt he was being exploited. And some of the monks, I know, would have left the robes, but the main reason why they didn't was for fear of upsetting their parents. Their parents would be so disappointed and feel so let down and be so angry if they dared to leave the order.

So this is the sort of development that one does get in Buddhist countries, where Buddhism becomes, so to speak, the national religion and everybody considers himself as a Buddhist simply by virtue of being born in that country. It's just the same with Christianity, except that now perhaps most people in the so-called Christian countries don't consider themselves really as Christians anymore, and some of them actually say so. It is perhaps significant that far fewer people now, when they get married, marry in church, or have their children baptised. The figures for baptism have dropped remarkably over the last twenty years. I think a third of the population, or a third of the babies being born each year, are not being baptised, which is a remarkable change.

But anyway, Milarepa is concerned with the merely nominally Buddhist layman, who just makes offerings to the monks occasionally, for not particularly spiritual reasons. He says, 'The faiths of evil-doers are in their mouths.' Such people who break the precepts, who make no serious effort to practise the Dharma, but who profess to be Buddhist, profess to be lay supporters, their faiths are just in their mouths. Then of course, coming even closer to home, as it were, he says, 'The faiths of you patrons are in your private parts.' What do you think he means by that? A strange thing to say.

_____: A reference back to the belles, perhaps?

S: Perhaps it is.

Siddhiratna: Is it that their faith is actually in their sons, and therefore in their ownership and their possessions etc. - the continuation of their wealth iandtheir family.

S: Could be.

_____: Their faith is just desiring things, just craving things.

S: Mmm, but if you regard that as parallel with the previous line, 'The faiths of evil-doers are in their mouths.', their Buddhism is purely verbal. So, 'The faiths of you patrons are in your private parts', If you regard that as a palace, as though your Buddhism is purely in your sexual activity. It's almost as though he is saying something like that. But how would that be possible? Perhaps he means that sexual activity is for you the most important thing. That's what you are really committed to, that's what you really believe in, that's what you really have faith in, that's where your mind, that's where your heart really is. To what extent do you think that this could be true? It sounds a very drastic sort of thing to say, it strips the coverings off all sort of decent evasions. But, yes, he probably really is saying that the most important thing in life for you is not the Buddha, not the Dharma, not the Sangha, not the spiritual life, not the making of offerings. The most important thing in life for you is simply sex. Do

you think this is true of a lot of people?

Ratnaketu: What do you spend most of your mental activity thinking about?

S: That is what is at the centre of your mandala. Do you think this is true? Of at least some people? This is what sometimes I refer to as the X factor. Although it is called an X factor, or I call it an X factor because it is the unacknowledged factor, the factor that is not openly named. But nonetheless it does occupy a very important place in most people's lives. But it isn't openly taken into account, very often. So Milarepa is stripping the veils off all the pretences. He is saying bluntly that, 'The faiths of you patrons are in your private parts.' All you think about is sex, that is the most important thing for you. So perhaps it is, at least for some of them. Even perhaps when they go to the temple that is what they are really thinking about. Maybe the young women, they are not really interested in the Dharma, want to have a look at the young monks. Maybe the young men are not very interested really, it is an opportunity of having a look at the young women who are visiting the temple. You have this sort of thing I suppose in all religions. [Pause]

Subhuti: I suppose it could be said to mean you are just sort of living a purely instinctual animal-like life. There is no greater significance than that.

S: Yes. And of course if you don't agree well everybody is a Buddhist to some extent, everybody is really on the spiritual path. If you insist well no, there are some people who are not, well then of course you are often described as an elitist. You are not supposed, these days it seems, to make these sort of distinctions. You are not supposed to think some people might be on the spiritual path and others are not on it.

Milarepa is really taking them to task. Let's go on. "When a rock grows old Grime encrusts its face; When a stream grows old Wrinkles cover its bed. When a tree grows old Its leaves soon fall off. When a hermitage grows old Water and plantains disappear. When a yogi ages, his Experience And his Realisation dimmer grow. When patrons grow old Their faith soon wears out." Do you think this is correct? For instance, take first of all, When a yogi ages, his Experience and his Realisation dimmer grow.' Do you think this is true? What does ages mean? Does the concept of ageing really apply to a yogi as such? One would have thought not.

Ray: When he wearies of.....

S: Mmm. When he himself wearies of his yoga, ages as a yogi, not as an individual, not as a human being. What about, 'When a hermitage grows old, water and plantains disappear.' That is the significance of the water and plantains?

_____: Not being tended, looked after?

S: Not being tended, not looked after, when there is nobody there. The spring becomes perhaps hidden with earth and undergrowth. The plantain trees which would have supplied the hermit with his food are not renewed - they have to be transplanted every year by the way. The other comparisons are obvious. So in the same way 'When patrons grow old their faith soon wears out.' In what sense does a patron grow old? If

one takes it literally, as people get older very often they become more pious, in a way, in a sense.

_____: They are not being inspired?

S: They are not being inspired. Perhaps Milarepa is simply addressing these people. Perhaps they are mainly old. Perhaps he is saying, earlier on, some years ago, when you were young, you did have some faith and devotion, but now it has all gone. You are old, your faith has worn out very soon.

Ratnaketu: Perhaps when you have lived a long time around the Dharma, been around Buddhism for a long time, you have got used to it.

S: Yes, I think this is a great danger, to become used to Buddhism. I think this is what has happened in many Buddhist countries. People have got used to Buddhism. It has been around for so many hundreds of years. People are so used to seeing temples and images and thangkas and monks. They think that they are in the midst of Buddhism, that they are surrounded by Buddhism. They think that they are Buddhists. Even though they are not practising the Dharma in any way. Or perhaps, if at all, only in the most formal manner, the most external manner.

That danger is likely to occur whenever you are surrounded by the external manifestations of the Dharma. You can think you are a Buddhist because your room is decorated with Buddhist posters and you've got Buddhist books on the bookshelf. You have even got a rosary and a little image. If you are not careful, that's that, that's it. But this is one of the reasons why I suggested some time ago that we did not sell or exhibit or use as decorations the Tantric posters that were being put out. The Tantric posters especially of yab yum deities

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represents a very high stage of Vajrayana practise. In fact they were just being used as decorations. They are often used as decorations by people who have no real interest in the Dharma. And people misunderstand completely. You often see that people think the best place to put a yab yum figures of the Buddha is over the double bed because it is much the same sort of thing, so they have completely misunderstood.

Therefore I said that in all those rooms in the centre where the public had access, we should just have if at all, thangkas just representing the Buddha, not either the yab yum Buddha figure or Tantric divinities with many heads and arms and feet which could not but be misunderstood. So it is very easy to surround yourself with all sorts of religious trinkets and objects of art. Objets d'art - another French expression! (laughter). And you think that if you are provided with that that you are a Buddhist.

Anyway, let's go on. He is still having a go at the patrons.

"Some patrons are like peacocks Who pretend and swagger. Some patrons are like parrots Gossiping and gabbling. Some patrons are like cows - They think you are a calf or a goat."

So, 'Some patrons are like peacocks who pretend and swagger.' Whatsort of patron would be like this? You can really meet these people in the East - the wealthy, pious Buddhists, the Buddhists who have made a lot of money by dubious means, and who make donations to temples and

who figure prominently on lists of donors and who are members of managing committees of temples and things like that. They really do swagger around, they really do think that they are good Buddhists, they really do think that it's they who keep Buddhism going. I can just picture them in my mind's eye. They are usually fat, about fifty or sixty, or even seventy and very well dressed and very pompous and overbearing, and they deliver little sermons and lectures from public platforms, usually telling you how much they've done for Buddhism and what a wonderful thing Buddhism is and how it supports the government and so on and every Buddhist should be a good citizen. This is the sort of thing you get. 'Some patrons are like peacocks who pretend and swagger.'

'Some patrons are like parrots: gossiping and gabbling.' What sort of patron do you think is meant here? Well perhaps they come to the temple and use it just for social purposes, just to meet their friends, exchange the latest news, and who are perhaps busy with all sorts of Buddhist gossip. I still have some old friends I'm afraid in different parts of the world, even in London - if I happen to meet them, their idea of a discussion about Buddhism is just the latest organisational gossip, about how so and so was turned down for the secretaryship of such and such a Buddhist group, and how so and so took over instead, but this is the extent of their Buddhist discussion - their Buddhist conversations. So, 'Some patrons are like parrots gossiping and gabbling.'

'Some patrons are like cows - they think you a calf or goat.' What does this mean?

Ratnaketu: To mother, look after.

S: They think that they are keeping you going. Well, in a sense they are because they are providing you with food and clothing, but they that you are totally dependent upon them, just as the calf is totally dependent upon the Cow. So they don't simply look after you, they take you over. They think that because you are dependent on them economically, therefore you are completely at their mercy, that you should listen to what they say, you should do what they tell you to do. This is what they think, that they are keeping the whole show going, they are the bosses therefore, they should have the final voice in every matter. Some patrons really do adopt this attitude.

I remember my friend Mr Chen used to tell me that when lay supporters visited Chinese monasteries, there was a recognised procedure with regard to serving them with tea. If a very ordinary layman came who was no one in particular and perhaps even poor, well of course he would have to be offered tea, but then the abbot would call out, 'Bring tea'. So if there was someone who was a bit well to do and who ought to be treated a bit more considerately, then the abbot would call out, 'Please bring tea.' That would mean, 'Bring tea of a slightly better quality.' If it was a really important wealthy person from whom a big donation could be expected, he called out, 'Please bring best tea.' So the best tea would be served to that particular person. So in this way, Mr Chen said that there was quite a difference in the way in which people were treated according to their worldly position, their wealth and the amount of money that the monastery expected to get from them. So that clearly isn't a very good thing. No doubt the monastery has to be concerned for its support and no doubt if support isn't forthcoming, monks may not be able to live in the monastery, that is all recognised, but nonetheless, if one starts paying attention to people more on account of their wealth and worldly position, that will affect eventually one's whole outlook and affect Buddhism itself, affect the attitude of all the monks living in the monasteries. So again, it does seem that the less one depends upon those who are in effect non-Buddhists for one's support, the better. I think it's very difficult for a spiritual movement to remain a spiritual movement without actually being self-supporting in the fullest sense.

"My patrons, it is getting late, it is time for you to go.

Besides, in the cave beneath," - that is in Rechungpa's old cave, "The sack of flour in the bowl By mice is being nibbled;"

- that is to say the offerings that you have left there for him rather than give them to me, "The cake of butter has been tossed And is now rolling on the ground; The vixen has upset the wine, The crows have scattered all the meat, So run fast and hurry home. Patrons I will vow to see you soon. In a happy mood you may leave me now." (Laughter).

All this good advice should have made you really happy, now you can go. 'The visiting patrons were nonplussed'. I should think so! 'They looked at one another timidly and nudged each others' elbows. Too filled with shame to say a word, they all went home. As the Jetsun had unmistakably exposed the truth, they felt guilt and deep regret; but also, as a result, their faith in him was firmly established'. One hopes so. What does it mean, 'The Jetsun had unmistakably exposed the truth'? What truth is being referred to here? I suppose initially about those offerings and then of course the truth about their own attitude towards the Dharma. There are very few 'monks' for want of a better term, who will speak in this sort of way to the lay people. If anyone tries to, he would be very much disapproved of by the other monks. One of the things that they are most concerned about is not to upset the lay people, not to interrupt the flow of offerings, in other words. So sometimes one can do that skilfully; keep the lay people happy and at the same time really give them some Dharma teaching, but only too often it means that one just has to flatter and humour the lay people.

I remember when I was at Sarnath some years ago, some important lay people had arrived, and I remember the Venerable Sangharatana was going to have to go over to the rest house and welcome them. I think as far as I can remember, these particular visitors weren't actually Buddhist, they were sort of Hindus, probably government officials who were a bit sympathetic to Buddhism. So there were quite a number of monks sitting together after lunch and Sangharatana said he was going to see these people and he looked around among all of us and he said, 'Who is going to come with me and help me flatter them?' [Laughter] Of course actually he very rarely flattered people but he was drawing attention to the fact that this was how monks usually had to deal with these sort of people, they had to flatter them and he wasn't very happy about that. [Laughter] So he said, 'Who is going to come and help me flatter them?' Some monks are very well aware of what the situation is really like. Anyway, any further comment on this whole long song to these people? [Pause]

Ray: Does Milarepa actually rely on these people anyway?

S: Well he seems to be able to manage on very little. Supposing you are living under this sort of system, the less you can manage on the better because the less control, so to speak, people hold or have over you. I think things were rather different in the Buddha's time when the monks really were wanderers and were wandering for the greater part of the year from village to village because they spent only perhaps a single night in one village and were just given alms by the people and then they passed on. The danger seems to have arisen when the monks settled down and became permanently connected with certain wealthy families in many cases, who supported them and supported the monasteries, because in that sort of situation, there is much more likelihood of the lay people actually exercising a control over the monks. Whereas when the monk is just wandering from place to place and is not depending on any particular family, when everybody supports the monks, or any wanderer in a very general sort of way, there is much less likelihood of an undesirable kind of dependence developing. Do you see the difference?

If you are just dependent for your daily food on the people that you come into contact with as you are wandering about, that is one thing. But if you are dependent for your daily food every day of the year perhaps, and if you are dependent on help for the upkeep of a large monastery on a particular group of families, then the situation is rather different. So perhaps it would be possible for a monk say to be dependent on the laity if he lived in the way that most monks did in the Buddha's own day, as the Buddha himself lived, wandering from place to place. In that way, there is much less dependence.

But that is a system that has ceased to exist in most Buddhist countries.

Ray: What you've been saying seems to indicate that the sort of systems that have come into operation in the Friends is the way that you could have a way where everybody is spiritually evolving. The old system just couldn't work because of the needs of.....

S: Right. And also you are very vulnerable. As Buddhism was in the late medieval period when you had enormous monasteries with thousands of monks supported by wealthy merchants and kings. When the kings changed their religion, then you lost their support. Or when invaders were unsympathetic to Buddhism as the Muslim invaders were, they destroyed your monasteries and destroyed your temples. Then you were in a very difficult situation indeed.

Ray: Do you think it was partly Ashoka's, the spread of Buddhism across India which led to this state of affairs?

S: Well the spread of Buddhism as such didn't lead to it, it was the particular type of organisation that Buddhism had, that is to say the monks being dependent on the well to do laity. Very often it meant the merchant class, the Vaishyas or the kings, the rulers.

So in the case of the FWBO we make quite a sharp distinction between those who are part of the movement and those who are not; those who are Friends, Mitras and Order Members and those who are just not any of these things. So we do not run a service for those who are not in fact Buddhists. This is what happens in Buddhist countries. That the monks provide services for those who are not Buddhists, in return for support. That is to say, you perform magical ceremonies to bless their crops and so on and so forth as the Tibetan monks did. So we have activities, via the centres, for the benefit of people outside the movement, but the purpose of those activities is to bring them into the movement, i.e. to get them developing as individuals, not to allow them to remain as they are and simply service their existing needs and desires. Do you see the difference? We do not accept the status quo. We come into contact with, in effect, non-Buddhists, not in order to get support from them for what we are doing. We come into contact with them to try to get them onto the path of individual development.

So most monks in Buddhist countries have contact with the lay people, virtually the nonBuddhists, as donors, as suppliers of food and clothing, but we have contact with non-Buddhists on a quite different basis. We have contact with them as potential Buddhists, as potential individuals.

Bob: What about when we have contact with people on a business level of say bank managers or customers or councillors, people like that, because we rely to quite a great degree on.....

S: Well we should try to use that also as an opportunity for interesting them as individuals in what we are doing. Sometimes they are a bit

interested at least in a theoretical sort of way. When you try to explain for instance the sort of set up, the sort of structure that you want to establish which isn't quite in accordance with general practice and then you explain why you want to depart from general practice, it is because of such and such principle or ideal. Then of course you might find that they are quite interested in that, so you should take advantage of that opportunity.

Anyway Milarepa is going to have a further go at the patrons. He hasn't finished yet by any means, as we shall see. So would someone like to read that next prose passage and the next song.

"One day they came again and brought excessive offerings saying, 'Please sing for us to awaken our insight into the transiency of all beings.' Milarepa would not accept their offerings, but he sang this for them:"

S: Why do you think he wouldn't accept their offerings?

Bob: He didn't want to sell them the teachings?

S: Perhaps that, yes. Perhaps he didn't think they were really sincere yet. They were still going through the motions to a great extent.

Subhuti: It does say excessive.

S: Yes, it does say excessive.

Ray: He didn't need them anyway.

S: He did not need them anyway. Also perhaps one should point out that in Buddhist countries for a monk to refuse offerings is quite exceptional and unusual and would almost be considered an insult, well would in fact be considered an insult, and normally lay supporters whose offerings were refused would be very upset and very angry. It would almost be as though they were being called sinners and unworthy to make offerings to the monks etc.,etc. They would certainly consider it a disgrace and perhaps be really angry with the monk.

Ratnaketu: Perhaps he saw that they were doing it to try and appease him and buy his approval.

S: Right. I have heard that in ancient times, if bhikkhus wanted to show their extreme disapproval of a layman, even perhaps of a king who was behaving badly, they went in a silent procession to his house and stood outside his door with their begging bowls but with the begging bowls turned upside down, stood there for a few minutes and then went away, which meant, "We do not wish to receive alms from you," in other words, "We do not consider you a Buddhist." Well I think if you applied that strictly in most Buddhist countries the monks would have to spend most of their time going around with their begging bowls turned upside down. Perhaps it would be a good thing.

Anyway, carry on with the song.

*"Hearken, you mean patrons!
For the sake of fame to do
Meritorious deeds -
For this life's sake to seek
The protection of Buddha -
To give alms for the sake
Of returns and dividends -
To serve and offer for the sake
Of vanity and pride -
These four ways will neer requite one.*

*For the sake of gluttony
To hold a sacramental feast -
For the sake of egotism
To strive for Sutra learning
For distraction and amusement
To indulge in foolish talk and song -
For vainglory's sake to give
The Initiations -
These four ways will never bring one Blessings'.*

*If for love of preaching one expounds
Without the backing of Scripture;
If through self-conceit,
One accepts obeisance;
If like a bungling, fumbling fool one teaches,
Not knowing the disciple's capacity;
If to gather money one behaves
Like a Dharma practicer -
These four ways can never help the welfare of
sentient beings!*

*To prefer diversions to solitude,
To love pleasure and hate hardship,
To crave for talk when urged to meditate,*

*To wallow arrogantly in the world -
These four ways will ne'er bring one to Liberation!*

*This is the song of Fourfold Warning.
Dear patrons, bear it in your minds!*

S: So he says, "Harken, you mean patrons! For the sake of fame to do Meritorious deeds - For this life's sake to seek The protection of Buddha - To give alms for the sake Of returns and dividends - To serve and offer for the sake Of vanity and pride - These four ways will neer requite one." So, 'For the sake of fame to do meritorious deeds'. Meritorious deeds like offering alms. Sometimes people do it for the sake of fame. This is especially so in India among orthodox Hindus. Very often they will give a donation for a certain religious purpose, a certain pious purpose, only on the explicit understanding that their name should be mentioned or that the name of their family shall be given to the project and this is sometimes a subject of hard bargaining, just where their name shall go and how big the letters and whether it shall be in gold or not etc., etc, and they are quite open and frank about it. They seem to experience no feeling of shame at all. They think it only right and proper that their name should be there. One often hears this expression, well I will give such and such an amount of money but my name must be there. They say this quite openly and even amongst Buddhists to same extent you see this too. And someone will give money for a preaching hall provided the hall is named after him. So this is doing meritorious deeds for the sake of fame.

Then, 'For this life's sake to seek the protection of Buddha.' You are not really truly going for refuge, you are simply seeking the protection of the Buddha in your worldly life. I think a lot of people in Buddhist countries don't understand this distinction. They think that they are Going for Refuge, but actually they are only asking for the Buddha's protection in a purely worldly sort of sense. They want the Buddha to protect them from, say, unexpected disasters, untimely death, loss of wealth. So they think that if they go to the temple and make offerings to the Buddha image and recite the refuges for this particular purpose, they think that actually they are Going for Refuge and are good Buddhists. Do you see what I mean? This is how Going for Refuge is in fact understood by a lot of lay people. It is faith that the Buddha will protect you. In that way you really have turned the Buddha into a sort of god. [Pause]

Anandajyoti: This whole song, like the previous one, seems to really emphasise the near impossibility of having a Buddhist culture. It is hard enough in the earlier part of the previous song to really practise the Dharma in a non-nominal way, it is even harder to actually be a patron. This is summing up all the dangers of spiritual materialism.

S: Yes, I have found in the East that it is only very rarely that you find a lay Buddhist, who though a layman is genuinely a Buddhist and who really helps the monks, the Bhikkhus, really intelligently, really understanding what they are trying to do, that is to say the best of them, and genuinely co-operating and understanding them. It is very rare to find this sort of thing. You do find it occasionally. I have one or two Tibetan lay friends of this sort in Kalimpong but they are very rare indeed. Usually the layman's involvement in Buddhist affairs is a matter of sort of religious politics almost. And sometimes, when you find a layman who really understands what the monks are trying to do and really tries to help them, sometimes you find that he himself is not a monk just because he sees what is involved and is so serious about it. Sometimes you find for that reason he remains a layman. He's got no misunderstanding about the spiritual life or sometimes he sees quite clearly that certain

monks are perhaps not doing as much as they might, but he doesn't take up a critical or censorious attitude, he just tries to help them as much as he can and encourage them even, or even advise them, but in a humble sort of way. So that sort of, one might say, real Buddhist layman you do occasionally find but the vast majority of Buddhist laymen are not like that at all.

So, 'To give alms for the sake of returns and dividends,' it's not a real giving. You are only giving so that you can receive more in return, it is a sort of investment. You are concerned with spiritual dividends, or maybe not spiritual dividends, perhaps you do believe that by offering to the monks you will become richer and more prosperous and more successful due to the merits that you accumulate by making offerings to the monks.

Ratnaketu: I remember reading an article, in a new age type magazine, which was about giving money and it was written by somebody who said that they had discovered this magic law of giving; if you give, they now gave something like 10% of their income each year away because they found that they got at least 25% year back! (laughter). They really believed it so they put it forward as a serious thing to give away money in order to get more back.

Bob: Even with modern american new baptists, the Reagan people have been pushing that line as well. I don't know whether they offer guarantees but it looks pretty close. Give ten percent of your income to God and God will ensure that overall you are better off than you were before.

S: And this is called faith [Laughter] - faith in God.

Ray: I've heard this from Divine Light followers for instance, since I have been giving money to the Maraji, all things have come my way.

_____: God pays 25%. (laughter).

S: Perhaps they do, but that is nothing to do with spiritual life.

Ratnaketu: It's not why you give....

S: You don't give in order to get..

Ratnaketu: You're not overcoming your sense of ego.

S: Then 'To serve and offer for the sake of vanity and pride, these four ways will ne'er requite one.' Well sometimes one offers things to monks, serves monks for the sake of vanity and pride - to show what a good pious upasaka you are. I am afraid all these things are only too familiar, one can see them really among born Buddhists. Anyway, we don't want to dwell on them too much.

"For the sake of gluttony To hold a sacramental feast - For the sake of egotism To strive for Sutra learning - For distraction and amusement To indulge in foolish talk and song - For vainglory's sake to give The Initiations - These four ways will never bring one Blessings" So, 'For the sake of gluttony to hold a sacramental feast - ' So what is a sacramental feast? Have we touched on that before? It's a feast where the significance is primarily spiritual, where food is offered to the deities and then shared amongst all the assembled worshippers or initiates. So clearly the purpose of the sacramental feast is religious and spiritual. You don't go for the sake of the food, you go for the sake of what the food signifies. You don't go for the sake of eating, you go for the sake of what the eating symbolises. But then when corruption creeps in, when degeneration takes place, people paying more attention to the food, the feast as such and they go out of gluttony, even they hold these sacramental feasts out of gluttony.

So, 'For the sake of gluttony to hold a sacramental feast.' This is the sort of thing that has happened, say, in the West, in connection with a festival like Christmas. What does Christmas represent? It's Christ Mass. It is the mass, the church festival, the church sacrament, which commemorates the birth of Christ, the birth of the saviour, but for most Christians it's just a matter of eating and drinking. So you get the same kind of thing in the Buddhist, especially the Vajrayanic context. People hold the sacramental feast itself just for the sake of indulging in food and drink. The sacramental feast just becomes a party, like a Christmas party. I mean what connection say has the office Christmas party with the birth of the saviour? (Laughter). Well some of you have been to office Christmas parties, it seems.

Subhuti: So would quite often the members of the laity hold sacramental feasts?

S: The sacramental feast is something in which both lay people and monks could participate; they would be participating not as monks or as lay people but as Tantric initiates. I think Milarepa has moved away here from considering simply the misdeeds of the laity. He is spreading his net as it were wider now. He is speaking of those people who are just nominally followers of the Vajrayana, and whose sacramental feasts are not really sacramental feasts, they are just for the sake of indulging in food and drink. Especially as you may remember that in these Vajrayanic sacramental feasts wine is very often served, so it really does become a sort of party under these sort of conditions if people aren't careful. It does seem that the Vajrayana in a way was - I won't say introduced too quickly into Tibet - but it certainly became too widespread much too quickly. There was a sort of popular village Tantrism with Tantric ceremonies being performed for the sake of worldly blessings, sacramental feasts being held without really very much genuinely spiritual Vajrayanic significance.

_____ : Where did it develop from?

S: Originally it came from India, of course. But then the Vajrayana, not always for the best of reasons, caught on very quickly in Tibet. The same thing happened in Mongolia. I have referred to some of the corruptions that took place in Mongolia very early on in the review of a book on Buddhism in Mongolia in the last *Newsletter*. Anyway there is no need perhaps to over emphasise that point. We could of course apply it to the Friends. When you are celebrating Wesak, instead of trying to remind yourself of the spiritual significance of the occasion, it becomes more a social and cultural event. No doubt for the sake of trying to bring in perhaps more outside people you need to have something of a social and cultural nature but there must always be right at the centre of the celebrations something of a definitely spiritual character, especially for the

benefit of Order Members, Mitras and Friends. The celebration of Wesak must never become a purely social or purely cultural occasion.

Then 'For the sake of egotism to strive for Sutra learning.' Well this is very clear, very obvious. In Buddhist countries you often get Bhikkhus studying hard, becoming very learned, but more for the sake of esteem as learned men. In modern times this has taken the form of Bhikkhus going to college, going to University, working hard for a degree and gaining their doctorate in Pali or Buddhist studies for the sake of some kind of worldly position. Then it's very easy to get a post in a University and quietly disrobe. That's what very often they were after all the time. I mean there are dozens, if not hundreds of examples of this sort of thing among people I have known or heard of in the past.

Ratnaketu: I suppose there is a danger in Buddhists offering courses which you get degrees in Buddhism at the end of.

S: Yes, right, yes.

Ratnaketu: Because you gain qualifications.

S: And you end up with a worldly qualification which will help you in gaining employment. When I was in India I met a lot of Bhikkhus who came from Ceylon and Burma and Thailand to study in India. They came to India because it was cheaper than going to the West though they would rather have gone to the West. They used to tell me they had a great struggle with their lay supporters because very often the lay supporters wouldn't want the monks to pursue modern studies because they knew from experience, or were beginning to know from experience, that a monk who got his degree very quickly ceased to be a monk. So some of these lay people in these countries didn't even like the Bhikkhus learning English because they felt that was the first step in the wrong direction; they wanted them to stick to Pali, or to stick to Thai and Pali, or Burmese and Pali, Abidharma studies which had no value in the outside world, or not much value in the outside world. And the Bhikkhus used to strongly resist this and they used to tell the lay people -this is what they told me themselves - well if we are versed in modern knowledge then we shall be able to preach the Dharma more effectively to people who have that modern knowledge, otherwise we shan't be able to do so. So with many doubts and reservations the lay people sometimes accepted this argument. Some monks put it forward sincerely but others only put it forward as a rationalisation. Some monks even weren't quite clear about their own motives. One could see that too. But if a monk wanted to go to India, if a monk wanted to go to college, go to university, study science, study English, the explanation always was, 'Well I want to be able to preach the Dharma' or even, 'I want to be able to go to America and preach the Dharma'. So a lay person couldn't quarrel with that, that a Bhikkhu wanted to equip himself to preach the Dharma, or equip himself better, so very reluctantly they used to dig into their pockets and fork out whatever was necessary, or maybe his relations would, but they would very often feel that something wasn't quite right, they weren't completely convinced by the monk's arguments. And of course, as I've said, many of the monks ended up disrobing as soon as they got their qualifications and found themselves a post. Then the lay people felt cheated, that they just in effect subsidised somebody else's higher education, and that there was no benefit to the Dharma, and of course they might not have got so much merit out of it as they had hoped (laughter). Because there is merit to be gained in supporting a monk while he equips himself to propagate the Dharma, but there is no merit to be got out of subsidising somebody else who becomes a layman again in the end and just takes up a secular job. And some laymen of course genuinely wanted to help propagate the Dharma and were genuinely disappointed when the monks let them down in this sort of way.

So I had many discussions with Bhikkhus in India about this sort of thing and I felt a lot of them were really confused. Some of them really felt that the way to propagate Buddhism amongst modern Western educated people was just to get Western education yourself; but they didn't really understand how it would work or what they really wanted to do when they spoke of propagating the Dharma. They thought of it at best simply in terms of explaining the Dharma in a rational sort of way, in a way that would appeal to the modern man, use a few scientific illustrations and that would be that. They didn't think in terms usually of putting across meditation or anything like individual development; they just didn't think in those terms at all. They thought in effect in terms of an extension of their national culture.

So, Milarepa says, 'For the sake of egotism to strive for Sutra learning. For distraction and amusement to indulge in foolish talk and song.' Well that is pretty obvious isn't it? Why does he say 'song'? What sort of song do you think he has got in mind?

Ratnaketu: Maybe even religious songs.

S: Even maybe religious songs. Anyway that's sufficiently clear I think. then 'For vainglory's sake to give the Initiations - these four ways will never bring one Blessings.' What initiations is he referring to? The Tantric initiations themselves. Only too easily these can become just ceremonies, only too easily these can become just ceremonies that somebody performs just because he wants to gain a reputation as a great Tantric guru, as a great Lama, and again you find a lot of this in Tibet. I mentioned a little while ago that even in Milarepa's time things seem to have started degenerating already so you got people going around, even at that time, from village to village announcing themselves as great Tantric lamas, inviting people to come for initiations, handing out initiations. You get that sort of thing in the West now.

[End of day six, tape one, day six, tape two - side one]

I don't say that all of the lamas who hand out initiations are not genuine tantric gurus. I don't say that. But nonetheless they seem to hand out these tantric initiations very very freely, sometimes to people who aren't even Buddhists! Who haven't even gone for refuge! Whereas the Buddhist tradition is, even in Tibet, that first of all you go for refuge, you practice the Hinayana, then you practice the Mahayana, then you practice the Vajrayana.

But here lamas come along and announcements are made and courses are held, fees are charged and you just get given so many tantric initiations without even being a Buddhist, without even going for refuge. So this is the path of irregular steps gone mad! What else can one say? One is absolutely appalled really at the irresponsibility of these people. And what they would say, probably, taxed with this, that they were just scattering their seed indiscriminately, hoping that some of it will fall on fertile ground. That may be so, that is a point of view. That in some cases it may be that someone, even a non-Buddhist attends one of these occasions, does, as it were, receive initiation and is genuinely impressed and follows that up. That is possible. But one has to weigh that against the cheapening of the tradition, the cheapening of initiations, tantric initiations. And there's the sort of impression it gives about the whole of the tantric tradition, about Buddhism itself. And also in some cases one has to question the motives of the people handing out these initiations. They give the highest tantric initiations, it seems, much more easily than we 'give', inverted commas, the Refuges and Precepts. And then they'll pat you patronisingly on the head and say 'Yes, you're just a poor little old upasaka, you don't have any of these wonderful higher ordinations and esoteric initiations, you're just a humble little beginner. Well, yes,

you are. But they're not even that but they don't know it.

So Milarepa is pointing out this sort of thing as long ago as that, in the 11th century or perhaps it's the beginning of the 12th century, because he's an old man by this time, but still it's pretty early! Yes, well he's the first generation of Tibetan born Kagyupa followers, that is to say, who haven't been to India. Marpa, his guru, is the sort of link between the two countries. So think of that - how quickly degeneration can begin. Already you've got the so-called lamas going around giving out the so-called tantric initiations. They are only going through the motions again. They can't be real tantric initiations that they are handing out. They can't be real tantric gurus. it's just a show!

Ratnaketu: (tape inaudible)...I was struck that in just about every song that is mentioned there always is morality. (inaudible)

S: Yes, yes, quite. Well, that's the first step. But very often Tibetan lamas nowadays, especially in the West, don't bother to teach the refugees, don't bother to teach the precepts. Not really. They mention them, of course, in passing, but don't dwell upon them. They hasten to get onto more interesting matters.

Anyway Milarepa hasn't finished yet, not by a long chalk. He says: 'If for love of preaching one expounds Without the backing of Scripture; If through self-conceit, One accepts obeisance; If like a bungling, fumbling fool one teaches, Not knowing the disciple's capacity; If to gather money one behaves Like a Dharma practitioner - These four ways can never help the welfare of sentient beings!' So 'If for love of preaching one expounds without the backing of Scripture' What is this love of preaching? Why should someone have a love of preaching? Clearly Milarepa means a love of preaching in an unskilful sort of way. So how could this happen? Could you have a love of preaching which was unskilful?

Ray: The feeling you get from having an audience.

S: Yes, showmanship. Being a sort of actor. It's quite easy to get carried away by this sort of thing. It's quite easy to enjoy preaching for the love of preaching, preaching for its own sake in the wrong sort of way. It's very easy to enjoy putting on that sort of show. Having that sort of effect.

Also Milarepa says 'without the backing of Scripture.' You are not really communicating what the Buddha has said. You are just introducing, perhaps, your own notions. It's not real preaching. It's not real communication of the Dharma. It's like nowadays if you go along to church, you won't hear the gospel expounded in many cases. You won't hear people being advised to leave their families and to tread the narrow path to salvation. No, you'll hear a talk about CND or abortion or the rights of women or something of that sort. Anything but the Gospel. Certainly in some quarters, so-called progressive Christian quarters, I mean I noticed this for months at one time I used to listen to the Sunday religious programme after the eight o'clock news on Sunday morning, hoping to hear something about religion. But it was always the church involved in this social issue, the church involved in that political question. The church, the trade unions, I mean, not a single doctrinal or spiritual issue ever month after month was raised or touched upon. It was entirely the social and political involvement of the organised churches. What the churches thought about what was happening in South Africa, about the persecuting of Christians in the Soviet Union and the churches and trade

union law, the churches and the abortion issue and the ordination of women. Things of that sort, of social and economic and political significance. Not a new interpretation of the Lord's prayer or anything of that sort. No, that sort of thing was never touched upon.

So, it's much the same kind of thing. 'If for love of preaching one expounds without the backing of Scripture.' You've got to be genuinely trying to communicate the Dharma and genuinely doing it for the sake of the people you are talking to, genuinely trying to awaken some interest in them. I mean not for the sake of your own aggrandizement or for the sake of the thrill it gives you or for the sake of the experience that it gives you. I mean this touches on something which I think was mentioned yesterday, that your preaching shouldn't be just part of your own experience. You shouldn't say, "I think it would be good for my self-development if I started giving talks on the Dharma." Perhaps it would be, perhaps it would be a good thing for your individual development, but not if you think of it in that sort of way. You should have a genuine feeling to communicate the Dharma. That will certainly contribute to your spiritual development, but not if you say, "Well, I think it will help me in my self development if I give a few little talks on the Dharma when I feel like it and when it is convenient to me. That isn't the attitude. One has to see the needs of people for the Dharma and have a genuine desire to communicate it and then do your best to do that. [Pause]

Then: 'If through self-conceit, One accepts obeisance' what is this obeisance?

_____ : Prostration.

S: Prostration. In Buddhist countries, following the Indian tradition, it's customary for people to prostrate themselves in front of monks. They respect the yellow robe. And this is quite universal and people do it quite naturally. But Milarepa says: 'If through self-conceit, one accepts obeisance'. I think it is very easy to get into this way of thinking, that because people are respecting you in this way, you actually are better, when you may not be at all. I have come to the conclusion, after thinking about the matter carefully, that this is, in fact, probably one of the Eastern Buddhist customs or traditions that it would not be skilful to introduce into the West. Some people in England feel that in the FWBO not enough respect is shown to monks, especially visiting monks and this was said, I think to Sagaramati, recently by a Buddhist belonging to some other group who was invited in for a meal one day. He said that the FWBO had the reputation of not showing respect to bhikkhus. By which he meant that when, say, a bhikkhu visited the LBC or visited 'Sukhavati' he wasn't received in the traditional way, with everybody going up in turn and greeting him with a full prostration which would have been the case in the East, more likely than not.

So Sagaramati put our point of view. But this visitor still seemed to think that this wasn't right. He wasn't quite happy with what Sagaramati said. But I have come to the conclusion that this is one of the customs or traditions it would be better, I think, not to introduce into the West because I've seen the sort of impression that Bhikkhus often get about themselves because of this. And in any case, it's often a sort of formality as far as lay people are concerned. Very often they do not do it with genuine devotion or genuine feeling. It is just a custom. It doesn't really mean very much to them. But it bolsters up the monk's feeling that he is a special sort of person, which he ought to be, but usually he isn't. And also it can get in the way of communication between the monk and the layman. The layman literally puts the monk on a pedestal, out of reach, out of communication. Some Bhikkhus, to give them their due, aren't very happy with this, but the tradition is so strong that there is not very much that they can do about it.

Also I have noticed that it sometimes happens that if, especially when they come to the West, bhikkhus don't get this sort of treatment, they don't know how to behave, they don't know how to react. If you just come up to them and start talking, even in a respectful, friendly sort of way. Without that preliminary prostration they are at a bit of a loss, they don't know how to take you, they don't know what to do, they don't know what to say, It's as though they are unconsciously expecting something, it doesn't come and they're at a loss. They're thrown a bit off balance. So this also suggests that the practice is not altogether a helpful one.

So certainly there must be genuine respect and even perhaps expression of respect for someone whom you genuinely feel is superior or more advanced than you, but not this sort of automatic showing of respect to someone you don't really know, simply because of the way in which he is dressed. And even when sometimes you can see he is not a very aware or emotionally positive person, perhaps not as much as you are. The orthodox reply to that would be, "Well, it's good for you to prostrate yourself even though that person may not be as spiritually developed as you because he is, after all, wearing the yellow robe and it is to the robe that you show respect!.' This is a very common traditional Buddhist point of view. I would entirely disagree with this. I would say that you don't show respect to the robe. If you show respect to anything it is to an individual. Showing respect to the robe has got no significance whatever, that expression. How can you show respect just to a piece of yellow cloth? It's absurd. If you show respect at all it is to the person. If you come to show respect to a yellow robe it is because worthy people in the past have worn the yellow robe. So when they were respected it was not the robe that was respected, it was they who were respected. So if someone who now is unworthy wears the yellow robe you don't show respect to them because you want to show respect to the yellow robe because in the past worthy people wore the yellow robe. That is very illogical reasoning. Do you see what I mean?

Siddhiratna: It is difficult though, isn't it, because that individual is wearing the history of the Order.....

S: Yes, yes. So I have come to the conclusion after quite a bit of thought, and being fully aware of all the arguments on the other side, and also having myself lived that sort of life for many years and having been accustomed to being treated in that sort of way and being still treated in that sort of way when I visit India or even other parts of the Buddhist world. But I still think that on the whole that particular institution is unhelpful in the West. I think it is probably unhelpful in the East as well, at least in some cases, with some people.

I remember some bhikkhus complaining to me that young men, that is to say Sinhalese or Thais, did not like to prostrate in front of them any more because they were afraid of spoiling the creases in their trousers! [Laughter]

So: 'If through self-conceit, One accepts obeisance; If like a bungling, fumbling fool one teaches, Not knowing the disciple's capacity.' This is very important indeed. Milarepa's language is very strong here. He is saying you have no business to be teaching unless you have some insight into human character. So this could apply, one could say, to lamas who hand out tantric initiations indiscriminately. They do this without any insight into the disciples' capacities. So what does this suggest? What is required for knowing the disciple's capacity? Before you can know the disciple's capacity, what have you got to know? You have got to know the disciple. So this stresses that some personal contact is important. In a sense, up to a point at least, the more the better. I have been mentioning quite a lot these last few months, that to know another person, to know another human being, is very difficult. And that one shouldn't rush in with one's advice and suggestions without knowing somebody really quite

well. [Pause]

And then: 'If to gather money one behaves Like a Dharma practicer - These four ways can never help the welfare of sentient beings!' So how could one behave like a Dharma practitioner just to gather, to accumulate money? Well, there are all sorts of ways of doing that. Some people will collect money by giving lectures on the Dharma, that being their main objective. Others by just pretending to be quite pious and holy and gathering the offerings of the faithful.

Usually if people behave like a Dharma practicer just to gather money, usually the aim and object is to set themselves up comfortably in a worldly sort of way when they have collected enough. One sees that happening sometimes. You see a fairly well-known monk who has been going around and who has a few supporters and gives lectures, gets money. After a while you find he has just settled down somewhere, and bought himself a house, he is no longer a monk. Before very long he has got a wife and kids and the whole show - there you are!

So: "These four ways can never help the welfare of sentient beings.' So Milarepa is going beyond the present situation. Perhaps some of his monk disciples are around. We are not told much about them. They do seem to be lurking in the background because at the end of the song he says: 'Drigom Repa, who was present, besought the Jetsun to preach still more of the Dharma.'

So perhaps Milarepa is saying these things not just for the benefit of the patrons but for the sake of his other yogi and hermit disciples who may be around. Perhaps he is trying to say, or trying to suggest, "don't think it is just the patrons who may be at fault, don't think it is just the lay supporters, this might equally apply to you. There are dangers for you too, not just for them."

Then he goes on: 'To prefer diversions to solitude, To love pleasure and hate hardship, To crave for talk when urged to meditate, To wallow arrogantly in the world - These four ways will ne'er bring one to Liberation!' So 'To prefer diversions to solitude.' Here he really does seem to be addressing the hermits and yogis. So in what way would one prefer diversions to solitude? One can imagine, for instance, the case of a yogi who was supposed to be meditating in solitude. Or maybe someone who has gone on a solitary retreat. He might have gone on solitary retreat for a month. He might be supposed to be getting on with his meditation. So he does a certain amount of meditation and then maybe he wanders along to the nearest village, along to the village shop, post office, and buys a few provisions, buys a few stamps, and maybe he lingers longer than he really needs, has a bit of a look round. Maybe in the village shop, especially if he goes say two or three times a week, he gets to know the woman behind the counter and has a bit of a chat, learns a bit about what's happening in the village, what people think about him perhaps, all that sort of thing. Then, before he knows where he is, he has become accustomed to these little diversions and he prefers those to remaining the greater part of the time in complete solitude. This kind of thing can very easily happen. The mind can be very easily diverted.

Ratnaketu: (inaudible)

S: Ah! You notice Milarepa is not actually saying anything against being in the company of other people. It's the diversions that he is, as it were, against. You can be with other people in a positive and skilful manner, as when you are meditating with them or studying with them, but what he is warning against is diversions. You can, of course, engage in diversions even when you are on your own, even on solitary retreat. You can play a game of chess against yourself or you can just read a detective novel instead of studying your sutras.

_____ : Newspapers.

S: Newspapers, that would be a diversion. So it's diversions as such that he's against, not being with other people. But why do people go after diversions? What is happening? Just go back to the case I mentioned, that you go on solitary retreat, but then you wander along to the village shop and you start becoming friendly with the person there behind the counter and start having a little chat, maybe start looking forward to that little chat. Maybe you don't just go once a week and buy what you want and then go away, you make a point of just buying two or three things at a time so that you've got the excuse of going two or three times and having two or three little chats in the course of the week. So, what is happening? Why is the mind working in this sort of way?

Siddhiratna: Not really getting down to what you are trying to do.

S: So why is that perhaps?

_____ : It requires too much effort.....

commitment () Perhaps you don't feel very comfortable being on your own. Perhaps you don't like your own company very much.

S: Yes, maybe you don't feel on very good terms with yourself. Maybe, also, you haven't made a wholehearted commitment to being on solitary retreat. You are half-hearted about it, you are superficial, you haven't really said to yourself, "Well, I am on solitary retreat." People don't very often make that sort of wholehearted commitment to what they are actually now doing. Therefore they are very easily diverted.

Ratnaketu: Perhaps you don't want to admit why you're going, because if you admit you're on a solitary retreat, admit you're supposed to be meditating, then you actually have to do something about it.

S: So therefore you should always be clear what exactly it is that you are doing. If you are going away for a holiday, alright, go away for a holiday. Say to yourself, "I am away on holiday." If it's solitary retreat say to yourself, "This is solitary retreat, it is not a holiday, therefore, I will conduct it in a certain kind of way which I would not have conducted it in if it had been just a holiday." And vice versa. It means being very definite, being very clear and therefore being very committed.

So: 'To prefer diversions to solitude, to love pleasures and hate hardship.' That is pretty obvious. But again, you mustn't misunderstand. It's not that pleasure is morally wrong and that hardship is automatically a good thing. You should be prepared to undergo hardships if hardships are necessary, in the interests of your individual development or for the sake of helping other people. It's not that hardship is to be avoided, but there is no merit in subjecting yourself to hardship for the sake of subjecting yourself to hardship. In some ways it is wrong to love pleasure, to be attached to pleasure, but there's nothing intrinsically unskilful in the experience of pleasure itself. It's loving pleasure which is unskilful and hating hardship. When you love pleasure you'll go after pleasure at all costs. When you hate hardship you will avoid it at all costs. [Pause]

'To crave for talk when urged to meditate, To wallow arrogantly in the world - These four ways will ne'er bring one to Liberation!' These are both pretty obvious, aren't they? 'To crave for talk when urged to meditate.'- 'To crave for talk' is a quite strong expression. Do you think people do sometimes crave for talk, in an unhealthy, unskilful sort of way? Do you find this happening? Do you find it happening with yourselves as well? Craving, why would one crave for talk? What is happening?

Ratnaketu: Again it's wanting to distract yourself.

S: It's not a skilful wish for communication, 'craving for talk'. It's a form of escapism. I remember when I was a child even, it was one of the puzzles of my childhood how people, especially women I'm afraid, could talk for so long without really saying anything. I used to feel quite bored after a few minutes and I just wonder how they could go on and on for hours together just talking about what I could even then recognise as - I must have been about five or six - as completely trivial things. It really puzzled me. They seemed to be getting a lot out of it but as far as I could see there was absolutely nothing in it.

_____: (unclear)

S: If you listen in that sort of state of mind, people's talking just seems like the almost meaningless noises of animals (Bhante does imitation - laughter) That's how it actually sounds, isn't it? There's no meaning there to pay attention to, so you just hear the sounds. It is just like saying 'woof, woof' or 'miaow, miaow'. It has not got much more significance than that.

_____: it's just like patting each other on the back.

S: Yes. Anthropologists call it grooming, a sort of verbal grooming. What they are really saying is, "Don't be afraid of me. I'm not going to bite you, provided you don't hurt me. it's quite alright, my intentions are quite friendly." This is what is being said, according to the anthropologists.

So you come back out of your solitary retreat and you hear things like, "It's a lovely day, isn't it?" "Oh, yes, wonderful weather we've been having." "Yes, I wonder if it will continue tomorrow?" "I think it will, I don't think it will continue the day after though." "What about next week?" "Well, next week I think it may be fine. We have been fortunate, haven't we?" [Laughter] This sort of thing seems to go on for hours. How utterly inane it is. People talk in this way as if they are discussing something really important, or that they are really involved in what sort of weather it is going to be.

Ratnaketu: I also notice that they do not look at each other, they are just sort of nattering.

S: All right, 'To wallow arrogantly in the world' What is the image which springs to mind when he uses the word 'wallowing'? It's just like a pig wallowing in his sty. 'To wallow arrogantly in the world.' There you are down in the mud and the filth and you are really quite proud of it. [Laughter] You think you are really big, really great, because you are dirtier than anyone else, i.e. richer or more famous.

'These four ways will never bring one to Liberation.' Milarepa is really being very severe, but what he is saying is perfectly true.

So 'This is the song of Fourfold Warning Dear patrons bear it in your minds.'

After all that, one would have thought that everybody present had had quite enough, but apparently not because: 'Drigom Repa, who was present, besought the Jetsun to preach still more of the Dharma. In response Milarepa sang: Anyway, before we go onto that song, let's look back over the last one and see if there's any point that we've missed there.

Ray: Can I just ask you about the school of Tibetan lamas that have wives and families.

S: Some Kagyupa lamas have wives and families. It seems to have developed out of misunderstanding of the spiritual consort, the dakini in the human sense. You start off by taking the teaching about the dakini quite literally, as perhaps it was in India in some circles, and you have a female companion with whom you are allegedly practising the Dharma and that female companion gradually becomes your wife, then of course children come and, in that way, the whole religious life, spiritual life, becomes, as it were, domesticated, even hereditary, and sometimes the children of the guru become gurus in their turn. This seems to be the way in which it happened.

_____: Were there any situations in which there were practitioners of the Dharma who would have a female companion? In what ways would that be beneficial?

S: As far as I have seen it from my personal observation and contact, I don't really know of any lama who actually did have say a consort in a full sexual sense and who was also functioning in a completely spiritual way. I don't know really of any such example. I do know married lamas, including married Nyingmapa and Kagyupa lamas who did have wives and who were functioning, but they seemed, as far as I could see, to be hampered by the fact that they had wives, regardless of whether they were technically their spiritual consorts or not. And in one or two cases where a lama did have a dakini, a spiritual consort, and did seem to be functioning really effectively and the dakini did not seem to be hampering his activities, in those cases I was assured that there was, in fact, no sexual relation between them. Do you see what I mean?

So therefore I say that I don't know of any particular case, I didn't encounter any case, where a tantric lama, a tantric guru, had a dakini, had sexual relations with the dakini, with or without the sacramental framework, and at the same time was functioning with full efficiency. In some cases the wife, or dakini, might resent that he spent so much time with the disciples. She might be rather mean and grasping, might be more concerned about his money earning capacities than his actual teaching of the Dharma, might even be resentful about women disciples coming to him for instruction and so on.

So I couldn't help feeling that in those cases where there were genuinely married lamas that they would have been better off, I mean better lamas, had they not been married.

_____: What would be the spiritual function of the dakini where there was not any sexual contact between them?

S: That's quite difficult to tell. In the case of one lama that I have in mind in particular, he was told by astrologers that according to his horoscope he would die at a certain age, but that this could be averted, or his life could be prolonged for a few years if he took a dakini. So his disciples, some of his disciples at least, requested him to take a dakini so that his life might be prolonged. So he took one. So how it worked I can't say that I was able to find out, but I was assured by the disciples that there was no sexual relation between them.

_____ : You say he took a dakini?

S: Yes. I wasn't able to find out what taking a dakini really meant, but she was, as it were, officially recognised as his dakini. It could be that they undertook certain ceremonies or that she was present at certain initiations. It could be that he simply looked at her, but I don't know. I was not actually able to find out. They seemed quite reticent speaking about these things. But knowing that I was, in their eyes, a Theravada bhikkhu, they were very concerned to assure me that there was, in fact, no question of any sexual relationship between them.

_____ : Even if you didn't have sexual contact you could still have emotional dependence, couldn't you?

S: Well, yes. But I don't think, as far as I could observe, there was no question of that. And I think that as far as one could see, the function of the dakini, under those circumstances - and the dakini is genuinely selected has to have certain spiritual qualities, not just to be any attractive young woman - she has to have a sort of stimulating effect on the person concerned, but obviously, in this case at least, not in the sexual sense. It almost suggests as though, if one leads an overly ascetic life, there are certain of one's energies not involved and that, under certain circumstances, those energies can be brought into play or brought into operation by some kind of contact with someone of the opposite sex. Again though, someone who is not only physically attractive - and dakinis are supposed to be physically attractive and youthful - but someone with definite spiritual endowments at the same time.

But anyway, the whole thing is so open to misunderstanding, to misuse, rationalisation, it's something that I usually avoid mentioning in the West because it is the sort of thing people would seize hold of, obviously.

But I must say I did not ever find an instance of a lama who had a sexual relationship with a dakini, where in fact that was a relationship with a dakini, and where he was helped rather than hindered in his work as a lama by having a sexual relationship with a dakini, whether genuine or not. I never found any such instance. I did find instances of lamas who were hampered by their dakini with whom they had tantric sexual relationships and who in fact were usually their wives. Very often in fact, dakini was a polite way of describing the lama's wife.

How did we get onto that? What was the question?

Ray: I just wanted to know about (lamas and their wives)

S: I am not saying that there were not some Nyingmapas and Kagyupa lamas who did not do quite a lot, even though they were married. Of

course, they didn't have any worldly occupation, though if they weren't careful, performing ceremonies and giving initiations became a sort of worldly occupation and a means of support. But though some of them did a lot for the Dharma, though married, I was convinced they could have done more, especially being more accessible to their disciples, had closer contact with their disciples had they not been married.

Any further points?

Would someone like to read the next song?

In response Milarepa sang:

*The long-lived heavenly beings above
Are hostile to Awareness when arising.
They are ever eager for Dhyana of No-thought.*

*The hungry ghosts beneath, not knowing
That they are hunted by the mind's projections,
Resent their pillagers with jealousy and avarice.
Because of their evil Karma,
They are pressed by thirst and hunger.*

*In between are we poor miserable humans.
Not knowing the golden treasure underground,
From our fellow men we steal and cheat.
The more we cheat and deceive,
The more suffering we have to bear.*

*The foolish and "enterprising" patrons Of Nya Non acquire no merits through the Jetsun,
But make offerings to young, handsome Repas,
Yet remorse and shame are all their alms will bring.
Enterprises so wrong and meaningless should cease,
So give your services and offerings to the Buddhas!'*

S: So: 'The long-lived heavenly beings above Are hostile to Awareness when arising. They are ever eager for Dhyana Of No-thought.' So what does this mean? What is this awareness?

Subhuti: Awareness of impermanence.

S: Yes, it could be awareness of impermanence or the awareness of transcendental reality. And why are they so eager for Dhyana of No-thought? Where does that actually come, the Dhyana of No thought? It's from the second dhyana onwards, isn't it? When vitakka and vicara cease. In the first dhyana you have got vitakka and vicara. In the second dhyana vitakka and vicara die away. So it's the dhyanas above the first.

So these devas represent beings immersed in extremely pleasurable experiences and they don't even want to think about the impermanence of those experiences. They have an experience of samatha but they are quite closed to the possibility of vipassana, of insight. [Pause]

You notice the line says: 'are hostile to Awareness when arising'. Even if the thought of impermanence, for instance, the awareness of impermanence happens to arise, or if they are told about it, taught about it, if they happen to hear something about it, they are hostile to the idea. They don't want to hear about it, they don't want to realise that what they are enjoying is in fact impermanent. They just want to go on and on enjoying it indefinitely. After all, they are long-lived heavenly beings, long-lived devas, they have become accustomed to enjoying that sort of experience. They don't want to consider even the possibility of its being interrupted or coming to an end. So they are hostile to awareness, even when arising, even if it arises within themselves they suppress it.

It is like someone with a good job who is, maybe, happy with his wife and children. He hears something about the spiritual life he doesn't want to hear. In a sense, he deliberately closes his ears. He doesn't want to listen. You can meet that sort of person in the human world. They are analogous to the long lived heavenly beings above.

Johnny: Is the realm of the gods in the Wheel of Life?

S: Yes, indeed.

And then Milarepa says: 'The hungry ghosts beneath, not knowing That they are hunted by the mind's projections, Resent their pillagers with jealousy and avarice. Because of their evil Karma, They are pressed by thirst and hunger.' So: 'The hungry ghosts beneath, not knowing that they are hunted by the mind's projections' in other words, the hungry ghosts are like people in a state of paranoia. They don't realise that the being that they experience as hunting them, as attacking them, are, in fact, the projections of their own minds. And they therefore direct their unskilful thoughts, their thoughts of jealousy and avarice towards these projections. Milarepa seems to be seeing or depicting the hungry ghosts in a slightly unusual way. It's as though the hungry ghosts are feeling really hungry and they are trying to clutch food and drink, but it's as though the food and drink is being torn away from them by the pillagers and that the hungry ghosts therefore feel jealousy and avarice with regard to the pillagers. But these pillagers are, in fact, the projections of their own minds.

So the hungry ghost seems to be someone who is in a state of starvation but who is, in fact, starving himself. The pillagers, that is to say those factors or forces that are taking away from him what he craves for so desperately are in fact projections of his own mind. People aren't really despoiling him. It is he himself who is responsible. People aren't really attacking. He is projecting perhaps his own aggressiveness onto those

people.

Ratnaketu: To a certain extent this is true of certain groups in society now. (unclear)

S: I heard once, at the tail end of a meeting, it was the Dialectics of Liberation Congress, it was held at the Round House. I went along towards the end of a working session which was discussing the Congress after it was all over and while I was waiting to meet this person, I heard a member of the Women's Liberation, I think she was Swedish, just holding forth. I had never heard anything like that before - it was still early days for me in London. It was just after the formation of the Friends. And she was shrieking and howling and weeping, she was talking about the way in which men oppressed women. You would get the impression that every single man that had ever lived spent his whole time literally torturing the women that he knew. This was the impression that she was giving. This was the way she seemed to see things. And everybody was listening to her quite seriously as though she was talking sense, which she wasn't, but she was interrupting the proceedings and after about three quarters of an hour someone took the mike away from her. And she was in a real state. She was literally shrieking these things out through the microphone to these fifty or sixty people who were the organisers of the congress.

So one sees here a clear example of projection and paranoia. No one had taken anything away from her at all as far as I could see, but she thought they had.

I have not actually heard the gay liberationists but from what you say they seem to say much the same sort of thing with, perhaps, no more justification. I am not denying that women have sometimes been oppressed by men; it also seems to me that men have sometimes been oppressed by women. It is sometimes difficult to tell who is the more guilty in this respect.

_____: (inaudible)

S: Well, one does notice that liberated women don't tend to go for the dirty jobs in society which are always done by men, or the dangerous jobs. In fact, there are laws even protecting women from doing things like that. Usually they don't protest against those sort of laws.

Anyway, pretas. I am afraid some of these women's liberationists are going to be reborn as pretas, it seems.

So: 'In between are we poor miserable humans. Not knowing the golden treasure underground, From our fellow men we steal and cheat. The more we cheat and deceive, The more suffering we have to bear.' What is this golden treasure underground?

_____: The treasure inside oneself.

S: The treasure inside oneself, yes. We want to steal and cheat and deceive others in order to gain something outside, something external, that we have a craving for, the possession of which we attach importance to. We don't realise that the real treasure is within ourselves if we only develop ourselves more, experience ourselves more, we wouldn't be so concerned with external things and therefore not be tempted to cheat and deceive others in order to get them. All this seems pretty clear and obvious really. It is simply just to be put into practice. It doesn't really

require much in the way of explanation.

[End of side one side two]

Ray: In the previous verse when it says through their evil karma, is that karma in a previous life?

S: Presumably, yes. It is because of their own actions. Their own actions are rebounding upon them. [Pause]

Ratnaketu: Do you think Milarepa is making this comparison with the gods and the pretas (unclear)

S: Human beings are generally considered to be in a sort of middle state, aren't they? With not too much pleasure, not too much pain. The state of the gods is so pleasurable that they become deeply attached to that. The state of the pretas is so miserable that they have no time to think about the Dharma. Or rather, perhaps one could say the gods are unable to think about the Dharma because they are overwhelmed by pleasure, but the pretas are unable to think about it because they are overwhelmed by pain, by suffering. Both states are equally unfortunate, in a way. But in the case of human beings they experience sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain. So they don't experience so much pleasure that they forget about the Dharma or are unwilling to think about the Dharma, but they don't experience so much pain and suffering that they are unable to think about the Dharma. So: 'In between are we poor miserable humans. Not knowing the golden treasure underground, From our fellow men we steal and cheat. The more we cheat and deceive, The more suffering we have to bear.'

In the last verse Milarepa says: 'The foolish and "enterprising" patrons' He uses the word 'enterprising' ironically it seems, 'Of Nya Non acquire no merits through the Jetsun,' Although Milarepa is living in their midst for the time being, they aren't really making good use of him. 'But make offerings to young, handsome Repas' They are impressed by quite superficial things. They are attracted more by Rechungpa just because he is young and handsome and he has been to India. Milarepa is an old man. He is not very attractive in appearance and he hasn't been to India. So they are not very attracted by him.

You actually do find that. Again, this is something I talked about with my Ceylon bhikkhu friends. I remember some of them telling me that lay people were definitely more inclined to listen to, or more attracted by, handsome young monks. And they regarded this as entirely natural. Perhaps it is. And they said that monks, when looking around for suitable boys to admit to the temples, usually tried to select those who were good looking because they knew that a good looking monk is more attractive to the laity than an ugly one and it contributed to the support of the sangha if there is a greater number of good looking monks in it. So this is, you might say, applied psychology. You can see this. You can see it even sometimes among Order Members. That those who are a bit presentable, a bit good looking, a bit attractive, a bit of charisma, are certainly pulling in more people than those who are not because people are attracted by these things. Perhaps, you can say, well, it is not altogether a bad thing, and that if you are positive and lively you will have a sort of attractiveness anyway, even if, maybe, you are not technically good looking.

But lay people, or let's say, ordinary people, are attracted by these things. These things weigh with them when perhaps they shouldn't. If a monk is old and stooping and wrinkled and maybe he has only got one eye and he doesn't speak very well, people are not so likely to be attracted by

him whatever his knowledge of the Dharma, whatever his spiritual understanding might be. This often happens. Whereas a handsome and upstanding young monk with rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes and a glib tongue, well, he'll have many followers and supporters.

Therefore Milarepa says: 'The foolish and enterprising patrons of Nya Non acquire no merit through the Jetsun, but make offerings to young, handsome Repas' It is not only the women, the men too are unconsciously attracted by those who are younger and brighter and better looking and so on. It seems almost a universal thing. Maybe not just who are better looking but who are more travelled and more experienced and even more worldly. You might find in our centres most people would rather maybe talk to an Order Member who is just back from New Zealand or just back from America than talk to one who has spent all his time around the LBC.

'Yet remorse and shame are all their alms will bring' because they haven't been offered with a genuine spiritual motive. 'Enterprises so wrong and meaningless should cease, So give your services and offerings to the Buddhas!'. He is not even saying to the good yogis - to the Buddhas. That is important. Offer to the Buddha. Make your offerings to the Buddha. He is saying, perhaps, 'Go for refuge'. Genuinely go for refuge. But what he is again really getting at is that the offerings are not real offerings, because real offerings are made to genuinely spiritual people for the sake of helping them to lead a genuinely spiritual life, to support them in that effort. But when you think in terms not of people who are making a genuine spiritual effort, but people who are younger and more attractive and more handsome and more travelled, then the offerings that you make for those sort of reasons are not genuinely spiritual offerings at all. They are not offerings in fact.

_____: But is it genuine skilful means to make them...(unclear)..

S: This depends upon motivation. Obviously if you are going to try to put across the Dharma you should be acceptable, even pleasing, to the people you are trying to put it across to. But your aim and object all the time must be to propagate the Dharma and you have to be very careful that you don't end up thinking more about making yourself acceptable to them than about putting the Dharma across to them. But certainly you won't do anything that you know is offensive to them. Assuming that that is something not of an ethical character. If you know that they find vegetarianism offensive, it doesn't mean that you will give up vegetarianism. But if you know that someone is allergic, say, to blue, well, you will not wear a blue shirt when you are trying to talk to them about the Dharma. That sort of thing doesn't matter. You can adapt in that way.

You must be careful not to impress or try to impress other people with your personality for the sake of impressing them with your personality. What you must really be impressing them with is the Dharma. If they are impressed by your personality it is of no value except to the extent that your personality does reflect or communicate the Dharma. It's very easy to think that, well, if you've made a hit with people, then the Dharma has made a hit with people, but it is not necessarily the case. Though on the other hand you need perhaps to establish friendly personal relations with someone, in a sense for their own sake, before you start talking about the Dharma.

But you mustn't identify your personal success with someone with the success of the Dharma. It should be the Dharma in you, or the Dharma that you embody or the Dharma that you reflect, that is the success with them. You mustn't get in the way of the Dharma. You mustn't become a distraction for them. The Dharma is the main thing. You can get examples of that sort of thing. [Pause]

If you are an Order Member somebody might come over to the centre, some young lady, and she might come up to you for instruction in the

Dharma and you might start giving her instruction. But in the end she might be so fascinated by your dazzling personality that she might fall in love with you and might eventually become your girlfriend. So if you just allow the relationship to stay on that level, to her you are now not an Order Member, but just a lover, then you've got in the way. You as a person have got in the way of her understanding of the Dharma. You've allowed her to be diverted from the Dharma to you. So that sort of situation you should not accept, should not allow yourself to be drawn into. You have become more important to her or to anybody than the Dharma, because initially, presumably, that particular person came along for the sake of the Dharma.

Now, I am not saying that personal friendships should not develop. They will, of various kinds. But what is important is that the Dharma aspect, the Dharma element, remains definitely and unmistakably and unambiguously predominant.

Bob: (inaudible)

S: Well, what I am speaking of is if you are, as it were, representing the Dharma, and you are, as it were, an attractive personality and people become attracted to you because of that attractive personality, then it is your responsibility to see that the personal element doesn't start outweighing the Dharma element. You have got to bear in mind all the time that you are primarily communicating the Dharma. Do you see what I mean? Even though you do develop friendships, even relationships with people, but the Dharma must be the main thing. Do you see what I mean? I am speaking especially say of Order Members, those who are definitely committed to the Dharma.

Bob: It definitely seems to imply that sometimes an Order member on duty and sometimes he isn't.

S: Oh no, he's always on duty.

Bob: Yes, exactly. It seems to imply.....

S: No. To give you an example. Supposing an Order Member goes away on holiday. All right, the people he comes into contact with do not know he is an Order Member. They do not know anything about Buddhism. So they might become friendly with him. So obviously he is not going to start talking about Buddhism straight away because they have just met, perhaps under ordinary social circumstances. He might become friendly with somebody, but then under those circumstances he may not say very much about Buddhism straight away. But if he was to become genuinely friendly, and he was to start getting to know them and they were starting to get to know him, something of the Dharma would, as it were, creep in as he was being more and more himself. Do you see what I mean?

So, in that case, if he were genuinely committed to the Dharma, he wouldn't allow, in fact it wouldn't be possible, for the friendship as it deepened to remain without any spiritual element. Because the other person couldn't, in fact, get to know him well, or be real friends with him unless they started knowing about that Dharma element in his life. And he wouldn't be true to that if he kept quiet about it or even concealed it. Do you see what I mean?

So it is just a question of what position you start from. If you are taking classes, say, at the centre and people are coming to you, clearly and as it were publicly, you are standing for the Dharma, that is the main thing. So if people approach you, you shouldn't forget that yourself, nor should you allow them to forget it. But if you are functioning outside the centre situation and if you meet people under, as it were, neutral auspices, well the situation is different. But nonetheless the Dharma is still uppermost in your life and sooner or later, if you do make any friends under those, say, neutral auspices, they will become aware, sooner or later, of the importance of the Dharma in your life. If you make friends say, outside the centre or outside the community, and suppose you are meeting them and going about with them for years and they still don't even know you are a Buddhist, well, what sort of a Buddhist are you?

So whether directly or indirectly, sooner or later the fact must become obvious that the Dharma is the main thing in your life and to the extent that you do know people, you relate to them primarily on that basis.

_____: (inaudible)

S: Right. This used to be a problem or difficulty in the old days. I have mentioned in many lectures that I used to visit those little Buddhist groups up and down the country. There was one particular woman who had been coming along to one group for years and she used to boast, well, she used to be quite proud of the fact that she had been working in the same firm for, I think, seventeen years, and she had been a Buddhist for, I think it was eleven or twelve years, and she said nobody that she worked with had any idea that she was a Buddhist and she seemed to think that this was not only quite right, but a desirable sort of thing to do. That you just didn't let people know what you really were, what you really thought. That seems quite incredible.

So I say that an Order Member is always on duty in the sense that even when he is functioning outside the centre and comes in contact with people under what I call neutral auspices, even though he doesn't deliberately start talking about Buddhism, or meet them for that sort of reason, or relate to them in that sort of way from the beginning, for obvious reasons, but nonetheless, on account of the fact that he is committed, his tendency all the time will be to do that. Not just to remain, as it were, under those neutral auspices and just relate to the people that he meets just like anybody else. So in that sense he is always on duty, even though he is not wearing his kesa. Just as a policeman is always on duty - a maybe not very fortunate comparison, but you see what I mean!. If a policeman sees a crime being committed but he's not in uniform, he won't say, "It's nothing, to do with me. I'm not in uniform." He will just take action, he is always on duty. So an Order member, or even a mitra, or whatever, can't say, "I'm not on duty, I'm not taking a class now, this is my holiday so I can forget about the Dharma and just relate to this particular person in a completely non Dharmic Way; That is just not possible.

_____: if you are truly committed to Buddhism then you wouldn't

S: You wouldn't, no.

Bob: But I would think much more in terms of the other person. I myself was much more impressed by the personality.

S: When one says impressed by the personality, what does one mean? Ideally one should be impressed by positive qualities amounting to, in

fact, the presence of the Dharma reflected in that particular person.

Bob: But obviously one makes the connection with the person involved theoretical
are engaged by the individual rather than by what the individual says.

S: Yes, but if the attraction goes beyond the ordinary sort of[social attraction, then even though you don't know it, what you are attracted by is the Dharma element, even though you are not able to identify it as such, because you don't think in those terms. So therefore it is important, to go back to looking at it from the point of view of the Order Member, let's take the case of the Order Member, it's important that he keeps that Dharma element alive in his dealings with everybody he meets, even though he isn't, as it were, functioning officially as an Order Member. In that sense he is never off duty. [Pause]

That's the end of the song. You notice that Milarepa speaks in terms of young, handsome Repas. Youth and handsomeness are quite external qualities.

Milarepa concludes: 'So give your services and offerings to the Buddhas!' Or if you like, the Buddha-like qualities, the genuinely spiritual or genuinely transcendental qualities. [Pause]

_____: You never can relax.

S: You can never have a little holiday, moral or otherwise.

_____: (unclear)

_____: (unclear)

S: Milarepa is very direct, isn't he?

_____: (unclear - too far from the microphone and very softly spoken)

S: The overall context is Buddhist. They can't deny the truth of what Milarepa says because they do claim to be Buddhists and they have some rough idea of what it's all about even if they aren't to practise it. But you have to be quite careful how you speak to people in those terms. They may well just react violently. One shouldn't just follow Milarepa's example in an unmindful sort of way. Well, to begin with, you are not Milarepa and to begin with the situation is quite different. But certainly be as blunt, well, at least as straightforward and open and honest as you possibly can. And in dealing with people don't allow them to put you in a false position. That is to say, don't relate on their terms in a group-like sort of way.

For instance, if you are an Order Member functioning at a centre and a young lady comes up to you and tries to treat you in a very un-Order Member-like sort of way, don't tolerate it. Just make it clear you are not there for that purpose. [Pause]

Well, we'll leave it there till tomorrow. Tomorrow we have a bit of prose and we have a song and we have the conclusions. Tomorrow of course, is the last day, so it means we will be able to finish the whole chapter, which is good. Perhaps do a little bit of revision.

(End of Session)

Next Session - Day Seven

S: Well Milarepa has been giving the patrons, as the translator calls them, quite a tough time. Anyway they seem to be taking it in the right sort of spirit. So let's hear now what they have to say in response to Milarepa's latest assault on them. Would someone like to read that prose portion first.

Their faith confirmed, the patrons all bowed down to the Jetsun many times and shed many tears. "Oh Revered Jetsun" they cried, "We beg you to remain here permanently. From now on we will give our offerings and services in accordance with the teaching of Dharma." Milarepa replied, "I cannot stay here long but I will bestow the blessing of long life and good health upon all of you. Also I will make a wish that we meet again under auspicious circumstances conducive to the Dharma".

S: The text says "Their faith confirmed", but judging by what Milarepa has been having to say to them, they didn't really have very much faith to begin with. But anyway, they are affected. They all bowed down to the Jetsun many times, they shed many tears and they beg him to remain with them permanently. They are going right to the other extreme as it were. Before they couldn't even bring him any decent offerings. They very much preferred the young handsome Rechungpa who'd been to India. They neglected poor old Milarepa. But anyway now they are asking him to remain with them permanently and promising to give their offerings and services in accordance with the teaching of the Dharma. But Milarepa tells them that he cannot stay there long, but nonetheless he'll bless them that they may live long and enjoy good health and he'll make a wish that they meet again 'under auspicious circumstances conducive to the Dharma', which can mean almost anything. It could mean in Heaven, so to speak, in the Pure Land. Not necessarily here upon earth. And

Then he sang:

*In the immense blue sky above,
Roll on the sun and moon. Their
Courses mark the change of time.
Blue sky, I wish you health and fortune,
For I, the moon-and-sun, am leaving
To visit the Four Continents for pleasure.*

*On the mountain peak is a great Rock
Round which oft the vulture circles,
The king of birds. Their meeting
And their parting mark the change of time.
Dear rock, be well and healthy, for I,
The vulture, now will fly away
Into the vast space for pleasure.
May lightnings never strike you,
May I not be caught by snares.
Inspired by the Dharma,
May we soon meet again
In prosperity and boon.*

*Below in the Tsang River,
Swim fish with golden eyes;
Their meeting and their parting
Mark the change of time.
Dear stream, be well and healthy, for I, the fish
Am leaving for the Ganges for diversion.
May irrigators never drain you,
May fishermen ne'er net me.
Inspired by the Dharma,
May we soon meet again
In prosperity and boon.*

*In the fair garden blooms the flower, Halo;
Circling round it is the Persian bee.
Their meeting and their parting
Mark the change of time.
Dear flower, be well and healthy, for I
Will see the Ganges' blooms for pleasure.
May hail not beat down upon you,
May winds blow me not away.
Inspired by the Dharma,
May we soon meet again
In prosperity and boon.*

*Circling round the Yogi Milarepa
Are the faithful patrons from Nya Non;
Their meeting and their parting
Mark the change of time.
Be well and healthy, dear patrons, as I
Leave for the far mountains for diversion.
May I, the Yogi, make good progress,
And you, my patrons, all live long.
Inspired by the Dharma,
May we soon meet again
In prosperity and boon.*

S: So Milarepa says or sings, 'In the immense blue sky above, Roll on the sun and moon.' You notice Milarepa seems to subscribe to a geocentric theory of the universe! 'Their courses mark the change of time, Blue sky, I wish you health and fortune, For I, the moon-and-sun, am leaving To visit the Four Continents for pleasure.' It's Milarepa's way of bidding farewell. In what sense is he the moon-and-sun. Well he's the moon-and-sun of the Dharma isn't he. Giving people the light of the Dharma. What do you think he means by wishing health and fortune to the Blue Sky? In what sense is one to take this? [Pause] How can you wish health and fortune to the Blue Sky? What does this mean? It seems a bit nonsensical doesn't it, if you take it literally? The Blue Sky is never ill! It has no question of poverty or riches. So in what sense does Milarepa wish the Blue Sky health and fortune?

_____: Is it a symbol to the world?

S: Blue sky is blue sky I would have thought! [Laughter] 'In the immense blue sky above roll on the sun and moon' - let's over look that. 'Their courses mark the change of time. Blue sky, I wish you health and fortune...' It isn't really a statement about the blue sky at all, is it. What is it a statement about?

Ray: The blue sky stands for a permanent state....

S: I prefer to take it as just blue sky. Well to begin with anyway. We can go step by step.

Bob: (unclear)

S: Perhaps you're getting a bit closer. So what is it really a statement about if it's not really a statement about the blue sky? It's a statement about Milarepa. It tells you how Milarepa is feeling. It's not really a statement about the blue sky. It's not that literally Milarepa is wishing health and fortune to the blue sky. He just feels in a very good mood, as in fact probably he always does. Supposing you have the experience, you wake up

in the morning, you feel really good, really happy. You just feel like as it were blessing everything and wishing well to everything. Towards the trees, towards the sun, towards the flowers, towards the sky, towards the cows in the field, even human beings, you wish them all well. And probably, one must remember they are right up in the mountains and the sky is the most obvious thing. The clear blue sky, you can't ignore it. It's the first thing you see, the first thing you think of.

So in the immense blue sky above etc., etc., and blue sky, I wish you health and fortune. It just tells you what a good mood Milarepa is in. He's sort of blessing everything, he's blessing the first thing he sees, namely in this case the blue sky. It's a bit like, on a very different level, Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' isn't it. Do you know what verses I'm thinking of? When the ancient mariner is watching the sea creatures playing, and he sees how beautiful they are, all their wonderful colours gleaming and flashing, and what does the ancient mariner say? - And I blessed them unaware - It's when he blesses those sea creatures that the albatross falls from his neck. Do you remember?

So maybe it's just a tiny bit like that. Milarepa's in such a good mood, so to speak, he just feels like blessing everything, wishing health and fortune to everything, and he starts off with the blue sky. So it's not a statement about the blue sky. You mustn't take it literally that Milarepa does seriously believe that the blue sky could suffer from ill health or misfortune. No, it just expresses the exuberance of his mood.

For I, the moon-an-sun, am leaving to visit the Four Continents for pleasure. It's as though he's saying goodbye to the blue sky, because he is leaving, he is going to visit the Four Continents. Well I'm not quite sure what that means because the Four Continents are the Four Continents of the traditional Buddhist world system, of which Jambudvīpa, our world, is one. It could mean that he's going to another continent, it could mean that he's going out of this world altogether, could mean that he's going to die, it could mean that.

Ratnaketu: (unclear)

S: Yes. And of course as we've seen he'll come eventually to the point that they are; they having met are now going to part, he's going away.

So 'On the mountain peak is a great Rock Round which oft the vulture circles, The king of birds. Their meeting And their parting mark the change of time.' Presumably the vulture is flying round the mountain and say every so many hours he comes back to the rock and round again, so in this way their meeting marks the change of time, the passing of time.

'Dear rock, be well and healthy, for I, The vulture, now will fly away Into the vast space for pleasure. May lightnings never strike you, May I not be caught by snares. Inspired by the Dharma, May we soon meet again In prosperity and boon.' You notice he uses the expression 'Dear Rock be well and healthy' - it's as though everything is alive to him. He addresses the blue sky in much the same sort of terms. He looks upon everything with mettā, even inanimate things. This reminds me of something that happened sometime ago, that someone somewhere - I won't give any details - was teaching the mettā bhāvana and was including mettā towards rocks and stones. So the question was asked, or I was eventually asked well can one develop mettā towards rocks and stones, and should one include this in the practice. So I said this wasn't traditionally part of the practice and I thought we shouldn't do it. But nonetheless if you did develop your mettā very powerfully and it was a state in which you constantly were, well you'd feel that metta towards everything at which you happened to look. You'd feel love and goodwill, not only towards

human beings, not only towards animals and plants, but towards the whole of existence, even including the so-called inanimate nature, even minerals, even rocks and stones, even the sky, the earth, space itself.

So Milarepa seems to be in this sort of mood. He is even addressing the rock as 'Dear Rock' and wishing it may be well and healthy. Though literally how can you have a healthy rock or an unhealthy rock! It's rather ridiculous, but nonetheless it isn't really ridiculous. The expression expresses Milarepa's deep feeling.

So here he compares himself to the vulture who is not going to circle round the mountain any longer, he's going to fly away to 'the vast space for pleasure'. You notice this expression 'for pleasure'. In the first verse he says, 'for I the moon-and-sun am leaving to visit the Four Continents for pleasure.' Again he says here, 'I, the vulture, now will fly away into the vast space for pleasure.' So what do you think is the significance of the expression, 'for pleasure'? I'd rather translate it as something like 'out of sheer bliss'. Something like that.

I think this verse actually makes the previous one clearer. I think in the previous verse one must bear in mind traditional Buddhist cosmology. You've got in the middle of the world system Mount Meru, and in this system the sun and the moon circle round and round Mount Meru. So it's not just a geocentric system, it's a Meru-centric system, and it's as though spread out as it were on the four sides of the mountain are the Four Continents. So it's as though in this first verse Milarepa is imagining himself to be the moon and the sun - in his case the moon and sun of the Dharma - circling round Mount Meru. That is to say in a sense staying in one place. But now he says he's leaving, he's leaving to visit the Four Continents at the foot of the mountain, for pleasure. But in the second verse he compares himself to the vulture circling round the mountain and coming back every so many hours to the Rock. But now he says the vulture, with which he identifies himself, is now going to fly away. You see the parallelism. But for pleasure - out of sheer bliss, or purely spontaneously.

'May lightnings never strike you, may I not be caught by snares, inspired by the Dharma, may we soon meet again in prosperity and boon.' It's a sort of farewell song. He's coming closer and closer to the point.

'Below in the Tsang River, Swim fish with golden eyes; Their meeting and their parting Mark the change of time. Dear stream, be well and healthy, for I, the fish Am leaving for the Ganges for diversion.' He's going upstream, going from the Ocean up the Ganges just for diversion. 'May irrigators never drain you, May fishermen ne'er net me. Inspired by the Dharma, May we soon meet again In prosperity and boon.' It's the same basic idea expressed in somewhat different terms, different imagery.

And then 'In the fair garden blooms the flower, Halo; Circling round it is the Persian bee. Their meeting and their parting Mark the change of time. Dear flower, be well and healthy, for I Will see the Ganges' blooms for pleasure. May hail not beat down upon you, May winds blow me not away. Inspired by the Dharma, May we soon meet again In prosperity and boon.' It's as though Milarepa's in a very mellow mood. He's blessing everything, but at the same time he's saying that he is in fact going away.

'Circling round the Yogi Milarepa Are the faithful patrons from Nya Non;' Well they've become faithful patrons now you notice. 'Their meeting and their parting Mark the change of time. Be well and healthy, dear patrons, as I Leave for the far mountains for diversion.' You notice he says

for diversion. Spending all his time meditating in a cave for Milarepa is diversion. He enjoys it so much. 'May I, the Yogi, make good progress, And you, my patrons, all live long. Inspired by the Dharma, May we soon meet again In prosperity and boon.'

So

Moved by this song, some patrons became devoted followers of the Jetsun, and the faith of all was greatly strengthened.

Some patrons became devoted followers. The text doesn't want to exaggerate. But the faith of all was greatly strengthened. Milarepa's words had some effect on all of them.

So this is Milarepa's goodbye to these patrons of Nya Non. [Pause] All right, any further query about this song? It's more simple and straightforward than many of the songs have been. As I said Milarepa seems to be in a rather mellow sort of spiritual mood here.

Siddhiratna: I don't like the word 'prosperity' in it.

S: Well what's wrong with prosperity? After all he's talking to lay people.

Siddhiratna: I would see it in the material sense.

S: Well what's even wrong with that?

Siddhiratna: Well like sort of castigated them earlier for seeing things in material terms.

S: But if prosperity comes, as it were, of its own accord, there's nothing wrong with that. You can just make good use of whatever riches come your way. It's quite all right for Milarepa to wish them prosperity. It's quite another matter for themselves to crave after prosperity.

Subhuti: Do you think there's any implied comparison between the patrons and the blue sky and the.....

S: No, the comparison is with Milarepa, isn't it, because then he says 'circling round the Yogi Milarepa', so therefore he's comparing himself in the first place to the sun and moon; then he compares himself to the vulture, then to the fish with golden eyes, and then he compares himself to the bee and then he speaks of the patrons circling around him. First of all he compares himself with something that circles round another object and then he speaks in terms of the patrons who encircle him. The patrons don't seem to have any place in the earlier verses. It's as though he's concerned mainly with the theme of parting. You notice this seems to be a characteristic of his verse, or many of his verses from a literary point of view; that he starts off with something remote and then comes closer and closer to what he really wants to say, but repeating the same kind of pattern of imagery, or same kind of reflection again and again. Well he starts off with the cosmos itself, according to the ancient Buddhist model, and then he comes to an ordinary mountain peak, then by natural association of ideas, the river, and then the bee, and then after that himself and

the patrons.

Ratnaketu: I remember when I first saw - I'm not sure what it is but it constitutes birth, disease, old age, death, and parting. I was quite surprised that there was parting there.

S: Well these are different kind of suffering. It's not just parting, it's parting from what is dear and being conjoined with what is not dear. These are forms of suffering. But did you not think that it was suffering to part with those who are dear to you?

Ratnaketu: I didn't at first, but when I left New Zealand.....

S: Ah, you did, I remember that! Perhaps you hadn't actually experienced it before, really parting from anyone who was dear, but you probably did realise then that it could be painful, or at least not very pleasant. Even though you were going to England. And also being conjoined with those whom one doesn't like - this can be no less painful, having to live and work with people that you don't like, with whom you don't get on, with whom you don't approve of.

I can't help thinking, in connection with this first verse, where you get this brief reference to the ancient Buddhist system of cosmology, that it's a great pity that it isn't true. It's much more sort of inspiring, I think, than the modern scientific version. There's this tremendous mountain in the centre of the picture and these four islands surrounded by seas and chains of mountains and seas and chains of mountains with the sun and the moon circling round this central peak, and the gods and goddesses living on the slopes. It seems much more impressive in a way. Maybe I'm just not very scientifically minded. I remember asking a young Tibetan incarnate lama, only sixteen or seventeen but he was very bright, so I thought let's just see how bright he is, let me see how he answers one or two questions [Laughter] so one of the questions I put to him was you've studied now a little bit of modern science and you must have learned the heliocentric theory of the universe, how does that compare with the traditional Buddhist question with Mount Meru and all the rest? - Which is the correct one according to you, which is true? So he thought for a moment and he said, "The one is useful for certain purposes and the other is useful for certain other purposes!". So I felt that was quite a good reply.

Bob: In that traditional (unclear) where would the hell realm and the hungry ghosts

S: I'm afraid they're right underneath Mount Meru in like a sort of dungeon as it were. You could say there's a sort of anti-Meru underneath Meru. A bit like in Dante's system. Do you remember?

Subhuti: Isn't it on the slopes of Mount Meru are the successive god realms?

S: Yes. Right, among the lower slopes are the four guardian kings and you go up and up. No, just a moment, the kamaloka devas, and I think the lower rupaloka devas are situated on the slopes, but the higher devas are above in subtler worlds. There's a sort of inverted cone as it were. The worlds from that world sort of spread out in greater and greater planes as it were. They expand. That's how they usually are represented.

Subhuti: A bit like chinese ()

S: Yes you could say that. So you get a sort of hourglass shaped figure. You get the cone of Mount Meru going up to a point and then you get the inverted cone, as it were balanced on that, which represents a whole system of finer, non-material worlds, each one more inclusive than the last, so it's represented as wider, a wider section of the cone.

_____ : In what sense more inclusive?

S: Well in the same way that one speaks of expansion of consciousness. The higher you go in the dhyanas the more consciousness expands. Anyway all that's by the by. It's a pity that the Meru system isn't literally true, but anyway for certain purposes, as the young lama says, well it's useful. In a sense it is true. We need not discard it altogether by any means. After all we still say that the sun rises and the sun sets. In terms of our actual experience that it what happens. We have to think that it's the earth that is moving and not the sun. Our senses tell us that the sun is moving. So even though we're theoretical heliocentrics, we're practical geocentrics, so we can just as well be Meru-centrics! [Laughter] for sort of practical spiritual purposes. Any further point.

If there isn't perhaps you'd like to go back over what we've done in the course of the week and see whether there's anything that we need to go over again or go into a bit more deeply. [Pause] Though of course we mustn't forget we've got a final paragraph, but anyway perhaps we can take that later on. [Long Pause]

Ratnaketu: Something that I was thinking about this morning was how you said that in many ways you sort of know the trick. You were saying before that we know too much about Buddhism. How do you think we can get around that? Do we have to forget something or have a different emphasis?

S: I think the first thing that we have to do is really to acknowledge that our knowledge is in fact theoretical. I think a lot of people aren't able to grasp that point. I'm not so much thinking about people in the Friends but people in various Buddhist groups - that they're not sufficiently aware of the distinction between knowledge in the ordinary sense and being. They think that knowledge is being in effect. So one just has to remind oneself constantly that that sort of knowledge is not being at all. That's certainly one thing that one can do, to constantly remind oneself of the distinction between what you've just heard, what you've reflected on and understood intellectually, and what you've actually experienced, and keep telling oneself that what one knows, theoretically, is probably a hundred or a thousand times greater than what one has actually experienced for oneself. Not allow oneself to confuse knowledge with being. That sort of knowledge is only a pseudo-being, but quite a lot of people think that if they understand something intellectually they know it, that in a sense they are that. They need not bother about it any more, need not bother trying to practise it or trying to realise it - they know it! And they think that that is sufficient. In other words they identify that sort of knowing with being. One might understand intellectually the theory of non-duality, but as regards your being, your being experiences duality, you being is based on duality. It has nothing to do with non-duality. So your spiritual practice therefore has to assume non-duality.

One has to remind oneself that most of the things one knows one just knows intellectually. That knowledge has no effect on one's being, it

doesn't find expression in one's being, and that it is one's being that one has to work on all the time. There's quite a lot of people who have read all sorts of books on Buddhism, especially Zen books, thought that they've understood them, and they read that the goal of Buddhism is Enlightenment and they think that they understand what Enlightenment is, so they don't really feel any need to practise and attain Enlightenment. It's almost as though they thought that because they understand what Enlightenment is intellectually, they've actually experienced it, they've realised it. They might admit theoretically 'oh well of course I don't claim to have realised it' but the way they say it it's as though they really feel that in a sense they have realised it just by understanding it intellectually. They are unable to think in any other terms. They don't realise the extent to which their being differs from their knowledge.

So one needs to remain very aware of that distinction. Maybe ask oneself well am I speaking from being or am I just speaking from knowledge in the theoretical sense, in the intellectual sense? [Pause]

Bob: Is the value of knowing () simply as a means of helping one to Insight. Because otherwise it would seem like you'd be better off not.....

S: Well it depends how strong is one's faith, especially in say Vajrayana terms, faith in the guru, because in the Buddha's day people, let's say, had great faith in him because the guru-disciple relationship was a very well known one, one that was widely appreciated, even outside the circle of the Buddha's disciples. So what happened in those days was that you went along to a teacher, to a guru, and he taught you what you needed to know, and he didn't teach you anything that you didn't need to know. For instance you read in the Upanishads of a disciple going along to his teacher say at intervals of twenty years. At the end of twenty years he goes along to the teacher, asks him one question, gets a very short reply and then goes away and practises that for the next twenty years, and he comes again and asks another question - this goes on for about a hundred years! So that was the sort of approach. But now we want to know the whole of the theory before we take up any of the practice.

So, all right, you just have to, in a way accept people on their own terms, you have to meet them half way at least, and give them a general idea of the whole system, at least as far as you can or as best you can, and then being convinced, as it were, about the whole system, they actually agree to start practising. But if someone was to come along to you at the Centre and they were to say 'what shall I do?' 'Practise non-violence' you might say, 'practice non-violence, go and do that for two or three years, then come back.' Well what do you think they'll do? [Laughter] They won't go away and practise non-violence and then come back after two or three years, when their practise of non-violence is complete, for the next precept - no, you won't see them again probably. They'll think 'well fancy saying a thing like that, I wanted to know all about Buddhism, I wanted to know about Buddhist philosophy, I want to practise it.' They wouldn't appreciate your approach at all. So you have to talk about all sorts of things that in a sense are not - well I was going to say not ready for, they're not ready for them really in any sense, not even theoretically - sometimes they find it quite difficult to understand the theory, what to speak about anything else.

But that is the way, in varying degrees, that one has to approach people. Some people require more of a theoretical explanation, some less. I think you can get away with very little if there is a way of life in obvious operation. That's why if you've got your Centres functioning and your Co-ops and your Communities, then you can validly say well look it's difficult to explain too much of the theory, just come and join in and see how it works, but you've got to have something which you can invite people to come and experience. But even so you'll probably find that a lot

of people need to know, or want to know, quite a lot about the theory - to have a general intellectual understanding of what it is all about - before they feel able or willing actually to practise.

Bob: If one is living in a community and working in a co-op and knows that that's where you want to be.....

S: Well you can feel that you are growing in that situation.

Bob: studies in order to be able to explain the Dharma to other people, rather than any particular.....

S: Well yes, if you find that you have all that you need within the practical situation and are able to keep on growing, well then yes, your study or the greater part of your study, is more for the purposes of communication. But on the other hand you may need to study something for your own sake as well, especially when it comes say to developing Insight. You'll need a basis for that. So you'll need to have some idea about the Buddhist teaching of impermanence and so on, or about sunyata, so that when you start developing vipassana, you've a support, a conceptual support for that. Otherwise you'll hardly know what to do.

Bob: I'm very interested in what you were talking about the other day when you were talking about developing Insight and how you develop Insight from the first dhyana. I'd always assumed that you got up to the top and then jumped.....

S: Jumped.

Bob: But then I thought about it some more and getting into the dhyanas is quite enough of a balance.....

S: I think also one must remember that it isn't as though one's mind is a complete blank. It isn't as though one is really a sort of philosophical innocent. Actually you have a philosophy or quite a jumble of philosophies, or what you call in Buddhism micchaditthis. [Laughter] So you need to study Buddhism, in the sense of study it, so to speak intellectually, at least to remove your micchaditthis. You might for instance have the micchaditthis of thinking that words can be taken quite literally. It's only after a certain amount of study that you realise that you can't take words quite literally. In the other study group we had a discussion about in what sense was the blocked emotion actually a sort of thing inside you like an object in a box. Well if you take language too literally that's the way you start thinking. So you need a certain amount of study of the Dharma to remove micchaditthis that are actually there. If your mind was quite blank in that respect, if you didn't have any sort of micchaditthis, you wouldn't need to study, but actually, without your knowing it, your mind is full of micchaditthis which you pick up in the course of your education, maybe in the course of your other reading.

[End of side one, side two]

So study helps there too. You might have vague ideas at the back of your mind about God or vague confusions about karma and fate. All that needs to be sorted out, cleared out of the way. So in that way also study is useful, because if micchaditthis aren't cleared out of the way or cleared

up it's difficult to develop insight.

Ratnaketu: I've been feeling lately that as far as things like pujas are concerned and devotion (unclear) I know that I'm supplicating the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as an aspect of my own.....

S: Yes, but you only know that in a theoretical way. You have to go back to a bit of good healthy old-fashioned dualism. It's better actually to think that there are Buddhas out there, actually existing, than to think that Buddhas are just aspects of your own mind in a purely theoretical sort of way.

Ratnaketu: If there's just a theoretical understanding...

S: It inhibits the practice. So you have to be true to your actual experience regardless of what the theory is, or what you think is the theory. Sometimes people ask me whether they should pray to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, I say well if you feel like praying, pray. You can sort out the theory of it afterwards! [Long Pause]

What do you think are the most important emphases that have emerged in the course of this chapter, if it is in fact possible to generalise in that way?

Ratnaketu: To always continually be aware of why you are actually doing or thinking something, and the superficiality where are you really at and are you just superficially acting out something.

S: I think we mentioned yesterday that the whole chapter seemed in a way like a commentary on the second fetter.

_____: And it talks quite a lot about pleasure.

S: That's true, yes indeed. And about samatha and vipassana. It would be a good thing if some of this material was written up in sort of article or essay form very soon and put into general circulation. In this connection I was also thinking about this whole business of transcribing and editing. It's as though sooner or later we've got to make really systematic arrangements for putting material in circulation. I was even thinking - this is just me thinking aloud so don't take it too seriously, not just yet anyway - but it's as though we need to get a whole team of people working on the transcribing and editing even. I don't know that we have anybody at present who can do the editing. It looks as though I still have to do it all myself, but it would be good if we had a sort of publication that brought out every month whatever had been transcribed and edited from the tapes. Maybe in sort of *Ola Leaf* format, like a *Shabda*. We did used to have in each issue of *Shabda* a few pages of edited transcript but it became difficult for me to keep that up, and also I didn't like just editing bits and pieces from here and there. But it's as though we need another publication of one kind or another, just making this material regularly available. At least bringing out a few hundred copies of each issue.

Siddhiratna: We were talking the other day about trying to plan a year in advance so that we could put several things together in a book rather

than (*spoken very quietly and not decipherable by the poor transcriber!!*) work it out a year in advance and get each section very carefully defined (). It would actually be very good to do that.

S: Yes, because a lot of material is being transcribed which is extremely useful. Transcribed by the Aryatara team, but there's not much in the way of editing and publishing of edited material going on.

Siddhiratna: The editing actually is the problem area.

S: Yes, that's where the block is occurring because at present I feel I'm the only one who can do it. There's more in it than I think meets the eye, because first of all when I edit I listen to the tape at the same time and it's amazing how many words even the best of transcribers misses or mishears, and sometimes emphases are wrongly placed, sometimes a single sentence is made out of two sentences in such a way that the meaning is also.... or part of a sentence is joined onto another sentence because the transcriber has only got the sounds and has to sort of work out the sentences and the clauses for himself or herself. Sometimes that is not done correctly. Sometimes words are misheard in a way that alters the meaning. Not just Pali and Sanskrit words, even English words. Sometimes I use on occasion words which are not quite familiar, people hear something else. I think in one place I used a word something like 'Partisan' and that had been regularly transcribed as 'Positive', which altered the meaning.

So there's that, and then there's slightly recasting, well not just recasting but sometimes you can bring out the meaning quite well by imaginative punctuation, and quite a few of our friends just don't even know how to construct a sentence, even an ordinary simple sentence or complex sentence. When it comes say to using semi-colons and colons they're completely stumped! So there are limitations. And then you have to grasp the meaning. Well what am I saying? Sometimes I have to study the transcript quite carefully myself to realise what actually I am trying to say, and listen to the tape where I put the emphasis, and where the pause comes when I'm speaking, and then translate that into visual terms in terms of sentence construction, capitalisation, underlining and so on. And then sometimes the meaning isn't fully clear, I bring it out more fully by adding words in square brackets. So editing involves all this sort of thing.

Siddhiratna: This is editing the sort of verbatim transcript isn't it. It's not editing in terms of.....

S: It's not editing in the sense of condensing or rearranging. This is quite basic editing. Minimum editing you could say. Just to bring the meaning out. Perhaps the whole thing could be arranged in a better way, but I don't do that. I just edit simply, to make the meaning clear. I hardly ever cut, I very rarely cut anything.

_____ : The Bodhicaryavatara is more or less verbatim.

S: Oh yes, yes. Especially nowadays if I want to modify anything I add in square brackets. Sometimes when - because it is after all the spoken work - sometimes when my expressions have been over colloquial I change slightly but not very much. Or if sometimes I've used one or two words too many, I cut them. Sometimes I might say well 'very very much', but on consideration all that I really need to say is 'very much', so I

cut one 'very'. It's things like that. But sometimes I might think well no, I really meant very very much, and I keep that then, with maybe the second very in italics. A lot of importance attaches to the tone and accent, and it isn't easy to translate that from the spoken word to the written word. And sometimes it's very very difficult to reduce the spoken words to a logical order, in terms of sentence structure. Sometimes you have to be very ingenious to be able to do that without losing anything of the meaning or altering the meaning, because when you are speaking, there are all sorts of pauses and sort of dashes and flyings off at a tangent - you have to reproduce that somehow or other. You don't speak in a completely logical sequential manner, or most people don't anyway - they don't speak like Doctor Johnson.

So editing involves a consideration of all these sort of things. So I haven't found anybody who is really able to do this. Mike Scherk isn't bad. Asvajit isn't bad. I've not sort of really tried others very seriously but what I have seen of their written work, they're not particularly good. Nagabodhi can sort of manage if it isn't a verbatim editing - just extracts for the newsletter or something. I will let that pass. I just sort of tidy it up. Abhaya I think hasn't really done anything. He might be able to. But where Dharma points are concerned one has to be so careful, and sometimes in editing I add modification, perhaps in just speaking I've been just a little bit too sweeping, so I modify my remarks ever so slightly, to make them more accurate.

I check all my references. If I make a quotation from a sutra, I check it when I edit, because sometimes I quote sutras from memory and I may not get the words exactly right. So all that has to be checked. So one has to know where to look. So editing is really quite a big business and quite a responsible thing. But I'd like to see edited material coming out at regular intervals. I think if some such arrangement was made it probably would stimulate to keep up the flow of edited material. If I had to produce say ten or twelve pages every month, something like that.

Siddhiratna: it sort of stops in 'Mitrata'. If it's worth going back to do editing, because I feel in a way some of the 'Mitratas' - I'm not sure but I think it's gone..... I did a quick survey of how many people had read the last five 'Mitratas' and it was actually better than I expected, but there were enough people who hadn't read it because it didn't contain seminar material, to make me think it was worth having it in.

S: Do you think more people would read 'Mitrata' if it contained seminar material, or is it that they just don't have time in many cases?

Siddhiratna: No, they'd read more if there was seminar material. I got the feeling that they don't quite trust the Order members who edit it to have the same feel of the subject.

S: Though of course it must be said that I check everything. I go through every single 'Mitrata' before it's published so that means that there are never any actual mistakes. Also perhaps very often or at least sometimes, when seminar transcripts have got - I won't say more life in them, but - a different kind of life, that perhaps appeals to people. There's more interchange, there's not just me, there's other people asking questions or putting points of view. Some people like that sort of variety.

_____: I'm not sure about that. I've had some very positive responses...

S: I've no idea how many copies we are selling. I really wish we had this information placed before us more frequently. I'll have to get at

Nagabodhi I think. It would be good to know how many 'Mitratas' were sold month by month. I think a thousand copies are being printed now aren't they usually?

Siddhiratna: Usually between eight hundred and twelve hundred.

S: That's really good actually. I was thinking again - I've been thinking about publications quite a lot - this is going off a bit at a tangent but it's not a bad thing if other people want to think about these things - I was thinking it would be a good idea if we tried to do with the 'Mitratas' what the *Buddhist Publication Society of Kandy* does with its 'Wheel' publications. We should get out a sort of brochure, a list of all the different 'Mitratas' and what they deal with, and the prices, and circulate that much more widely throughout the Buddhist world. Just like the *Buddhist Publication Society*, and get more subscribers in that way and try to sell more individual copies. Because there's an enormous amount of valuable material there. I forget how many issues it is - it's what, about thirty?

Siddhiratna: The one that's being done is number Thirty.

S: Well that's very good. That's a lot of material. So I think we should try and do something of that sort. Just a very simple brochure, it could even just be four sides, just a single folded sheet, just setting forth these 'Mitratas' in serial order and giving the title of each or the material that is in each one, and advertising and sending round as widely as possible. It's very valuable material.

_____: With some of these seminars it would be very good to have tapes of the seminars for some of them. Like when I was at Tyn-y-Ddol a year ago a number of us listened to some of the Kalyana Metta Sutta.

S: I think it is the idea that eventually each centre should have a full set of tapes of seminars, but clearly it takes time to copy them and also it takes money. I don't know whether some centres have got copies of some - I think they have actually. In New Zealand they do have copies of some seminar tapes, because Aniketa used to listen to them before she was ordained and she got a tremendous amount of instruction and inspiration out of those. It was a quite important part of her preparation for ordination - just listening to these day after day at home.

Siddhiratna: There isn't even a (chronology) of the material on cassettes.

S: Ah. We should try to multiply copies as much as we can, and distribute them around centres or centres should try to order copies. Is there any great practical difficulty about making copies? Not any more. This is something that should be taken up with the Chairmen. Perhaps you could put it down in your notes, that they should try to build up their library of cassettes. It should be possible. After all most centres have got libraries of cassettes of classical music and all that, so they should be able to start adding cassettes of seminars for people to listen to. It's the sort of thing one can listen to privately, or two or three people together.

And Aniketa said that it really gave her the feeling of being right there on the retreat and it made the whole thing much more alive hearing people's voices. She felt she was really there in the midst of it, just as though she'd attended that seminar, and she said it had a tremendous effect

on her listening to so much of this material, as well as to tapes of lecture. I think, if I am not mistaken, that she said she preferred listening to tapes of seminars than to listening to tapes of lectures. She got even more out of the tapes of seminars.

Ratnaketu: It's much more personal and immediate.

Siddhiratna: But why do you think they should be available?

S: Well I think certainly all Order members should have access to them, perhaps mitras as well. But not to be sold commercially like the tapes of lectures I think.

Ratnaketu: Are there edited transcripts of taped lectures that are published?

S: I don't think much work has been done on that. I must say I tend to discourage it, because I think perhaps you don't realise what a transcript of a lecture looks like. It's full of repetitions, just inappropriate to the printed page. One doesn't really like material to go out in that very untidy form.

Subhuti: It did occur to me that it would be quite easy to get the whole of the seminar transcribed during the course of the seminar.

S: That would be possible yes, provided you didn't have a work period, or provided that was your work period. I even thought of people staying on afterwards just to transcribe their own seminar, and type it. I think actually Johnny's done a bit of that haven't you. And have you typed it?

Johnny: Not all of it.

S: How many pages would that be?

Johnny: About twelve, thirteen or so.

S: So what are you going to do with that?

Subhuti: Try and get it edited.

S: By whom?

Subhuti: I don't know! [Laughter]

S: Not much use looking at me, not this time! [Laughter] Not this month anyway. On what topic was that?

Subhuti: On going to Florence.

S: Ah, oh let's get that out quick! [Laughter] In what way could it be circulated, if supposing it was edited?

Subhuti: *Shabda*.

S: In *Shabda*. Or offprints could be made and made available separately. Yes. Well let's have a look at it when it's actually typed. That's the next stage. How many pages of typing would it be altogether?

_____: About twelve.

S: Oh that's not very much actually. That could easily go into *Shabda*. It might not even need much editing. Some things need more editing than others. Where a text is being studied in detail and especially if it's a Pali text going into the meaning of the Pali words, that's quite difficult to edit, but if it's something straightforward, where I'm just talking about something without any reference to the text or any quotes or technical terms, that is quite easy to edit. Well let's have a look at it.

But of course some of the material can get into circulation in other ways because people have made their own notes. So if in a study group or on some other occasion they may remember with the help of their notes, a point that has been made in the course of the seminar and introduce that point into the discussion.

Subhuti: It's quite a good idea to give talks afterwards.

S: Yes indeed. It's interesting that talks have been given, I believe spontaneously, perhaps with the help of a bit of arm twisting, in the evenings. I think this is the first time that this has happened on a seminar and is a quite good development. Whose idea was it?

Subhuti: It happened on the last seminar.

S: Oh, did it? I didn't even know that. That's good. That must have been your idea then! No? Ah.

Anyway any further point.

Ray: You say you mentioned to the other group about personal mandalas and () mandalas. I wondered if you'd mind....

S: Well just a few words, rather than repeat myself too much. The idea of the mandala in general is that you put the most important thing in the middle. So in the middle of the mandala you get the image of the Buddha in one form or another, and then everything else in the universe is

arranged around that in a sense in order of its relative importance, its closeness to the centre, it's closeness to the Buddha.

So one should try to think of one's spiritual life in those sort of terms. That you've got say the Buddha in the middle and maybe you've got your guitar somewhere right down in the corner - not in the middle or even near the middle! Maybe you've got your wife and family tucked away in a corner. They mustn't be in the middle of the mandala, not if you're a Buddhist anyway. So then I suggested that it might be a good idea to draw two mandalas. One, the mandala as it actually exists, the so-called mandala - put in the centre what actually, and truly, is the most important thing in your life. You might find that the Buddha comes right down in the corner instead of being in the centre. So I suggest you draw two mandalas, one showing what really you put in the centre of the mandala, what really you put in the corner and so on, and the other as it should be. Your mandala as reorganised, putting the most important thing in the centre and the less important things toward the periphery, and see what sort of difference there was between the two. And someone did make the suggestion that maybe this could actually be done on a retreat as a sort of exercise. Just ask people to spend an hour drawing these two mandalas in this sort of way.

So if you are a real upasaka well you'd genuinely have maybe Avalokitesvara or Shakyamuni at the centre, and then maybe not too near that you might have squash [Laughter] or yoga or D.H.Lawrence or sex etc., etc. Or travel. Travel mustn't be in the centre, it should be towards the periphery. And money would be there somewhere wouldn't it? Beethoven might be there somewhere in the mandala. So try to include and arrange all your main interests in a harmonious way around the thing which was objectively of the greatest importance. But first of all the mandala as it actually is. It might even not be properly round. We did discuss the possibility that your mandala had two centres, so to speak. That it was like an ellipse or a sort of peanut shape, or even quite amorphous like an amoeba with lots of different little centres in it. No one really the centre.

So sometimes it's good to think in sort of visual terms instead of in abstract conceptual terms. You have to ask yourself well just how important is such and such a thing in my life? You could start with relatively concrete material things, rather than sort of attitudes - things like your guitar or your piano or whatever, your books, your bank account, your friends, parents. [Pause]

Siddhiratna: On several occasions you have gone into something that I always find quite interesting but very difficult to follow, and that is when you go from the mundane to the transcendental in terms of talking about space and time. I lose track of what you're saying really. The way that the individual experiences the transcendental as being outside space and time.

S: Well even the expression 'outside space and time' is self-contradictory, it's a spatial expression. You could say the transcendental isn't outside space and time, but how are you going to express it? Well, if you say inside space and time, that's still a spatial expression. Even the term itself 'transcendental' or the verb 'to transcend', it really means just that which is above or that which goes above. Again it's a spatial term. So - we touched upon this in fact this morning - that you've got only language drawn from your experience of the material world let's say, in order to describe mental processes, even spiritual processes, and that introduces all sorts of contradictions. You can't apply language literally to mental states and mental operations, it's all metaphorical. You have to try to catch the spirit of it.

Siddhiratna: Is that what you can actually aim to do?

S: I think so yes. You can't have a sort of scientific demonstration of the transcendental. You can only hope to communicate in a sort of poetic, metaphorical way, so long as you are using language, because language is sense based. Even if you talk about the spiritual life as the higher life, the higher evolution, again there's spatial terminology. It's something other, some different mode of experience, some different mode of being. When we try to say very much about it well we can't help speaking in either spatial terms or temporal terms. Even if you say for instance that the Bodhisattva is greater than the Arahant, well you're simply saying the Bodhisattva is bigger than the Arahant. It's again metaphorical language. If you speak of the spiritual life in terms of a path, you're speaking of it in terms of time. Or at least if you speak of it in terms of traversing a path. If you speak of it in terms of a mandala, well you're speaking of it in spatial terms, but it doesn't really occupy either space or time.

So one needs to be aware of the limitations of language, but nonetheless use language but use it in an imaginative manner, not taking it too literally. A lot of the difficulties that people experience, a lot of intellectual difficulties, arise simply out of taking literally expressions which are essentially metaphorical. Many, so-called, philosophical difficulties are linguistic difficulties. I think this is now generally recognised. As in the Hindu cosmology well what supports the Earth? Well the Earth is supported on the back of four elephants. Well what do those four elephants stand on? Well they stand on the back of a tortoise. What does that stand on the back of? Well that swims in fact in the ocean. So on and on you go because you've taken literally this idea of something having to be supported by something else.

I think we can say that among all the religions or all the spiritual traditions of the world, Buddhism is the most sophisticated when it comes to the use of language. It's as though only the Buddhist tradition has been really aware of the limitations of language, and aware of the extent to which many metaphysical problems really arise out of a misuse of language or a taking language too literally. [Pause]

Siddhiratna: When one is experiencing say the higher dhyanic states, are these what takes place in space and time?

S: Yes, they are mundane. Though one can also say that it does seem that when one is in these different or altered states of consciousness, in a way one's sense of space and time is altered. But some experience of space and time is still there.

Siddhiratna: (unclear) all mixed up (unclear)

S: Yes. Or you can experience space in a quite different way.

_____: (unclear) little book called "(Einstein and the Universe?)" which accidentally helped me a lot with this sort of problem. What you don't realise you hold onto and fixed ideas of self.....

S: Well Einstein developed some extraordinary ideas - that of space being curved for instance. Well, that's what he said - the expression in a sense is quite meaningless, but there at least it does make us realise that we have looked at space in the past in a fixed sort of way that is perhaps not justified by the facts and he presents a different way of looking at it, an equally valid way. We've tended to think of space more on the lines of a sort of cube indefinitely extended. Whereas he suggests space is curved. A ray of light apparently sufficiently propagated will come back to

the place where it started from, though at the same time I believe that light does move in a straight line, at least for all practical purposes. That's rather odd, isn't it.

_____: (unclear) was that the universe was like a soap bubble. The universe was actually the surface of the bubble, the material that its moulded out of is no space and no time.

S: Sunyata. [Laughter] Rupa and Sunyata clearly. In a way. Don't take it too literally. How can you have an expanding no space and no time? You can imagine space expanding, even time expanding, if you try hard, but no space and no time expanding? I wonder how one imagines that. Anyway perhaps we do need a little pause there. [break in recording]

.... say except colloquially. If you try to translate that rather colloquial way of putting things into more formal English, you just change the meaning and the meaning would have to be sacrificed. So I didn't want to do that. So in a sense I did less editing in the sense of recasting than I had expected. In fact I didn't do any recasting at all. I didn't translate the spoken idiom into the literary idiom.

Siddhiratna: In "*The Endlessly Fascinating Cry*".

S: Yes. And I followed that procedure with other editing work that I've done. Sometimes though when I get into my stride and there's not much of exchange and it's just me talking for two or three pages together, sometimes I find then that the language falls almost into a literary style and requires very little editing, sometimes for pages together. It's very clear and well constructed, but not always by any means. And sometimes when other people speak their language is so non-literary it's just a jumble of words. You get things like 'Well of course, you know, in the Sutta, you know, the Buddha said, well yes it's obvious, er, but of course one day I thought....' [Laughter] and it's like that! And you have to make some sort of sense of that. This is how most people speak! It's so painfully obvious when you start trying to edit other people's remarks. Your own are bad enough in some ways but other people's remarks. Sometimes there is a point there in the midst of all the stammerings. Some people are better at constructing sentences when they speak than others. But some don't speak in sentences at all. They speak in disconnected phrases.

Siddhiratna: And associations.

S: Loose associations. There's no rational structure to what they say. So no wonder often discussions end in confusion. No one actually has made a logical statement about anything.

_____: Presumably though Bhante it comes from your own literary training. From your own writing and giving of talks.....

S: I must admit I was a bit surprised the extent to which my spoken English differed from my written English, and I don't know whether this is noticeable to other people - is it?

_____: (unclear)

S: Do you think so? In what respect?

Subhuti: I think you have in a sense a less literary written style. Not as...

S: It may be partly for that reason. It may be that this has happened after I've started doing this sort of editing work. It could be. I certainly realised that the spoken word, ordinary colloquial English, sometimes has a force, an expressiveness, that more literary English doesn't have. I also remember reading somewhere that the sayings and the teachings of Ch'an masters of the T'ang Dynasty in China are very difficult to translate because their language is the colloquial Chinese of their day, not the Chinese literary language. I've not before attached much significance to this fact, but then it did seem to me, more recently after editing some of these transcripts, that well maybe they in a sense deliberately spoke in that way. It was more forcible, it was more expressive. [Pause]

[End of tape - Day seven tape 2]

Siddhiratna: It works two ways as well, doesn't it. Because sometimes if you read verbatim what's been said just the appearance of the typography on the page can actually interrupt the flow. I'd quite like to get a piece of written stuff that comes out as a literary style and you can read it very quickly and fluidly, but sometimes a stop-start mechanism of a seminar can be an interference. I wonder if it's a bit of a mood in a way. It depends on the reader. I know I've swung from one to the other but sometimes it's nice to have a nice flow. At other times it's nice to have that kind of immediacy and familiarity that you get on the seminar.

S: If you're not careful the spoken word can be, in a sense, lacking in precision, certainly in intellectual precision. But one of the things you have to do when you're editing is to try to reproduce on the written page the nuances of the spoken word. The rise and fall of the voice, the pause, the emphasis. You are relying on all these non-literary devices to communicate your meaning. If on the printed page you've just got the words spoken, you've only got half of what was actually said.

Siddhiratna: The shifting tone of voice and.....

S: If you say for instance 'I know he's very clever' or you say 'I know he's very clever', these are two different statements, but the words are exactly the same words. Or you could say 'I know he's very-clever', that's a different statement, it's not the same statement as the previous two. They are all different statements. Three different statements. How are you going to convey that difference in terms of the printed page? This is the sort of problem you are faced with. So sometimes I have to listen to the tape - the words aren't enough - I have to listen to the tape to know what I was really saying. For instance you can say well 'after passing through the dhyanas there is the possibility of realising Nirvana'. Or you can say 'after passing through the dhyanas there's the possibility of realising Nirvana'. That's a different statement. It is not the same as the first statement. The meaning is different, but the difference of meaning is conveyed entirely by pause and intonation and pitch. So how are you going to represent that on the printed page? You have to be very ingenious in your use of punctuation, dashes and things like that. Even italics which the purists of literature don't like to see at all on the printed page. They think it a weakness that you have to have words in italics and words

underlined. Well in a sense it's true if you're thinking in purely literary terms, purely visual terms.

Subhuti: Plus you must have the precision of the written word.

S: Yes. [Pause] Or even the way that you say 'yes' - someone makes a statement and you say 'yes' or someone makes a statement and you say [*with some uncertainty*] 'ye-es' - it means something different.

_____: It means no! [Laughter]

S: So I think one has to be aware of these things. This is why I'm quite interested more recently - well this is a bit of a digression, but it seems we have more or less finished with this chapter except for the concluding prose sentence; but I have been thinking in terms lately of the video tape. It seems to me increasingly that one has think of each form of communication as being a form of communication in its own right. I must admit that I myself was brought up in - what does Marshal McLuhan call it? -

Siddhiratna: The Gutenberg era.

S: Yes, what would he call that, that type of approach? He has his own term for this sort of thing. But anyway you think in terms of the printed page. That is for you the primary means of communication, well I was certainly brought up in that sort of way. I got used, quite slowly and reluctantly, even to having things tape-recorded, lectures tape recorded. I never had this done in India. It was a bit of a pity because I've probably given my best lecture in India, or some of them anyway! But therefore I originally thought in terms such as you give a lecture and then you write it down and edit it, but the real thing is the edited lecture which you read. It's as though the verbal lecture is not a means of communication in its own right, or not a medium of communication in its own right. From the literary point of view it's very much a sort of second best. So what you have to do with it is either from your notes or a transcript, reduce it to a literary form. In other words translate it into an essay or an article. Do you see what I mean?

But I begin more recently to think a bit differently. It's as though the spoken word, or the given lecture, exists in its own right, as it were. It isn't a sort of raw material for an article or an essay. It is a finished product.

Siddhiratna: It's something like an event in itself.

S: It's an event in itself. So I'm thinking even more so in the case of the video tape. So I think that perhaps I shouldn't think so much in future of say turning lectures into articles, transcribing and editing, but let them stay as lectures. Because it's as though before one was thinking of the printed page - thinking of the article or the essay or the chapter of a book - as the norm, and not thinking in terms of say a taped lecture being in fact almost an art form in its own right. So I'm thinking that maybe one should think in terms of the video tape in the same way. Even more so because it's a fuller and more effective medium. So think in terms of say giving a lecture which is video taped and well that's it - you're not going to transcribe it, you're not going to sort of edit it. If you want to put those ideas across in literary form you'll just do it in a completely different,

appropriate way.

So when one knows that one is going to give a talk and it is going to be video taped, you as it were prepare a video taped live lecture, and you will regard that as in independent medium. I think probably this should be more the approach. So I'm thinking in terms of writing more, yes, and maybe just giving lectures, video taped lectures, but not trying to translate one into the other so much. Allowing each to be in its own independent medium separately.

Subhuti: I wonder in some ways whether we don't need to consider the tape and the video even more in their own right, rather than as sort of eavesdroppers on a public lecture. Whether perhaps you don't need to prepare more for the actual video.

S: I think that depends on the kind of approach. For instance would it be possible to have a video tape of me just say sitting here all on my own just chatting about the Dharma? Would that seem very real? If someone was asking me questions an interviewing me, well yes, fair enough, if I've got an audience in front of me, yes I'm talking to them, but me talking to myself?! [Laughter] What sort of impression would that create? [Laughter] You see what I mean!

_____: Like the Queen at Christmas.

S: Yes, right! Well no she has got this imaginary audience. Well the audience is there, they're all tuned in, except that she's recorded her address several days earlier apparently. So I could I suppose just sit here and say, "Hello Order members in New Zealand, [Laughter] America and India, this is Bhante speaking to you all." I can't say that I really feel that very strongly. I'd rather have an audience and a hall full of people actually in front of me.

Siddhiratna: I think there are some middle ways in these things.

S: Or at least be interviewed.

Siddhiratna: I think with some of the more modern mediums like video for instance what it seems to me you've got a problem with is what I think is called retrieval problems. If your access to the material is actually quite difficult so unless you've got a colour TV set and a special tape recorder.....

S: But it does seem that these things are going to be more and more widespread. According to a news item which I read the other day 96% of households in Britain have got colour TVs, 96%. And according to the people who make reports, it was the priority among household purchases, with the refrigerator next. And apparently in the last year people have spent more on luxury items proportionately, than they did before, than on food. The percentage of one's income devoted to food or spent on food has decreased by about 2% and the percentage spent on luxury items has increased by 2%, and among the luxury items, the leading one is far and away the colour television, closely followed by the refrigerator. We must be aware of what's happening in the world outside. I mean how many people in the FWBO have got a colour TV, how many colour TVs or

colour TV owners are present in this room? [Laughter] You see! And that's probably not for your own personal benefit anyway. You just own it. It's probably not even with you. Right.

_____: It's interesting you use the word 'luxury' for TV.

S: Well that's the word used in the report.

_____: Because I did a study on it at college and insofar as you can define the word 'luxury' objectively, the only method you can use is something called - I've forgotten the name of it - to do with the amount you spend on it varies according to income, and if say your income halves obviously the amount you spend on food doesn't half, so therefore food can be said not to be a luxury, and there's a percentage you can work out where if it comes out less than one then it's not a luxury and if it comes out more than one it is a luxury, and television came quite strongly in the below one figures along with things..... so it's like objectively defined as a necessity by the population.

S: Yes, people regard it as a necessity. Just as with petrol people regard their cars as a necessity, so you find when the price of petrol doubles you don't find the number of people driving cars halves. No, it remains pretty much the same as it was. The car has been defined as a necessity. It reminds me of what Oscar Wilde said. He said I can do without necessities but I can't do without luxuries! [Laughter] He often hits the nail on the head doesn't he!

_____: He could resist everything but temptation. [Laughter]

S: Well he said that he mustn't tempt providence. In any case providence should be old enough to be able to resist temptation! [Laughter] But anyway the fact that we don't have colour TVs doesn't mean that they're not widely current in the outside world, so that actually it would be possible for say every Centre to have say a TV room where only video tapes of lectures, even seminars and other events were regularly shown. This could be an integral part of Centre activities. And how useful for a very small group somewhere.

Siddhiratna: I don't think it even has to be colour Bhante, because what I've been thinking of - well I thought of it a couple of years ago but I think it's becoming more and more the need for it is apparent - is that on a black and white level you had a video newsletter. There are a number of different uses. The other one I think that's very good would be in speakers' classes, where you use video to show the speaker how he's coming across, and so he can see himself and be self critical rather than just rely on the audience.

S: I shall be quite interested to see the tape of my own lecture, because obviously I've never seen myself giving a lecture. I might be horrified! [Laughter] I might think 'Good Heavens I've been as it were functioning in the dark all this time, I need to polish up my performance' or something like that. I may not like myself at all. I might sort of think well 'this is dreadful, I must do something about this'.

Siddhiratna: I was very surprised when we did something with video a while ago and it was very revealing just to see yourself and how you come across.

S: I must admit that knowing that I was being video taped, I was a little more careful about my gestures than perhaps I usually am. I don't know if anyone noticed that. They were just a little bit more controlled.

Siddhiratna: It had quite a dramatic end if I remember rightly.

S: In terms of gesture?

Siddhiratna: Yes, you said the last thing and you stepped back very quickly. It was quite a finale.

S: Well I can't say that I did it deliberately but perhaps it was, as it were, in a sense instinctive or I instinctively felt that that was appropriate. It's things like that I want to look at. I might think well no, I just stepped back much too quickly, next time I mustn't do that. I might think that.

So therefore what I'm saying is that yes take each medium as a medium in its own right, not as raw material for some other medium. So say if I've prepared a talk, think of the end result. What I'm preparing is a video taped lecture. I'm not just giving a lecture - I have to give equal attention to the visual dimension, and bear in mind that this is the end result. I'm not just producing words, I'm also producing something visually. In fact I'm producing the two things together. So I've got to bear in mind the total end product - that there will be people listening to what I'm saying and also looking at me saying it and I have to bear both of these things in mind.

Siddhiratna: The future source of information much closer to the event itself isn't it, that people don't have to take notes or read about it later. That's actually contained there and then.

_____: It seems a very good chance for getting over information in a better way. Apparently we do take in about 70% of the information which we receive, we receive visually. So you do have a much greater chance of getting across.....

S: For instance somebody said to me before I went down to London, he said 'Are you going to wear your brown suit for your lecture?' So I said, 'Yes'. He said 'I think you ought to have a grey one instead, light grey.' So I said 'No, I can't afford it.' So he said 'Well at least wear your green polo neck with your brown suit.' He said 'The blue one doesn't look quite so good.' So yes it's after all being video taped in colour, one needs to bear in mind things like that. Otherwise if the colour of my suit had really clashed with the colour of my polo neck, well this could irritate the viewer, having to look at that for a whole hour or more. So things like that need to be borne in mind. I was careful to have a haircut also before the lecture.

Siddhiratna: I noticed that! [Laughter]

S: So one must be aware of the visual side of things more perhaps than one often is.

Siddhiratna: Also it suggests that if you have these things like TV monitors and cassette players that..... for me it's quite interesting historically when you take say the movement ten years ago, and the sort of pauperish environment we found ourselves in and then ten years later it's actually doing quite successfully.

S: The only technology we had was Ananda with hundreds of miles of tape in his flat all over the floor! [Laughter] Reels like sort of cartwheels or spools like cartwheels accreting and growing over machinery.

Siddhiratna: There was a change of attitude as well. The sort of getting away from.....

S: Well think how recent cassettes are. We didn't have even cassettes ten years ago, did we? I remember only a few years ago someone saying to me, as if they were talking about future developments, did you realise that cassettes are eventually going to become more popular than spools? Well look what's happened already. This must have been only four or five years ago someone said this to me. We didn't have tape recorded lectures available on cassettes before, did we? - in the beginning. They were made available on spools.

So in the same way I think video tapes will become quite commonplace. I think already in some circles - we are not very progressive after all in that sense - they are quite commonplace. Say in Vajrayogini's movement, in her institute, she's been using them constantly, taping everything that they do in some of her groups for years. She's now given us her old equipment because she's buying the latest up to date equipment, has bought it. So she's handed on her old equipment to us.

So what I was thinking was that perhaps I should think in terms of preparing some new lectures and giving them, but giving them as video tape lectures, regard that as a medium. Not that my lecture happened to be video taped as a sort of afterthought of someone's but I actually prepare a lecture for that medium.

Siddhiratna: What would actually change do you think from what you actually do now?

S: I don't really know. I haven't sort of thought about it sufficiently. But I think I have to pay much more attention as it were to the dramatic element. I think maybe I don't need to do too much about that, because I think I'm a little bit dramatic already. But I certainly mustn't appear to be reading a script. I must certainly seem to be talking much more say to the people who are actually watching the video tape. Not just to the people in the audience.

Subhuti: I mean things like we should pay much more attention to the background.

S: Yes. I haven't given any thought to that. Maybe it's for the people doing the video taping to do that. Yes. I think this time they just had me - at least the coloured video tape just had me full face as it were, and if I've got any notes you don't want, I presume, having me turning over my notes or whatever. All that would have to be thought about quite carefully, but the idea is that perhaps I should think in terms of producing video tape lectures.

_____: Even a short one, could be used just for an introduction (). It need not be by you, by other order members.

S: Yes, right indeed.

_____: A general introduction to the movement.

S: Well I think you should only have it on video tape when you haven't got anyone in the Centre who is able to do that thing equally well live.

_____: Or you could have a speaker with video showing different aspects of the movement.

S: That would be very useful. Showing the co-ops in action, Centres in action, retreats in action. That would be very useful. Especially where one was trying to spread the movement, or giving the movement in one part of the world a glimpse of the movement in another part of the world. Supposing you have a video tape of the movement in Pune. How interesting that would be to people over here. It would bring the whole thing alive. You saw perhaps order members and mitras in their huts, in their crowded conditions, and you saw them on retreat or climbing that hill (Surgath?). It would really bring the whole thing alive. See them trudging through the streets of Pune on their way to the centre, and see Pune itself. See the hell, as Lokamitra calls it, just within a few hundred yards of the centre. Or to see and hear people chanting the puja. They do it in a rather different way from which it's done here with much more evident devotion. It's very noticeable, the devotion with which they do recite things. They are much more carried away by it than people usually are here. Even to hear the language. To hear them talking in Marathi. It's all FWBO activities but it's all in Marathi or it's all in Gujarati or all in Hindu, or all in Finnish. That itself would be interesting. [Pause - general chatter whilst Bhante was out of the room]

Subhuti: holograms would be quite good for that. [Laughter]

S: Holograms. Oh yes, that was something I noticed - in fact that was one of the few things that I found really interesting there.

Siddhiratna: When was that?

Subhuti: They had an exhibition of holograms. The were quite small ones.

S: Yes I found those really interesting. I'd never seen them before.

_____: What were they of?

Subhuti: Nothing very interesting. Things like lions' heads, but it did illustrate the medium.

S: Yes.

Siddhiratna: The Russians have made a holographic 70mm film. So you had this train actually rushing at you. It didn't go round the side. [Laughter] There was a limitation that only eight people can watch it and they have to sit in a row one behind the other. [Laughter]

Subhuti: Press a button and you just spring to life in the corner of the room. [Laughter]

S: Complete with good advice! Very interesting.

Siddhiratna: I'd always felt that whilst these new mediums were very interesting and actually quite useful, somehow when you perhaps use them at a centre they should always be thought as a sort of back up to an order member.

S: Or an introduction. You never use them as a substitute for the live presence.

Siddhiratna: I think that is quite important.

S: Yes, indeed.

Anyway what I was going to say was that talking about the video tape lectures, that it's a question of thinking in terms not of video taped lectures, but of video-tape lectures. You see the point of the distinction?

Siddhiratna: I think it allows you actually to..... I mean one could even think of adding material, like I can remember sometimes lectures you did at Pundarika on the Tantric series, where you were talking about images but you had to describe them in the abstract as it were. You could actually have those images.

S: Charts for instance. Or thangkas, yes you could. The camera focuses on them just for a moment. That would need to be done quite skilfully, though I suppose it could be edited afterwards. If the exposure wasn't long enough it could be lengthened, say the exposure of the thangka that someone was talking about.

Siddhiratna: What Vajradipa and Gerald have been doing is you have a slide of the thangka and you just copy that. Things are getting so simple now. You can match media up as well.

S: Oh well we'll see.

Anyway shall we go back to the text and just finish off. Would someone like to read those last couple of paragraphs? That was a bit of media discussion, that was. Putting in a good word for the visual media.

Moved by this song, some patrons became devoted followers of the Jetsun and the faith of all was greatly strengthened.

During his journey to Weu, Rechungpa came to the Buddhist study centre at Sha and was appointed a Mindrol Professor there. Then he met, and formed an attachment to a certain noblewoman, but through the grace of the Jetsun became ashamed of his conduct and returned to Milarepa to live with him again. The details of this episode are clearly given in the biography of Rechungpa.

S: So this is the story of Rechungpa's Journey to Weu. We are not given any details about his attachment to a certain noblewoman, but there's a reference to it at the beginning of another chapter which we have studied where he is just becoming free from that entanglement, and according to the editor here, the details of this episode are given clearly in the biography of Rechungpa, which of course has not yet been translated into English. Perhaps we shall get in one day.

So Rechungpa has had so much in the way of instruction and guidance and help from Milarepa, but still he is not free from attachment, he still gets entrapped and entangled. [Pause]

Anyway any further point, either arising from this paragraph or what we've done in the course of the week? [Pause]

Subhuti: It does seem that Rechungpa has..... it seems to suggest he's achieved Insight, a certain amount of Insight, and yet he still goes so far astray. That cannot be comfortable.

S: Well the Stream Entrant breaks what have sometimes been called intellectual fetters. The emotional fetters go much deeper. Remember that the Once Returner breaks only the coarser forms of the fetters of craving and hatred, craving and aversion. In their subtler forms they're broken only by the Non Returner. So it does suggest - this is putting the matter in Hinayana terms, which might not be altogether appropriate here - but it does suggest that you can develop Insight even to the degree of being a Stream Entrant, and even though there's no danger of your permanently regressing from the path, you can go astray to some extent, either as a result of craving or as a result of aversion. But you notice that it does say that 'through the grace of the Jetsun became ashamed of his conduct and returned to Milarepa to live with him again.' There was no question of a permanent regression or a permanent going astray, or even an indefinite going astray.

So if you have to be quite careful even after becoming a Stream Entrant, how much more careful must you be before becoming one? I think that shall be the moral that we draw from that little episode. If even someone like Rechungpa who spent so many years with Milarepa and had received so many excellent instructions from him, and he had even been to India! And who had had many spiritual experiences and many Tantric initiations and many good meditations, if even he could go astray, well what to speak of other people. It just behoves one to be mindful. I don't quite like the word careful, so I say mindful. [Pause]

_____: I was wondering about what you said yesterday about the Preta realm and you were saying feminists could end up in the Preta realm, I was wondering if you'd just amplify on this. For instance I was thinking in particular of alcoholics and people like that, could they end

up in the hell realm? Whether this was a distinct probability or just a faint possibility.

S: Well It think in the case of alcoholics it's a question of intense craving and intense craving has a greater affinity with the preta state. The hell state is especially connected with aversion, with hatred, with the taking of life. An alcoholic will not necessarily go as far as that. How did I make the connection between the feminist..... not surely the feminist in the ordinary sense, but the very extreme women's liberationist. Yes, it would seem that in her case there is a violent craving for something or other, and it is this, the lack of something or other in a very extreme way, which makes her so extreme in her women's liberationist views. Well, because if she has a genuine hatred towards men, and especially if she acts upon that, well yes she might be in danger of the hell realm. There's quite a strange case at a recent women's retreat when they had four women's liberationists on the retreat, whom someone had invited with the best of intentions - they were old friends of hers I think - trying to get them into something more positive. One of the women on that retreat refused to do the mettā bhavana, one of these feminists, or women's liberationists, because she'd have to include men, and she didn't want to develop mettā towards men. She just wanted to hate men. So that is really amazing isn't it. I can't help wondering well how on earth someone could get into that state.

_____: She wanted to hate them or she couldn't help hating them.

S: She thought it was right and proper to hate them, on principle as it were, as well as of course actually wanting to obviously.

Subhuti: You should hate the oppressor.

S: Yes, it is right to hate the oppressor.

Ratnaketu: About being born in the other realms in the literal sense. I've heard two ideas on this. One that it's quite probable that if you say develop intense craving or are preoccupied with food, sex and sleep then it is obvious that you get reborn in preta realm or an animal realm; the other one I've heard is that some Tibetan lama said - I don't know who it is - that it's quite unlikely. You would have to do that for a long time, many lifetimes in order to be reborn there, because it's such a change.

S: It is such a change, yes.

Ratnaketu: So which do you think is more correct?

S: It's difficult to generalise, because you don't know. For instance supposing someone is behaving in a very animal-like way in this life, well he might have behaved in that way in previous lives or not. You don't know. It's very difficult to be sure in any given case. But surely if you behave in an animal-like way, well, to the extent that you do behave in that animal-like way, you are heading in a downward direction, and you can be sure of that. To the extent that you do indulge in intense, as we would say, neurotic craving, yes to that extent you are in danger of becoming a preta and being reborn as a preta. To the extent that you do indulge in violent feelings of aversion and even injure and kill people, to that extent you are in danger of becoming a being in hell and being, if you take it literally, reborn in hell.

And if you get into the habit of remaining in blissful dhyana states without even a thought of insight, you're in danger of being reborn as a long-lived god. If you're intensely competitive, always fighting and quarrelling, you're in danger of being reborn as an asura. It may be difficult to tell or difficult to say after how many lives you will actually be reborn in that state, but certainly that is the direction in which you are heading. You can change direction of course, later on. [Pause]

_____: Sometimes we talk of the devaloka. We were talking about it yesterday, as a state that's quite hard to get out of if you become attached to, I think, the dhyana of no thought. It's quite hard to get out of that.

S: Well it's quite hard to get out of as a result of your own volition, but of course you come out of it, or you are dragged out of it even, precipitated out of it, when the karma due to which you've been born in that state as a deva, is exhausted. Then you fall from that state however unwilling you may be. This is the standard Buddhist teaching.

_____: What I was thinking was that in a sense it should be quite easy but if you're used to coursing in the dhyanas then traditionally in order to develop insight you just need to come down to the first dhyana and turn over, reflect, on.....

S: Yes, you need to come down to a somewhat less blissful state. That is what the devas are unwilling to do. They are attached to bliss. So one needs a very strong rousing influence. In the fully developed form of the Wheel of Life you get the Buddha with his lute, with his vina, playing to the devas the music of impermanence, even perhaps singing the song of impermanence.

_____: So potentially it's quite easy for them to gain insight because they have had that experience of dhyana.

S: Yes, they have a good basis for insight if only they can be persuaded to develop it.

Subhuti: Is the traditional teaching that if you develop dhyanic states in this life but don't develop insight that you will be reborn as a god?

S: Yes, you will tend to be reborn as a god, depending on how long you have spent in those states.

Subhuti: That would be quite a difficult position for you to progress from.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: Because you won't carry over any impetus for the development of insight.

S: Yes, you will just have to, as it were, await the natural turn of life in those worlds before being reborn.

_____ : Is that because you've lost the obvious spur of experiencing suffering? Is that the reason why the impetus has fallen away?

S: To some extent. Not only that but basically you are so immersed in bliss and so attached to that you don't want to think in any other terms. Of course in order to develop the dhyanas you must have had a good basis in the silas. So once you de cease from the heavenly world, then of course the likelihood is that you are reborn in the human world again.

Ratnaketu: Something you said there just made me think. You said until you have exhausted your karma, what exhausts karma.

[End of side one side two]

S: is limited so when the ball reaches a certain point the impetus, the energy by the ball is exhausted, it starts falling again. It's just like that.

Ratnaketu: But you've got gravity which is a force acting on the ball which exhausts the energy behind it. Is there something with gravity that's.....

S: Well you could speak of the law of karma as that. The results of karma in the form of vipaka are proportionate to the energy in the form of karma that is behind them. This involves the idea of karma as a force and that is, so to speak, the analogy. Well you can see that from the experience of meditation. You develop meditation say on retreat, but as a certain energy, but if you don't do anything to keep it up, the results from that particular meditation will come to an end after the energy that you put into the meditation is exhausted. So it's just like that with the devas.

Ray: It occurred to me yesterday when we were talking about the patrons and then we were talking about the support of lay people for monks in a Buddhist countries - it would seem inevitable to me that the way originally Buddha and his supporters would go about the area and beg alms from the lay people, that Buddhism would develop in that way.

S: I don't think it was inevitable because they could have decided not to remain permanently settled. The original pattern was that they settled only for the rainy season.

Ray: I think the point I'm trying to make is that doesn't that then limit the number of people that can be Buddhists?

S: Well yes it does of course, obviously. Those who can be, as it were, full-time Buddhists.

Ray: That doesn't seem quite right to me!

S: But presumably as many as want to become monks do, because not everybody wants to become a monk, believe or not.

Ray: Yes but if one of the points of being a Buddhist is to get as many people as possible to try and achieve Enlightenment, there comes a time when there aren't enough people....

S: Well one would like to think so but in practice it might not work out like that.

Ratnaketu: I suppose if that happened then you'd have a pure realm.

S: Yes you would. If everybody wanted to go forth, nobody would need to go forth. [Laughter] Because if everybody was wanting to go forth what would there be in fact to go forth from. It's like going forth from one pure land to another, which would be pointless.

Ray: How does this fit in with the Bodhisattva Ideal?

S: You can't force people to take up the spiritual life. You can only encourage them, and it does seem that the majority will not want to at any given time. They'll want material rewards and blessings and perhaps they'll look to the monks to help them obtain those. Offering to the monks serves to accumulate merit so that they may be more blessed and more prosperous in their worldly life. That has been the traditional pattern. Otherwise it becomes like the old story well suppose everybody becomes a doctor well what will happen to the world? What about nurses, what about lawyers, if everyone becomes a doctor. Well actually the point is that not everybody is going to become a doctor even though it's theoretically possible. I think it's the same with people becoming monks. Theoretically everybody could. It's highly unlikely that everybody is going to. Therefore you can't really raise the question of what is going to happen to this, that and the other if everybody was to become a monk.

I think even within the FWBO you have to be very careful that you don't develop an almost class of Order member who is concerned exclusively with classes and lectures and so on, and who is supported and who never works say in the co-op. Otherwise you will get a sort of division between people who are working in co-ops and earning money and supporting others, and those who are being supported and not working. Maybe yes, they are working in another way, but one has to be very careful that that doesn't become a sort of rationalisation. You don't want to have sort of blue-collar Order members and white-collar Order members [Laughter] which is what it might amount to in the end. So I think there has to be a willingness to interchange, and that even people who can take good classes and give good lectures should have a spell in a co-op or doing administrative work or something of that sort.

_____: We could always call it re-education! [Laughter]

S: Well everybody need re-educating. If you've spent a long time in a co-op maybe you need a spell taking classes. Maybe you're very confident of your ability to work in a co-op but maybe even though you're an Order member you're not at all happy at the thought of taking classes or giving lectures but you ought to be as ready to do that and as capable of doing it, at least after a few years as an Order member.

_____: Do you see that there's anything that say a new Order member could do in practical terms to make sure that say at the end of two

years he was capable of giving good talks?

S: Well he has to study, he has to learn to arrange his material, present his material, learn to speak, learn to produce his voice, learn to be aware of his audience, keep up his own meditation so as to have a basis of real positivity, maybe attend speakers' classes, and get someone more experienced to criticise the talks that he gives and give him practical tips. [Pause] Or even get someone to make a video tape of you giving your first talk. That would teach you quite a lot perhaps. [Pause]

Any further points. No need to go on talking if we haven't in fact got anything to say! If there is anything.... [Long Pause]

_____: What happened to the Kagyupa line after Milarepa? Historically speaking how did it develop?

S: Well the two chief disciples were Rechungpa and Gampopa. There seem to have been many others who were very highly gifted spiritually. These were the most famous and I think Gampopa especially was important and had many disciples who had disciples and I think, as far as I remember, that the main lines trace themselves back to him. He gave all sorts of intellectual bases to the tradition. He wrote, you may remember, *'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation'* as well as other works.

Ray: This practice of generating body heat, was that a specific Buddhist practice or did that occur during the Bon religion?

S: No, it goes back to India. It's one of the Six Yogas of Naropa. It seems to have nothing to do with the Bon religion at all.

Ratnaketu: Milarepa's concerned a lot with renunciation and giving up the world and living in caves. Do we have to learn how to do that in the city? Like renounce the world while still living in it?

S: Well in a way you've no alternative if you live in a city except to live in a cave metaphorically speaking. In other words to cut yourself off to some extent, to insulate yourself. This is what living in a cave means I suppose. Mahatma Gandhi was asked once why he didn't retire to a cave in the Himalayas and meditate if he was really a religious man. So he said, well I carry my cave around with me! [Laughter] So it's as though you have to do something like that. You can be very isolated in the city actually. Sometimes more than you can be in a small town or a village. In a large city no one takes any notice of your comings and goings. Your presence can be quite unknown to people in your quiet little room or flat somewhere. Whereas that very often is just not possible in a small town or village.

When I lived at Muswell Hill, we had very little contact with the people around. Very few people in Muswell Hill knew anything about me or what I was doing. But when I was staying in Castleacre which is a little village the other side of Norfolk, it was only a matter of weeks before people in the village were all aware of who I was and what I was doing and so on, even though I'd not spoken to more than a couple of them. Because after all there's the postman. The postman sees letters coming to you from foreign countries, he sees Buddhist magazines coming, he sees you addressed as the Venerable so-and-so and he talks to neighbours etc., etc., so word very quickly spreads in a little village. So everybody before very long knows all about you, or at least they think they do.

Whereas in a big city people wouldn't bother. So you can be very alone in a big city. I mean Sukhavati's like a great big cave, like a complex of caves. It's like a cave-monastery, yes, isn't it really? It's an urban cave! [Laughter]

Siddhiratna: Think of Roman Road like a sort of urban babbling brook.

S: A babbling brook! No, it's not as innocent as that. It's like a sort of cleft in the ground with all sorts of strange fumes emerging from it [Laughter] and maybe the earth sort of heaving and trembling sometimes.

_____: Do you think it's still quite important to make use of places like Tyn-y-Ddol if you're in a.....

S: Oh yes indeed. I'd like to see every order member and every mitra if possible spending some time each year at Tyn-y-Ddol, at least a few days, if possible a week. I think that would be highly desirable. In some ways I'm surprised people don't make more use of the place. I'd especially like to see chairmen spending a week there. I was trying to reckon up the other day how many chairman had spent a week at Tyn-y-Ddol and I was rather surprised to find that there were quite a few who hadn't spent a week there - who'd only visited the place, so it would be good if even chairmen, maybe especially chairmen, perhaps they should have at least two weeks every year at Tyn-y-Ddol, and just enjoy the experience of not having any responsibilities; going back fired with fresh energy. [Pause]

Anyway any other point or is that really all? Don't want to scrape the bottom of the barrel you know, even though it is a very good barrel.

All right, let's call it a day. In fact we'll have to call it a week now won't we.

END OF SEMINAR

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