

## 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*

## The 'Rechungpa's Third Journey to India' seminar

**Held at Padmaloka in November 1980**

Those present: Sangharakshita, Brian Duff, Suvajra, Atula, Asvajit, Clive Pomfrett, Mangala, Malcolm Webb, Peter Shann, Aloka, Vajradaka, Adrian Macro, Peter Hayes.

S: Would someone like to read the whole of that first paragraph right down to meditation on the next page?

"Obeisance to all Gurus.

Through his miraculous powers the Jetsun, Milarepa, had conquered the scholar priests in their ill intentioned debate and had won the argument. However, his heart son, Rechungpa, was not satisfied with this victory. He thought that the Jetsun had not answered the monks' questions in a scholarly manner. The only way Rechungpa thought to himself, to conquer these scholars who cannot even be convinced by the evidence of miracles, is through logic and argument, or by black magic and curses. I might ask the Jetsun to teach me black magic but it is not likely that he would. Oh confound it, these damn scholars who belittle genuine miracles as sorceries. They certainly deserve to be dealt with. But the Jetsun will never do it. Well it is true that my Guru is well versed in the pith instructions for attaining Buddhahood in one life but in order to beat these scholars I shall go to India to learn logic and science. He then went to Milarepa and told him of his intention.

The Jetsun said,

Rechungpa if we had been defeated in the debate, how could the scholars have credited us with pure thought? If you go to India merely for the purpose of learning the art of debate you are then doing something wrong and worthless. That also means that you will forsake meditation practice. In learning semantics you may acquire some knowledge about words but still you will not be able to win all the debates. Nor can you master the whole study of letters. Only Buddha can answer all questions and challenges. But to achieve Buddhahood one must practice. Therefore the best way is to abjure the world, renounce all thoughts and wishes of this life and devote oneself to meditation. One may slay people by black magic but if he cannot deliver the victims from Samsara both he and the victims will be damned. Formerly I used black magic to curse my enemies but because of this sinful deed I had to go through many painful trials under Marpa. Life is very short. No one can tell when death will fall upon him. Therefore, please forget everything else and concentrate on your meditation."

S: All right let's go into this. 'Through his miraculous powers the Jetsun Milarepa had conquered the scholar priests in their ill intentioned debate and had won the argument.' This refers to the happenings of the previous chapter which is entitled 'The challenge from the logicians'. So Milarepa had won the argument. The scholar Priests had challenged him not with a very good motive but nonetheless Milarepa had won. 'However his heart son, Rechungpa, was not satisfied with the [2] victory for he thought that the Jetsun had not answered the monks questions in a scholarly manner. The only way, Rechungpa thought to himself to conquer these scholars who cannot even be convinced by the evidence of miracles is through logic and argument or by black magic and curses.'

So what does this statement by Rechungpa tell you about his attitude? What sort of attitude is he adopting here?

Brian: A very sort of competitive attitude.

S: It's more than that because you could say that the debate itself was competitive.

Atula: He wants revenge. He seems to want revenge in some way.

Adrian: He seems to want to answer the logicians on their own ground so to speak.

S: On their own grounds, yes, but why do you think he wants to do that? After all apparently Milarepa has conquered them so why is it that Rechungpa is so concerned that they should be conquered through logic and argument.

Mangala: Perhaps he himself needs convincing on those grounds, that he himself isn't satisfied with Milarepa's approach.

S: That is a possibility too yes. But on the other hand he of course is blaming the scholar monks for belittling genuine miracles of sorcery. It's as though he has got great faith in those genuine miracles whereas they do not have. But what is the basic mistake that Rechungpa is committing here? Going even further or going even deeper.

Atula: He actually doubts.

S: Well perhaps there is an element of doubt but there's more involved in it than that.

Suvajra: Thinking that logic and argument are the ultimate means, that there's something in words themselves.

S: It's not even that. It seems to me that he has got a fixed idea about the way in which things are to be done. In particular the way in which people are to be conquered to use that expression since it is the expression of the text. They have been conquered. The text says that Rechungpa himself recognizes that. The scholar priests, the logicians, have been conquered, they've been defeated in debate. But apparently that is not enough for Rechungpa. He is wanting that they should be defeated in a particular way. In other words the mistake in his attitude is that he is over attached to doing things in a particular way. Surely all that matters is that the scholar priests have been conquered, that they've been defeated. That's been done, but he's not satisfied. He is insistent that it should be done in a particular way. In other words he's attaching too much importance to a particular means and not giving enough recognition to the end. After all the end of the logic and argument is that the scholar monks should be defeated, but they have been defeated so why all this insistence on Rechungpa's part on logic and argument. Milarepa has already defeated the scholar monks - that is admitted all round. So it seems the mistake in Rechungpa's attitude is not only [3] wanting to do something. It is quite all right, it is quite acceptable that the scholar monks should be defeated as in fact they have been defeated but what is not all right is that Rechungpa is insisting that it should be done in a particular way. So that even though they have been defeated it's not enough that they've been defeated, they've got to be defeated all over again in that particular way to which Rechungpa himself attaches such great importance, namely through logic and science. Perhaps as

Mangala suggested, there is this insistence on his part on this particular means because he himself needs convincing in this way, as though he himself perhaps isn't convinced by what Milarepa has said. He wants himself logic and argument. But the basic flaw is that he wants things done in a particular way. It's not enough for him that they should be done but that they should be done in a particular way. So don't you think this is in fact quite a common attitude. Very often you find people aren't happy if something is done if it hasn't been done their way. It's as though they ignore the fact that something has in fact been done, something has been achieved, it hasn't been done in their way, the way that they thought it ought to be done, and even if it doesn't make any difference to the end result they're still not happy, they're still not satisfied as Rechungpa apparently wasn't.

Mangala: I'm wondering how the priests could actually have been conquered. If they weren't open or had any appreciation of let's say sorcery, how in fact they could be defeated on those grounds rather than on their own grounds, debate say.

S: But of course Milarepa goes into this a little bit later on because he says, 'Rechungpa, if we had been defeated in the debate how could the scholars have credited us with pure thoughts', which is what has happened in the previous chapters, because the chief logician says at the end of the previous chapter, 'I am convinced that what Milarepa has said is true and that we logicians have little sincerity, faith or devotion, nor do we have the pure thoughts and spirit of renunciation.' The logicians have admitted this so they have as it were admitted defeat.

Mangala: So presumably Milarepa has actually defeated them on their own grounds of logical argument and debate and...

S: Well no. I think Milarepa is saying something different. He said, 'Rechungpa, if we had been defeated in the debate, how could the scholars have credited us with pure thoughts?' In other words what is important Milarepa is saying is that the scholars should have recognized the genuineness of our motivation, the purity of our thoughts, the correctness of our attitude. The fact that they recognized that and incidentally of course recognized the wrongness of their own attitude, means that they have been defeated. Milarepa is saying that the defeat is not so much a matter of logical argument or science; that their defeat really consisted in the fact that they had to recognize their own wrong motivation and recognize Milarepa's correct motivation. It wasn't a question of scoring this particular point or not scoring that particular point. Rechungpa is thinking of defeat in exclusively sort of logical terms. If they hadn't been defeated by means of logic and science they've not been defeated at all. But Milarepa says no, that is not the real defeat. Maybe Milarepa could have won an argument on their own grounds but according to Milarepa that is not the true victory. They would not have been really defeated They are really defeated when they acknowledge their [4] own fault as they have done, their own wrong attitude, and recognize the purity of Milarepa's attitude. In other words when they adopt a genuinely open attitude towards him - that is the real defeat, not when they're merely stymied in logical argument. So it's as though Milarepa is saying to Rechungpa that he's got an entirely wrong idea as to what constitutes victory and what constitutes defeat in this particular situation. That it's not really a contest between opposing points of view or opposing doctrines or opposing reasons. It's a conflict if you like between two people. The conflict in this case between Milarepa and this leading logician.

So the victory is therefore not a victory in terms of argument but a victory in terms of persons, a victory in terms of individuals. In other words Milarepa conquers his opponent when the

opponent recognizes that he himself is insincere in his approach and Milarepa is sincere, Milarepa is pure. He can then be open to Milarepa. That's what the discussion, that's what the debate is all about. Not about scoring technical logical points. Do you see what I mean? So in other words Milarepa is thinking in terms of human communication you could say whereas Rechungpa is thinking much more in terms of technical debate. Milarepa is as is were saying well he acknowledged his mistake, he recognized my purity of attitude. That's all that matters. I've won, because he's opened himself to me. Forget about the logical rights and wrongs and the logical arguments. Milarepa is not concerned with victory in the ordinary sense, he's not concerned with winning the argument . What interests him is that the other person has renounced his stubborn opinionated attitude and has opened himself to Milarepa recognizing Milarepa's superior spiritual attainment

Mangala: On the other hand let's say had Milarepa been able to convince the guy also on the basis of logical argument would that not represent the more total complete...?

S: Yes and no because Milarepa mentions this later on. He says 'in learning semantics' - semantics is the scientific study of the meaning of words - ' you may acquire some knowledge about words but still you will not be able to win all the debates, nor can you master the whole study of letters.'

So this means that you cannot ever reach a final conclusion by means of logical argument. You may be a person of great spiritual attainment, your opponent may not be a person of great spiritual attainment but he may be much more as it were capable, even much more tricky, in handling logical weapons than you are. So sometimes you know you can have the experience of arguing with someone who is better at arguing than you are and he defeats you in argument but at the same time you know or you feel that he's not right, that you've not been defeated. I'm not referring to the sort of situation in which you refuse to acknowledge defeat out of mere stubbornness or anything of that sort, but when you really do know quite genuinely that he's only sort of bamboozled you with some apparently logical arguments but you don't really know enough about logic, you're not really good enough at that sort of thing to be able to point out exactly where he's gone wrong or exactly in what the bamboozlement consists. So Milarepa is saying all right you may have all the tricks of the logical trade at your fingertips but even so you won't win all the arguments. You may well meet someone who is cleverer at that sort of thing than yourself. So therefore he's saying no final victory can be achieved by logical means. You may well meet someone who is more clever than you. Even though he may be less developed spiritually he may be less right basically but [5] he may be able to defeat you in argument so nothing is (settled by that means). You probably all have or maybe have had the experience of meeting people outside the Friends with whom you've been trying to discuss and argue but you've not been able to convince them. You feel you're so right, what you say is so true, you're convinced of it, you know it. But you can't convince them. They've got all sorts of arguments to bring against you. You know that those arguments are sophistical but at the same time you're unable to cope with those arguments on logical grounds, you're not sufficiently skilled. Supposing you were. All right supposing you did defeat the other person but supposing he wouldn't acknowledge defeat well what are you to do then? You've used all your arguments, you've defeated him logically, he's unable to reply but he doesn't change his opinion, he doesn't come over to your way of thinking because there's a very deep conditioning there in him which goes beyond logic. So even then he's not defeated. You may have defeated him logically in argument but he has not been defeated. So therefore we come back to Milarepa's point that you defeat someone really in this sort of situation only when he

opens himself to you which is what that logician apparently had done at the end of the previous chapter. Sometimes it happens actually that you lose the argument but on the other hand... in logical terms ... but in person to person terms you win. You know the sort of situation or do you recognize the sort of situation. That you may have a discussion with somebody - that person may wipe the floor with you logically but even though you're defeated logically in the course of being defeated you've come across so positively that that person is impressed despite themselves. So who has lost and who has won?

So Milarepa is saying basically to Rechungpa the basic thing has happened, the thing that really needed to happen has happened. He says the scholars have credited us with pure thoughts, and we know from the previous chapter that the leading scholar blamed himself severely and recognized his lack of good faith and understanding as compared with Milarepa. But that's all that you need, that someone becomes receptive and then of course you go beyond victory and defeat or winning or losing an argument. But Rechungpa is obsessed with this idea of defeating the logicians by logical means which does suggest he's over occupied with victory in the narrower sense, the more superficial sense. He's not so much preoccupied or concerned with the question of human communication, he's not so impressed by the fact that that logician has now opened himself to Milarepa. He wants him actually to be defeated. He wants to rub his nose in the dust as it were. He's not satisfied that he's conceded defeat and has acknowledged Milarepa as spiritually superior.

So it does as I think you also suggested indicate a sort of in a way revengeful attitude. It's not enough that the logician has opened himself to Milarepa, Rechungpa wants him to be actually defeated technically too.

So you can see several aspects of Rechungpa's mistaken attitude or you can look at that mistaken attitude from several points of view. To begin with he's not satisfied that the logicians should be defeated or should have conceded defeat, he wants that he should be defeated in a particular way. He thinks he hasn't been properly defeated. He doesn't recognize that he's been defeated in the only true sense, that is to say he's opened himself to Milarepa - Rechungpa isn't able to see that.

And of course this point is underlined by the fact that he says or he rather thinks -'the only way Rechungpa thought to himself, to conquer these scholars who cannot even be convinced by the evidence of miracles, is by logic and argument or by black magic [6] and curses'. Well that really gives the game away doesn't it because what does black magic and curses represent in a word?

Clive: Hate.

S: Yes, if you're trying to do things in that sort of way in what sort of way are you trying to do things?

Clive: Power.

S: Power yes, violently. So within the spiritual context can you really defeat people by power? You could even say that trying to defeat people by reason and argument is using power. Maybe that just about sums up Rechungpa's whole attitude. He wants to deal with the logicians in one way or another by the exercise of power. Milarepa is content to deal with

them by means of the exercise of love. Love in the sense of metta, or more than that, in the sense of Maha metta and Maha karuna. So far as Milarepa is concerned the fact that the logician has acknowledged his mistake and opened himself to Milarepa, that is quite enough. That's all that Milarepa wants. He doesn't want the other person to be humiliated. Rechungpa apparently wants him to be humiliated. Milarepa thinks in terms of the other person opening. Rechungpa thinks in terms of the other person being crushed and humiliated.

Clive: It's like a war like instinct. Wanting to sort of not only defeat your enemy but play football with their heads or something.

S: Yes. So you notice this if you're engaged in discussion with somebody. You have to be very careful that what you're trying to do in putting across your own point of view or your own attitude or yourself, you have to be very careful that what you're really trying to do is to get the other person to open himself up to you which means of course that you must open yourself up to the other person. In other words you must be very careful that what you're really trying to do is to get the other person to open himself up to you, which means of course that you must open yourself up to the other person. In other words you must be very careful to make sure that you are really in pursuit of communication and trying to communicate with the other person, that you're not trying just to beat the other person down in argument. Sometimes of course that may be necessary. If the other person's attitude is so intensely competitive or overbearing or arrogant, you may need to beat the other person down more, but of course you have to be quite sure that you are actually able to do that because if you can't do that, however right you may be you will just end up looking rather foolish and then you may start even feeling angry and frustrated. But apart from that what if one is having a discussion with someone or an argument, you have to be really concerned that you are doing your best to create an open situation, a situation in which you open up to each other and a situation in which you can communicate, that you're not just trying to score technical debating points and win an argument. There is a saying, win an argument and lose a friend. It's better to lose the argument and win the friend. So that's why it may be you can have say a discussion or argument, even quite a strong one, with someone quite outside the Friends, you may lose every point, you may actually be defeated on everything that you say, logically defeated, but if you keep a positive open attitude that person may go away, nonetheless, quite impressed and think things over very seriously. You haven't really lost. If you've [7] maintained your openness and your willingness to communicate. This is what in fact Milarepa is saying. How could we be defeated. The logicians have acknowledged the purity of our motive, the purity of our attitude. There's no question of one having been defeated.

Malcolm Webb: (Do you) sometimes force arguments and they're very subjective. They've got a particular slant on it and they're not really the truth. It depends how different people interpret it. That's another great error isn't it. A few months later you might think Oh God, I really pushed my opinion down that person's throat and it was really just subjective.

S: So therefore you have all the time to be concerned even when you are right, that you are not just pushing an opinion, even a right opinion, but genuinely trying to communicate. This is the important thing. So this is what Milarepa seems to be emphasizing.

Clive: Rechungpa's commitment's at question, whether he genuinely wants these people to be converted or whether he just wants to beat them

S: Yes indeed. Milarepa is concerned with converting people to the right path but it's as though Rechungpa is just concerned with enjoying a victory over them regardless of what happens to them.

So therefore I said that in this sort of situation when we're discussing with people, especially people outside the Friends, we have to be quite careful to maintain our openness of attitude and our will to communicate. If we can do that we can't be defeated. We may be defeated logically, we may be defeated in the sense that the other person may feel that he has won the argument, that we have not been able to stand up to him logically, but in terms of person to person we've beaten him because we've maintained a positive attitude, an attitude of willingness to communicate whereas he hasn't and this will have its effect. Maybe not always but very often. So this is what we should be more concerned with and in the course of the discussion or the argument itself we should be very careful to ensure that our own attitude doesn't subtly change, because you find if people are being really argumentative in a foolish way, a very subjective way, and we can see that, we can see how they're wriggling on the hook as it were, but not admitting it, and that they're being really very closed and not at all open. Well we can start getting a bit impatient. We can start getting a bit frustrated that they're not recognizing our point of view or not recognizing us then we can start feeling a bit resentful, a bit angry and then we may want to start beating them down and actually winning and defeating them in the argument. In other words we're just functioning on the same level as them even though in a sense we are in the right, and that doesn't help. So we can say that just as in a general way there is a point in which we can either go in the direction of creativity or in the way of reactivity, in the course of discussion we can either go in the way of trying to communicate and be open or go in the way of trying to crush and defeat the other person in argument. In other words there's the danger in this context too that we can switch or be tempted to switch from the love mode so to speak to the power mode. So we have to watch this all the time, especially when you are young and you're convinced that you're absolutely right, that Buddhism is absolutely right, that the FWBO is absolutely right, which of course it is! But you have to be very careful how you put this across. And that the way in which you put it across is also right which means positive and willing to communicate and open, not just insistent and [8] dogmatic or harsh or overbearing or anything of that sort. Otherwise the way some people put across Buddhism - I'm not referring to anyone in the Friends - but the way some people put across Buddhism or try to put across Buddhism or think they're putting across Buddhism - it doesn't sound like Buddhism at all, it sounds like something completely different. Sometimes it sounds more like Christianity, just because of their particular tone and attitude, which is not in harmony with what they're actually trying to put across. Not in harmony with the spirit. And as I said of course the fact that Rechungpa thinks in terms of convincing the scholar priests by black magic and curses, that gives the game away because how can you really convert anybody with curses. What does a curse mean. You're (implicating) evil and harm upon them. So that means your attitude is the exact opposite of what it wants to be.

So Milarepa says 'if you', that is Rechungpa, 'go to India merely for the purpose of learning the art of debate you are then doing something wrong and worthless. That also means that you will forsake meditation practice. In learning semantics you may acquire some knowledge about words but still you will not be able to win all the debates. Nor can you master the whole study of letters. Only a Buddha can answer all questions and challenges but to achieve Buddhahood one must practice.'



So again Milarepa is saying it's not a question of words, it's not a question of logic, it's not a question of argument, it is a question of being. It is your being that defeats the other person, it is not your arguments, it is not your logic. So you must as it were cultivate your being and you cultivate your being through meditation. If you meditate then you will transform yourself. If you transform yourself you will impress the other person whatever you say. Whether you know logic or you don't know logic.

Malcolm: You can afford to be open.

S: You can afford to be open. You don't mind being defeated in argument, you don't mind being exposed as ignorant of this or ignorant of that because it's all beside the point. What really matters is the state of your own being, and if the other person becomes open to this as the logician became open to Milarepa's state of being, that's all that you require. You have so to speak defeated the other person, you have so to speak won the argument. It's the quality of your own being that is important and the study of logic and reasoning is not going to help, not going to improve that. So Milarepa is saying well don't think that by going to India and learning logic and debate you're really going to be able to defeat other people, you're not. And what is more, in order to study logic and debate you'll be giving up the practice of meditation, and that is what is going to transform you, that is what in the long run is going to help you to defeat or conquer other people if one would like to put it in that way.

'Therefore the best way is to abjure the world, renounce all thoughts and wishes of this life and devote oneself to meditation.'

Mangala: This isn't or is it like a putting down of say scriptural study etc.

S: No, I think it isn't. The Kagyupas of course did and do emphasize meditation above all else but from various songs of Milarepa's we can see that he was quite well versed in the scriptures, quite well versed in the doctrinal teachings. So we might say that by meditation here Milarepa means all those practices, all those methods which raise the level of consciousness, which heighten the quality of [9] one's own being. Meditation is one of the most important and direct, maybe the most important and the most direct, but it's not the only one. But Milarepa's referring to those practices, those pursuits which actually do help you to evolve and to develop and the science of reason and debate is not one of those.

Mangala: But the point about say debate between where there's also communication like where it wasn't an argument but...

S: Yes, OK but then even so in the last analysis it is the communication that is going to sort things out and not the debate. The communication will be the deciding factor because a third party might come along and upset the arguments of both of you - where would you be then?

Mangala: I suppose what I'm trying to get at is that... isn't it true that an intellectual understanding and appreciation of things is necessary for vipassana?

S: Oh yes indeed, but nonetheless your intellectual understanding of things may be upset by somebody of more powerful logical capacity than yourself. But it doesn't matter. You can go on happily meditating and using your provisional intellectual structure as a basis for the development of insight nonetheless and it will still work. Even though it has been pulled to

pieces by somebody else who's a more capable thinker than you. If you yourself are convinced that it has been pulled to pieces then of course you've got to reconstruct the whole thing all over again taking into account the objections that have been raised. This may sometimes happen to a greater or to a lesser extent. You may modify your intellectual structure as the result of debate and discussion.

Mangala: The impression that I sort of get from Milarepa is in a sense very sort of simple and uncomplicated with just a very pure motive and maybe sort of well obviously perhaps meditating a lot but no kind of complicated or weird sort of mental state and desires but I think about just sort of well perhaps more ordinary people perhaps even like Rechungpa and perhaps this, the intellectual faculty has to be worked with to some extent and developed.

S: Well perhaps it does but even so it doesn't help in the long run because as I've said you may develop your intellect in the sense of your logical capacity, your power of abstract logical thinking. As a result of that you may come to certain conclusions and you may base say your development of vipassana upon those conclusions but somebody else with a more powerful capacity for logical thinking may come along and upset all that. So ... and again somebody with a still more powerful logical capacity may come along and upset his upsetting. So there is no finality on that level. This I think is one of the things that Milarepa is getting at, and in fact usually we don't follow logic and reasoning implicitly. We may be convinced. As Butler says, 'a man convinced against his will remains of the same opinion still'. We very rarely change our views for purely logical reasons, we merely elaborate them further to meet the objections which have been made. We very rarely basically change them.

Malcolm: You can't argue against emotional positivity either can you?

S: You can't. You can't argue against emotional negativity. We shall see that also in the course of this chapter I think, or maybe it's the other one. But you can't argue against emotion. So that [10] does in a sense raise the point well what is the function of the intellect? What is the function of the rational logical process? The function of that particular type of thinking. It can certainly help, it can clarify, it can give one a basis of reflection but it cannot ultimately decide. (Matters is) the quality of your being not the technical, the logical, rightness or wrongness of your thinking.

Mangala: It reminds me of that little saying when some Chinese king I think asked what is the most important thing in Buddhism or something and (the answer was) purify the heart...

S: Cease to do evil, learn to do good, purify the mind.

Mangala: So it's like the main thing is just to in a sense cleanse, purify your being and if you do that that's it.

S: Because one really does see that there are people who just go on arguing pro and con indefinitely and all their energy goes into that and they never get on to purifying their own being. They don't seem to think that that is relevant even though one of the things that they may be arguing about may be purifying one's own being or even the importance of purifying one's own being and not arguing about purifying one's own being. They will argue about that and not realize that they're just arguing.

Mangala: There's no real self consciousness there.

S: There's no real self consciousness. So this doesn't mean that one should shun discussion or refuse to enter into debate but enter into it in a very provisional sort of way. It's like a sort of game. Even if your argument is defeated you are not defeated and what you are is the really important thing, and you actually find this, that sometimes people who are intellectually not in a way very developed will in a sense dominate people who are intellectually very well developed because they've got something different, they've got something stronger. Stronger not in the power sense but in, for want of a better term, the character sense. They've got more strength, more genuine solidity, more openness, they communicate better. This is why if one is talking say about Buddhism or the Friends with a rather difficult outside person, someone who's enquiring and probing, sometimes it is as it were better, certainly with some people to sort of put all one's cards on the table and say well look I can't meet your arguments, I find it quite difficult logically to justify my position in terms of abstract thought, but I have practised certain things. As a result of practising certain things I have achieved certain results and those results I have found worthwhile for me as a human being and I can say no more than that and that I'm convinced that if you were to understand, to practise in the same way you could be benefited in the way that I've been benefited. I can't justify it logically but this is actually what has happened. I'm like a man who just switches on the electric light - it lights up the whole room - how electricity works I can't tell you, I can't explain because I've not studied that subject, I just know that it works. So it's just like that with Buddhism. There are clever people who understand how it works, who have studied the Madhyamika and the Yogachara, I'm not one of them. I've just pressed the switch, I've just turned on the light. So I'm not going to deny the light because I don't know how electricity works. So one can adopt some such approach, and if something of that light so to speak is reflected in [11] your whole attitude and positivity they cannot but be at least a little bit impressed. You notice Milarepa also says, 'only Buddha can answer all questions and challenges but to achieve Buddhahood one must practise.' When Milarepa says only Buddha can answer all challenges and questions what do you think he means. What is he actually saying about the Buddha? Is he saying that the Buddha is the best of all debaters? and the most highly logical person.

Brian Duff: It's just that he's got Perfect Speech, he knows exactly what has to be said and what's appropriate.

S: Or even not said because sometimes the Buddha remains silent. So it's not that the Buddha can answer all questions in the sense that the Buddha can necessarily answer all questions on their own level to the perfect satisfaction of the questioner. No but he knows what is best to say whatever the circumstances, in a sense regardless of whether the listener is satisfied or not. Some of the arguments that the Buddha uses in the scriptures which convinced the people that he is talking to don't convince us. But we don't drop the Buddha so to speak because of that, because we recognize that the Buddha nature, the quality of the Buddha's being, transcends particular arguments, transcends whatever he says, just as we know within ourselves on a much lower level, that we can't always communicate or often communicate all that we think, all that we feel, all that we understand even or all that we've experienced. Our power of expression falls far short of that, and sometimes we wish that we could communicate to people what we actually feel, what we actually experience but it's very difficult. The fact that we can't communicate it doesn't mean that it isn't there or the fact that we can communicate it only under rather special conditions, that is to say especially when the other person is really open. Some people they expect you to communicate when they destroy

the very means of communication. They say come on tell me all about Nirvana, come one: two minutes! There we are I'm giving you your chance! Convince me. Well when they lay down conditions of that sort they are in effect removing any conditions of communication. They're making it impossible for you to communicate.

You can't communicate with anybody against their will even a Buddha cannot do that. You can't save anybody against their will, you can't convince them against their will, therefore logic is out. Therefore black magic is out, curses are out, because they are all forms of power and you can't lead anyone on the spiritual path through power but only through - well I don't want to say love - but only through metta and karuna. You can't compel anybody. This raises the whole question in a way of imposing discipline on people. You can impose discipline on people in such a way as to make them a more positive member of the group, and if they're a more positive member of the group well then they have got a good basis for becoming an individual. But you cannot make them an individual by means of discipline forcibly imposed. That is quite impossible. You have to let them go their own way so to speak, and their development has to be as a result of their own volition because they want to develop. You can't make anybody develop. You can create the right sort of conditions or help create the right sort of conditions, give advice, suggestions, inspiration, but that's all you can do.

Suvajra: What do you mean you can discipline somebody to be a more positive member of the group?

S: Discipline means basically threatening them in some way or other if they misbehave. This is what it really means. But it does work within the group. You can see it in the army, it works, you [12] produce quite positive healthy people through basically the fear of punishment in one form or another, but you haven't produced individuals. But a good healthy group member is as it were a candidate for individuality. But you cannot make someone an individual by a use of the same methods in a more refined form. The method has to be completely different for so to speak producing an individual. You can force someone to come and sit say in the meditation room when the bell rings. You can force them to sit without moving for an hour, but that is all discipline, as they do in the Zen monasteries, that is discipline, and it is helping to produce a healthy group member, but you can't force anyone to meditate, that you can't do.

You may force him to perform concentration exercises through fear, just about, but that's all. You can't force him to meditate, you can't raise the level of his consciousness by force.

Suvajra: What I was thinking of there was just experiencing within our own community when you try and sort of limit people doing certain things it doesn't seem to produce positivity, it seems to produce resentment.

S: Well I think one must say that in some cases people are trying to form or create a spiritual community when they should first try to create or form a positive group. Some people try to live in a spiritual community who aren't fit to live in a positive group! It's just like a dog before you allow him into the house he's got to be house trained. I used the expression in a letter to somebody not so long ago, 'community trained'. I said that someone wasn't community trained if you know what I mean. But this is what I feel say reading about Zen Buddhism in Japan, that very often the Zen monasteries, especially when they took in boys and very young men, were not so much spiritual communities they were positive groups run in a semi military sort of way, but they weren't spiritual communities. The odd person as a

result of his own individual practice after a number of years may have become an individual but the situation as a whole was that of a positive group at best. Sometimes it wasn't even a positive group. So I think in communities it's very fine to talk about a spiritual community but first of all you've got to be quite sure you've got individuals, because if you haven't got individuals there's no question of a spiritual community. If they're not individuals well at best you can have a positive group and a positive group needs discipline which means you've got to have someone to impose the discipline so to speak. So ideally that should be someone who is himself an individual and who is imposing the discipline as a means to an end to prepare the way for individuality or at least to create a possible base for individuality.

So I think in communities people need to be very clear about this, that they're usually not actually yet spiritual communities. Because sometimes people will claim that because it's a spiritual community they ought to be free to do as they like, after all they're individuals, they're responsible, etc., etc., we've all heard these sort of arguments, but the crux of the whole matter is whether they are in fact individuals. Because if they're not, well they cannot be truly responsible, they must be told what to do, they must be made to tow the line, there must be a line. An individual doesn't need a line except a very provisional one which maybe he chalks out himself, but those who are not individuals require definite lines, and to be made to tow those lines and punished if they don't tow them. Otherwise you can't create a spiritual community. It's like this with children. They have to be given a definite line.

[13]

Mangala: I sometimes wonder whether a year's national service wouldn't be a good thing for everybody.

S: Oh Wonderful! For quite a lot anyway.

Mangala: Well I think actually an awful lot of people just around the Friends generally and communities are just really just undisciplined I think they really need a good sort of training in a way.

S: Well you see this should be given by society as a whole. Society should be so structured as to give this sort of training with or without national service, so that people progress from that society which is a positive healthy group to the spiritual community which is the FWBO, but actually society doesn't do its work. Society is not constructed in that sort of way. So people do not become positive group members usually, sometimes they do more by luck than by accident. So when people come to us usually it's not a really good positive healthy group member who's started to get some glimmerings of individuality and wants to develop in that direction. It's usually a very reactive person, not to say neurotic person who isn't even a healthy group member, who's got some theoretical idea about being an individual which he usually understands as being an individualist! That's what we very often get.

Mangala: Perhaps our communities really need to be almost restructured or at least given a lot more... I think up to now we've just pretty much had communities. We used to have mixed ones, now at least it's single sex but maybe a lot more consideration needs to be given to some being well just much more high quality for want of a better word and some being definitely sort of positive group situations where perhaps it is disciplined and only then after careful selection do people join let's say more spiritual communities. Perhaps we've really been operating for the most part positive groups rather than actual spiritual communities.

S: Well I've also said on some other occasion it isn't as though one is one thing or the other all the time because you can't label something, well this is a spiritual community or that's a positive group - it's fluctuating. One whole day you might have everybody present on the premises, all the members of the community and functioning in such a way, communicating in such a way, it really is a spiritual community. The next day it may be totally different. It may not even be a positive group because of changes in the minds of some of the members of the community over night. But then again you might find that two or three people are really functioning as individuals and so far as they're concerned it's a spiritual community, the rest maybe are not. And this can change from day to day, week to week.

Mangala: Just more generally I've been wondering a lot lately whether in fact on the whole there isn't too much of a sort of jump between let's say people sort of in ordinary society coming into the Friends and I think that a lot of people seem to try and make a jump from one situation to let's say what they take to be a spiritual situation on the other hand, and it's almost like they're trying to do things which require just much more refined energy than they've actually got. I think in some ways people just aren't ready for meditation and really need...

[14]

S: Well we had someone a little bit like this at Padmaloka for a while - no names no pack drill as they say in the army - but he just clearly wasn't suited for a community, not a community like Padmaloka anyway. He had far too much undisciplined energy. Which, OK, wasn't unhealthy perhaps, but it didn't quite fit into a spiritual community. He needed some other kind of situation.

Mangala: I feel that's pretty sort of general. I think with most people they could probably do with a lot more ways of bringing out and integrating and contacting even let's say the more cruder sort of energy, even before meditation and stuff like that to really do it properly. Even just kind of discipline and stuff like that.

S: Of course you realize that most of the people who come along to the Friends or who come in contact with us do not like the word discipline at all. They want to do what they want to do and it really requires quite a bit of hard thinking to recognize intellectually the need for discipline and the humility in a way to recognize that you're far from being an individual, you're not really a positive group member yet and therefore you need discipline and discipline means allowing yourself so to speak to be disciplined by other people. A lot of people find that very difficult to accept. Because in a way it means accepting that other people know better than you know yourself and this sounds very undemocratic.

Atula: Yes you find that a lot in a work situation.

S: They'll try and tell you how to lay bricks or something like that even if they haven't even seen a brick before.

Atula: So they won't, they can't accept any ( ) from anybody. After a couple of weeks they think they know it all. You get that a lot.

Adrian: Presumably if the word discipline comes from the same root as the word disciple.

S: I think it does.

Adrian: You could look at the word discipline in terms of a mode of behaviour which is conducive to some sort of vision.

S: Yes you could. But I think you have to be very careful because people who are reactive and maybe individualists rather than individuals might say well the way I'm living, doing things my own way, following my own judgement, that is what is going to help me to develop. The sort of pseudo liberal pseudo hippie kind of attitude.

Anyway how did we get on to that?

Malcolm: I find that I'm more receptive to people who are pure, who I know are committed to what they're doing, and it's not like them then that are imposing the discipline. It's like what we're doing when we sit down ( ) purifying ourselves together and I'm more liable to be receptive to that person's sort of nod or a wink if they're putting me right somehow than somebody who I ...

S: Yes sometimes you can feel that if someone is telling you to do something or how to do something or not to do something, you can very often tell whether it is coming from genuine knowledge or whether [15] it's coming just from desire to boss and to order you around and if you're reasonably open and receptive you can tell the difference. But sometimes of course there are people who are so reactive they don't even like to be told what to do when they're doing things say the wrong way, by someone who obviously knows much better than they do. They don't even like that.

Malcolm: Some people just want to be sort of good leaders, they've always had a desire to be a good leader and here they are, there's this opportunity, there's a group of men here who can prove themselves to be good leaders but they're no good because..

S: They aren't able to lead.

You notice Milarepa also says 'one may slay people by black magic but if he cannot deliver the victims both he and the victims will be damned.' Milarepa doesn't rule out the use of black magic altogether as a skilful means because in that case it's only apparently black. You really know what you are doing, and in extreme cases - this is at least hypothetically postulated - you can even kill someone by black magic, but if you know what you are doing you can follow their consciousness and accompany their consciousness and help their consciousness after death. So Milarepa is saying well even black magic can be used but you must be really well versed in it in this sort of way and be able to do those sort of things. So therefore Milarepa isn't adopting a dogmatic attitude at all. He says in a way yes anything goes, it depends upon your state of mind, it depends upon your real capacities. He says I'm not even ruling out black magic but make sure you really know black magic, from the Buddhist point of view. That is to say as a skilful means. Even that isn't ruled out.

So in the same way even harsh speech isn't ruled out. We know that harsh speech is against the ten precepts, all right, but you could say at least maybe not from the Hinayana point of view, but from the Mahayana point of view harsh speech is not ruled out. Sometimes the Buddha spoke a bit harshly, at least in a sense harshly. Because you can use rough words, a strong language but with a basically positive intention. That cannot be ruled out except that you must be quite sure that you really do know what you're doing. If you do that's all right.

You take that risk, you can look after yourself, you can handle the situation, and sometimes yes a few rough words can produce under certain conditions, a very positive effect. But make sure again that you really know what you are doing, that you haven't just got irritated or that you don't just want to destroy or wound or hurt the other person, that it really is with a positive intention and is really for their good that you're using this harsh language.

Vajradaka: A number of times people have given the example of that evil Tibetan king who was killed by a bowman in black who was supposed to be a lama. Some kind of justification for a highly spiritually evolved person killing somebody.

S: Well the Vajrayana - of course this is the Vajrayana and not even the Mahayana - the Vajrayana doesn't even rule out that possibility but obviously it's open to great misuse and great misunderstanding and so on but nonetheless the theoretical possibility is acknowledged by the Vajrayana. Perhaps even the Mahayana wouldn't agree, certainly not the Hinayana. Though these are only really successive applications of the same principle, that it is the mental state, it is the intention that really counts, that you [16] can't as it were ensure that something is right by defining it in terms of a certain action or a certain way of behaviour. You can't ever be sure. Because there's nothing that you cannot do with the wrong motive. So motive is all important. So you can put it the other way round and say well if the motive is wrong it doesn't matter what you do. If the motive is right it doesn't matter what you do, but you have to be very careful how you apply that.

Malcolm: It shows up very well in the life of Padmasambhava doesn't it.

S: Yes indeed.

Malcolm: He kills a child and they go to some ( ) future rebirth but it's so sort of... I don't know ( )!

S: So if you can be quite sure that someone is going to go to heaven after you've killed them, yes, there's no harm, but can you be sure of that. Do you know that. That's the question you have to ask. But the basic principle is that it's the mental state, the intention, the volition which is all important.

Malcolm: He was killing out something evil wasn't he?

S: Yes. So Milarepa is sort of underlining that here. He is as it were saying to Rechungpa that yes, I'm saying that I'm discouraging you from going to India, learning logic and debate. I'm discouraging you from learning black magic. But it's not as though they cannot ever be useful under any circumstances. I'm not taking the opposite dogmatic point of view. You are as it were saying only logic, only black magic, only those things will do the trick but Milarepa is not taking the opposite point of view that they will never do the trick, he is admitting that yes, under certain circumstances they may do the trick but know what you are doing, understand what you are doing. And of course at the same time he is saying the best way is to abjure the world, renounce all thoughts and wishes of this life and devote oneself to meditation. Or as we might say to your own spiritual self development. In the long run you'll defeat people if it is a question of defeating them by as it were, inverted commas, 'force of personality'. It's that which really counts. And he says, 'formerly I used black magic to curse my enemies' - we read about this in the life of Milarepa, 'but because of this sinful deed I had to go through many



painful trials under Marpa.' In that case it was just black magic, it wasn't Vajrayanic black magic, not magic that was black on the outside but white on the inside. It was magic which was black on the outside and black on the inside too. ' Life is very short. No one can tell when death will fall upon him. Therefore please forget everything else and concentrate on your meditation.

Rechungpa is so concerned about debating with others and defeating others, presumably in order to convert them, but what about converting himself. This is what Milarepa is saying. If you are converted yourself you'll be able spontaneously to convert others, but if unconverted yourself you merely try to array yourself in logic and debate, if you merely try to provide yourself with those weapons but without that underlying quality of being being present, you won't succeed.

So it all comes back to the quality of your own being. No short cuts. Sometimes we might be tempted to think well it will be very nice if the FWBO could expand really rapidly, that we have millions of pounds that we could spend on advertising and [17] have our own radio station, our own TV programme even etc., etc., but it wouldn't do all that much good. At the very best it could just bring the existence of the FWBO to people's notice. It couldn't really communicate very much about the FWBO. What you really have to do is just to get hold of people individually, work with them and on them individually. That's a long slow process. There's no way of speeding that up except by increasing your own individual efforts.

So Rechungpa is too much concerned with results, in a quite superficial sort of sense. Milarepa's concerned with results too but in a much more genuine and real kind of way. That he's able to see what it is that really does produce results. So he's pointing Rechungpa in that direction. Rechungpa's quite unwilling to go in that direction.

So in this opening paragraph you get quite a good picture of these two different attitudes. The attitude of Milarepa and the attitude of Rechungpa. Milarepa being concerned more with the quality of the individual being. Rechungpa being more concerned with the intellectual equipment. Rechungpa being more concerned to use the power mode, Milarepa being more concerned to use the love mode. Rechungpa thinking in terms of actual victory and defeating people, Milarepa thinking in terms of being open, encouraging openness. There's a really great difference between the two attitudes. You could say Milarepa's attitude was more creative, Rechungpa's attitude was more reactive. I remember that when I was in India I knew some young Hindu monks once at the Ramakrishna mission and they were absolutely fascinated by the story, the life story of Swami Vivekananda, the founder of the Ramakrishna mission, how he went to America and conquered everybody with his oratory and they were very concerned to practise their oratory and their idea was that they'd go to America - it was usually America - and would orate about Hinduism and the Vedanta in a very sort of impressive way and people would be absolutely bowled over by that and in that way they'd be conquered by Hinduism and conquered by the Vedanta. Maybe you get some Buddhists thinking in that sort of way too. Maybe Rechungpa thought quite a bit in that sort of way, but it's not really a genuinely spiritual attitude.

All right let's leave it there.

Clive: "In spite of his guru's advice Rechungpa pressed the Jetsun to grant him permission to go to India. Milarepa then said 'If you insist upon ignoring my advice you may go to India but

I'm not sending you there to study logic and science. When I was with Marpa I received from him only four of the nine complete teachings of the Formless Dakini Dharma series. He said that the other five were still available in India and also prophesied that a disciple in our lineage would later secure them as a teacher of Naropa's transmission. Thereby many sentient beings will be benefited. Since I have been devoting myself to meditation I have not yet attended to this matter. These teachings therefore are to be obtained. I am now old and sick. Also I have realized in my own mind. There is no need for me to go. I think it fitting that you go to India to procure them. You will however need some gold for your journey.' "

S: So 'in spite of his Guru's advice Rechungpa pressed the Jetsun to grant him permission to go to India. Milarepa then said, if you [18] insist upon ignoring my advice you may go to India but I am not sending you there to study logic and science.' So what do you notice here. In spite of his Guru's advice Rechungpa pressed the Jetsun to grant him permission to go to India. What does this suggest, what does it imply?

Suvajra: He's not very open to his own guru.

S: He's not very open. He wants permission but he doesn't want actually to go against Milarepa, but on the other hand he doesn't want to really go along with what Milarepa is advising him. He at least wants Milarepa's formal permission. He knows that Milarepa doesn't want him to go but at the same time he wants Milarepa to say OK you may go. He wants Milarepa's permission to do the very thing that Milarepa is advising him not to do. On the other hand he wants to do things his own way but he still wants the guru's approval. He wants the guru's approval in rejecting the guru's own advice. Isn't it so? This is what he's really asking In spite of his guru's advice Rechungpa pressed the Jetsun to grant him permission to go to India. Please permit me to do the very thing that you have advised me not to do. Please give me your blessing to do it.

So what does this suggest about the relationship between Rechung and Milarepa and even disciples and gurus in general? It suggests the disciple doesn't want to do what the guru advises but he wants the guru's approval nonetheless. So what does that suggest?

Asvajit: The relationship is not really one of guru and disciple.

S: Mmm not completely at least, no. It's as though the guru has become a sort of approval bestowing father-figure. Rechungpa wants to go his own way, he is not open to Milarepa, he does not wish to follow his advice, he is going directly against it, but he still wants Milarepa's approval.

Mangala: He's not really prepared to take responsibility.

S: Yes, he's not prepared to take responsibility.

Mangala: Otherwise he'd just say well look I want to go to India so cheerio.

S: Yes. I know that you disagree, I know that I'm going against your advice but I'm sorry, that's what I've got to do. But he doesn't say that. He tries to get Milarepa to change his mind so to speak or even to permit him to do the very thing that he thinks he shouldn't do.

So it's as though he's not really concerned with following the guru's advice or instruction. He's just concerned with getting his approval of what he himself wants to do. He's using the guru in a wrong sort of way rather than opening himself to the influence of the guru. He just wants the guru's blessing on whatever he wants to do. That's the guru's function, just to give a blessing on what he wants to do, just to approve. So that's the situation. So how does Milarepa deal with it? Well quite skilfully as one might imagine. Milarepa then said 'if you insist upon ignoring my advice you may go to India.' In other words Milarepa is not blind to the situation and as far as he can he's not going to allow Rechungpa to remain blind to it either. He says, 'you are ignoring my advice', this is the actual situation, you're ignoring my advice. All right, if you insist upon ignoring my advice [19] you may go to India, but I'm not sending you there to study logic and science, so it's a sort of compromise. Rechungpa wants to go to India to study logic and science. He won't listen to Milarepa's advice not to go, so Milarepa says, all right you may go to India. I give my permission to you to go to India, but I'm not giving my permission to you to study logic and science. It's as if to say well in a sense there's nothing wrong with going to India so I can give my permission to you to do that. Going to India is not in itself necessarily wrong but it may well be the wrong thing for Rechungpa. But to try to learn logic and science, that is definitely wrong. So Milarepa's not giving his permission for that. He says, 'when I was with Marpa I received from him only four of the nine complete teachings of the formless Dakini Dharma series. He said that the other five were still available in India and also prophesied that a disciple of our lineage would later secure them from a teacher of Naropa's transmission.' So Rechungpa is insisting on going to India. Milarepa permits him to go but he tries to give a different significance to the journey, a different purpose. He is not permitting Rechungpa to study logic and science. If he wants to do that let him do it off his own back without the guru's permission, without the guru's blessing. So far as Milarepa is concerned he can go to India but for another purpose, to obtain the remaining five of the four Formless Dakini Dharma series. This refers to an esoteric Tantric teachings as one can imagine. Formless here means not formless in the ordinary sense but as it were absolute, transcendental. You may remember that in the Sutra of Wei Lang, Wei Lang says I shall give you - he says to his disciples - I shall give you a formless gatha, an infinite gatha, that is to say a transcendental gatha, a gatha dealing with transcendental realities, not with mundane truths.

So in the same way the formless Dakini Dharma series is a series of Tantric teachings in nine parts imparted by the Dakini and dealing with transcendental realities.

So out of those nine parts five have already been imparted to Milarepa by Marpa. The remaining five have not been imparted. All right, Rechungpa may make it the business of his journey to obtain those, to learn those. In this way Milarepa tries to give a different kind of orientation to the trip. It's just as though someone in the FWBO was to say well I want to go to India, I just want to travel, I want to go to India. So you say all right, travel, go to India, but don't make it just a sightseeing tour, don't make it just a holiday, go on pilgrimage, go to Sarnath, go to Bodh-gaya. In that way you don't completely oppose what they want to do but you try skilfully to give it a somewhat different - a more positive - direction. So Milarepa is doing this same kind of thing.

So sometimes that is a better way of handling people. Don't directly oppose what they want to do. Well maybe if it's completely unskilful, yes, oppose it but if they still don't agree with you, they insist on doing what they said they want to do, all right try to turn it somewhat and make it into a more positive kind of experience for them, a more positive kind of act, as I said

just as Milarepa has done here.

Suvajra: It's very like the first time he went to India except that Milarepa wasn't quite so direct at that time. This time he is quite blunt saying if you insist upon ignoring my advice, but the first time he didn't.

S: But you notice he obliges Rechungpa to face up to the fact that he is in fact ignoring Milarepa's advice. It's as though Rechungpa is trying to sort of create a situation in which he can [20] sort of at least feel, well, OK I have been given permission, the guru has agreed, but Milarepa is as it were reminding him that that is not the situation, you are ignoring my instructions. You are going in spite of what I say so at least recognize that. Don't just try to extort a purely verbal, a purely formal permission from me and then say that you are going with my permission and with my blessing, that is not the situation. You are going in defiance of my instruction or at least ignoring my instructions. But all right go, but I'll give you something else to do when you're there. So far as I'm concerned you can go and obtain these five Dakini Dharmas not to study logic and science.

Mangala: I think the fact that Rechungpa goes on those conditions indicates that he wasn't all that interested in studying logic and semantics etc., anyway.

S: Well a few extra Tantric teachings wouldn't do anybody any harm...

END OF TAPE

NEXT TAPE ... Tantric teachings but nonetheless he'll be to some extent preoccupied with these teachings which is better than just being preoccupied with science and logic.

Pete Shann: I think it shows a very good balance in Milarepa there between him being really firm and at the same time being receptive and allowing him to go sort of on a loose rein as it were.

S: Well on the one hand Milarepa doesn't want there to be a complete conflict between himself and Rechungpa. Milarepa is in a sense in a difficult position. Rechungpa wants to do something that Milarepa is convinced is not in his own best interests so he's told him that but he won't listen. So Milarepa could then break off contact completely and say all right go your own way, I've finished with you. In a sense he would be justified but he doesn't do that. He sort of adopts a compromise which is in a sense not a compromise. He sort of meets Rechungpa halfway, even though Rechungpa is in the wrong. He won't agree to his studying logic and science but all right he agrees to his going to India and he adds something else for him to study when he is there of a more positive nature. So in that way Rechungpa doesn't do just what he wants to do and there is no sort of open or complete breach between them. The contact is maintained which is of course the important thing.

Malcolm: Would there be any circumstance where Milarepa would actually cut that off?

S: Well nothing can be ruled out, Milarepa would not willingly create a situation in which all contact, all communication, between Rechungpa and himself was cut off, but Rechungpa might make it impossible for Milarepa to do anything but that, except that.

Adrian: Isn't there a danger if Rechungpa goes to India and studies logic and science that it could be construed that Milarepa was sending his disciple to learn black magic?

S: Oh yes of course, no doubt. No doubt Milarepa's fully aware of that. Rechungpa might even be telling himself well I've got a sort of permission to study logic and science, in the end the guru has agreed after all but he doesn't like to go back on what he said before so he hasn't sort of said outright, OK study logic and science but that is what it amounts to. Rechungpa could argue [21] with himself in this sort of way. I think one mustn't underestimate the degree of rationalization that people are capable of in order to justify their doing what they want to do while retaining the approval of the appropriate authorities. On the one hand there is the fear of or the submission to authority, on the other their wish to do what they want to do, and by hook or by crook they will reconcile the two.

So this is a very typical situation in which the disciple asks the guru to approve of his doing something which the guru has advised him not to do. We find this in the Friends sometimes. If you advise people not to do something they will try to qualify the statement in such a way or to make exceptions in such a way that they are able to ignore in effect the advice that you are giving. For instance if you warn people about the danger of dependant or neurotic relationships oh yes they agree with that, they fully accept that, but they will make all sorts of exceptions. They themselves of course being the exceptions or the exceptions applying to them and not to other people. So in effect they are going against what you are saying and one can think of lots of other examples.

So there is this desire to reconcile the continued acceptance of authority with the continued doing of what you want to do and you avoid admitting that there is any conflict. You convince yourself say if you are a theist that you are doing the will of god all the time. So in effect you make your will the will of god. This is what it amounts to. The disciple makes his will the guru's will.

Malcolm: Thereby he doesn't admit responsibility for himself.

S: Right. Instead of making his will the guru's will. Yes it suggests that too, that you're not able to stand on your own feet and say well look I think this is right therefore I'm going to do it. You want to do it, you want to do what you want to do but you want the guru, as it were the higher authority as you see him in this case to approve of what you do, to give you permission. You are sufficiently free so to speak to rebel but you're not sufficiently free to be independent.

Clive: One wonders what would happen if Milarepa definitely said no so he didn't say Rechungpa should go to India whether Rechungpa would actually go against his advice.

S: Well one would imagine since he didn't say that that Rechungpa would have gone and would have broken off contact with Milarepa because he would know that he had openly disobeyed Milarepa and that would mean that he would regard the link between them as broken at least for the time being, or he might feel very guilty. He might feel that he couldn't go back to Milarepa, couldn't face him, because he'd disobeyed him so flagrantly and openly.

So clearly there was a great risk of something of that sort. Otherwise presumably Milarepa would have insisted on his not going. There are various other chapters in which Rechungpa

insists on going off somewhere and it isn't to his advantage. There's also a parallel passage, in fact two parallel passages, in the Pali scriptures, in relation to the Buddha and one of his disciples. I think one of them we did in the 'Udana'. Do you remember. The Buddha is moving about with a bhikkhu who is so to speak in attendance on him or accompanying him, and the bhikkhu in the course of their travels sees a rather attractive grove of mango trees and says to the Buddha well let me stay [22] there and meditate, let me leave you for the time being, and the Buddha says no, there is no other Bhikkhu available to accompany me. So don't go. So the bhikkhu says but I want to go and meditate, there can't be any harm in that. So the Buddha still says nonetheless don't go, there will be nobody with me. Still the bhikkhu insists and he goes. It's interesting what he says, he says you oh honoured one, or whatever expression he uses, you have done what you have to do, you have gained enlightenment, I haven't. So what can the Buddha say to that argument? He's really put the Buddha in a cleft stick, you've gained enlightenment, as if to say, you're being selfish, you've gained enlightenment, you're not concerned about me, I want to gain enlightenment too. He thinks of it in that sort of almost possessive kind of way. So when he puts it in that way what can the Buddha do? He says do as you think fit. That's all he can say, do as you think fit.

So the bhikkhu goes and (says,) here I am in my mango grove - now I'm going to get on with my meditation and gain enlightenment just like the Buddha, but it's not so easy. He starts being assailed by very very unskilful thoughts. He is attacked by Mara. Because he wasn't strong enough yet to be on his own. He needed the Kalyana mitrata of the Buddha, he needed the spiritual friendship of the Buddha, the spiritual contact with the Buddha and later on when he comes back the Buddha explains that, that for someone as immature as he is Kalyana mitrata is very very important. He hadn't realized that. He hadn't realized the importance of Kalyana mitrata in the spiritual life, even though he was with the Buddha himself. Maybe he thought he was doing it all off his own back, he didn't realize the extent to which it was due to the fact that he was with the Buddha. He's just like the fly sitting on the chariot wheel and saying my aren't I kicking up a dust! (Laughter) It's a bit like that in a more positive way. So he learns that lesson.

So there are a couple of episodes like this in the Pali Canon with disciples who want to go off on their own. So Rechungpa is very much this sort. He's always wanting to go off on his own somewhere, go to India, go to Weu or wherever it is and Milarepa's always advising him not to and he's always insisting on going and in some cases gets into difficulties. But the disciple thinks he knows best and he wants the guru's approval for what he is doing.

So he's dependant on the guru without relying on him if you see what I mean and he is rebellious without being really independent and that is the situation of many people.

Asvajit: Is that largely a result of early cultural or parental conditioning or something inherent in ego structure?

S: I'm inclined to think that it is something inherent in ego structure, leaving aside the whole question of the relation of ego structure to that domestic and social conditioning. I don't think it simply happens if you haven't been very well brought up sort of thing. I think however well you've been brought up and however positive and healthy your ego is it will start reacting and kicking in this sort of way sooner or later more or less.

Clive: Do you think it's a reaction against the fact that when a disciple is close to the guru, that he is genuinely growing, spiritually, genuinely being brought up against himself and he reacts to that.

S: Oh yes you could say because after all Rechungpa in the end he [23] did get there so to speak and he did become enlightened in the end. There's a chapter about that which we'll be studying sometime.

But nonetheless it doesn't mean that in ignoring Milarepa's advice he wasn't in the wrong. It's only because Milarepa is sufficiently skilful to deal even with that situation that Rechungpa is enabled to gain enlightenment eventually, but it would be better if he followed the guru's advice and presumably gained enlightenment with less trouble, more quickly.

Clive: If he was genuinely receptive to the guru then he would be able to know what the guru really wanted or really thought was best for him, whereas now he's in a position where he thinks the guru actually wants him to go to India or thinks it's the best thing for him to go to India.

S: No that would be difficult at this stage for him to think like that because the guru says if you insist upon ignoring my advice you may go to India but I'm not sending you there to study logic and science. So it's quite clear he's not just getting the permission that he wanted. There were strong reservations on the guru's part and Milarepa is saying 'if you insist' which means I can't force you to stay, I can't force you not to go to India. If you insist you have to go, what can I do, but he tries to help Rechung nonetheless even though he is ignoring his advice. He doesn't just wash his hands of him as an ordinary person might do. In a sense Rechungpa gives up Milarepa, he gives him up when he ignores his advice but Milarepa doesn't give up Rechung. That's the difference.

So that is really the difference between them. That Milarepa's attitude remains quite creative even though Rechungpa's attitude is so reactive.

Clive: Doesn't this imply that anything a disciple wants to do or feels that he wants to do is reactive, is not... is reacting against his better...

S: But not necessarily.

Clive: So if the disciple comes up with something that he wants to do and the guru definitely thinks it's the best thing for him then that situation's quite possible.

S: Say that again.

Clive: This is suggesting that anything that the disciple wants to do is a reaction...

S: No, not necessarily.

Clive: Well this particular.

S: In this particular case Rechungpa wanted to go to India, yes? and Milarepa advised him strongly against it for certain definite reasons but Rechungpa did not accept that advice. It

would have been better if he had accepted it.

Clive: I'm just thinking that on both occasions, both in this one and with Meghiya the disciple wanted to go away from the guru. That isn't necessarily always the wrong thing. It might be necessary sometimes for him to go away, be alone.

S: Yes that might be. The Buddha himself said on many occasions to bhikkhus here are the roots of trees, sit and meditate. He didn't [24] say remain with me all the time, in fact he sent disciples away quite often. But which is the appropriate course in any given instance, the point is the guru is more likely to know, to say the least, what is good for the disciple, than the disciple himself. If the guru says go away and the disciple still wants to stay that also is equally wrong. There is that situation too sometimes. There was the famous case of one of the bhikkhus who followed the Buddha around gazing upon him all the time, and the Buddha said that that was not a very skilful thing for him to do and sent him away. So the point is not whether this particular line of action is right or that particular line of action is right. The point here is that the guru knows better than the disciple whatever the advice may be. It may not always be to stay. The meaning here is not that the guru will always advise the disciple to stay with him - no that is not the point. Here it is the point but on certain occasions the guru may advise the disciple to go away and not stay.

But whatever the guru advises well the skilful thing for the disciple to do is to follow that advice. If the guru advises stay, all right stay. If the guru advises go all right go.

Malcolm: Rechungpa doesn't seem to have a great deal of conflict does he?

S: He seems a very impulsive character.

Malcolm: He seems very self assured.

S: Well in a sense but he's asking for Milarepa's permission so he can't be all that self assured. He wants as it were to keep up the formalities; as I said at the beginning he wants to do what he wishes but on the other hand he wants Milarepa's approval of that.

Clive: That wanting Milarepa's approval, that's not merely a formality is it, that's an indication of something much deeper.

S: Well it's a formality in spiritual terms because Milarepa has refused his permission. So even if he speaks the words it's only the words that Rechungpa wants. Then that's enough for Rechungpa, but from as it were a psychological point of view he really does want something from Milarepa, he wants his approval. He wants his approval as an authority figure, not his permission as a guru because as a guru Milarepa has refused his permission. So if he regarded him as a guru he would accept that. But it's clear he's regarding him as a sort of authority figure because he's insisting on getting his approval. That's all he can get if Milarepa won't really permit him to go and doesn't think he should go. He's just trying to extort from Milarepa the words which he can take or interpret as giving approval to what Rechungpa wants to do.

So one has to be very careful giving advice to anybody, and those who are Order members probably know this already, that you may ... people may try to twist your advice into some



kind of approval and in changing the advice into approval they change the subject matter of the advice or approval. You have advised them to do such and such, they take that as meaning your approval to do something different, something slightly different or subtly different or seemingly subtly different which is actually [25] very different. And then they turn round and say 'Oh but you said I could do it' but then you say 'well I didn't mean that. You're just taking my words not my real meaning.'

Malcolm: You have to have a very strong relationship with the person who's advising you of something because he's advising you of something that's not actually in your life. You go through a period where you're doing something, say you're abstaining from something on the advice of somebody perhaps a neurotic habit or something and you go through a period where you have to trust that person's advice don't you.

S: The person giving the advice needs to know the person to whom he is giving advice quite well. It's not enough just to repeat general principles. One has to be able to see the situation of that person and actually relate what you say or relate your general principles to that person's actual position and apply it in that kind of way. It's not enough to hand out platitudes or general advice. It has to be very specific and to the point and meet the needs of that particular person. So Milarepa surely knew Rechungpa's mind, he knew exactly what his position was, his state was, his attitude. So he gave advice which Rechungpa should have followed.

Vajradaka: Related to what you just said I heard something quite interesting recently. There were two friends who came into the Friends at the same time and one Friend asked the other Friend to ask questions of Order members because she was a bit shy and didn't want to ask herself. So this second Friend let's call her, went and asked me and other people about doing certain things like meditating - is it OK to do two meditations a day and of course we all communicated to her, but she was a very different kind of person to the number one person. So yeah it's OK do two meditations a day. You're quite into it. Then she went back and told her friend everything, yes it's OK, and her friend started doing it and she freaked out. When I heard I was furious in a way that people just hadn't had the openness just to be direct and that they in a sense should have been so silly.

S: Yes. Well it is silliness more than lack of openness, thinking that advice about something like meditation is sort of objective and it's something that applies... the same applies just to everybody. So yes the disciple should follow the advice of the guru but the guru's advice must be directed to the disciple himself and be based upon an understanding of the disciple. Otherwise in a sense it isn't a guru.

Vajradaka: I sometimes get the question from Friends who never have contact with you for example, and they say well Order members perhaps they don't know me very well so how do they know what's best for me, and then I said well there are general principles which apply to everybody and that you have to in a sense decide whether they are appropriate but generally they are appropriate to everybody, that certain things are good and certain things aren't.

S: Yes. I think if anyone gets deeply and seriously into spiritual life they need more than just general principles and that's why they need a real good friend, a real kalyana mitra, who can see them more clearly than they see themselves and help them to make a more specific and concrete application of those principles, and that does assume that you do trust that the kalyana mitra whoever [26] he is does really see you and your situation more clearly than you

see yourself. Otherwise there's no point in asking his advice, unless you just want to talk things over with someone and then make up your own mind well that's different, sometimes you can do that in matters which aren't of great importance.

So you notice also what Milarepa says after telling Rechungpa about the five formless Dakini Dharmas which are still available in India. He says 'thereby many sentient beings will be benefited.' Now why do you think Milarepa says that?

Vajradaka: He calls on his compassionate element.

S: Yes. Of course it's true. Any Buddhist teaching whether of the Hinayana, Mahayana or Vajrayana, will of course benefit many sentient beings, but why does he make that point to Rechungpa. It is to appeal to his compassion, to awaken his compassion, to set his whole journey and his whole mission so to speak in a much broader more altruistic perspective. After all his interest in logic and science is very narrow, even very selfish, very egocentric you could say. Not really very spiritual, very worldly. So first Milarepa tries to broaden the significance of his visit to India by asking him to obtain those particular teachings while he is there and then he mentions, he adds, that those teachings will be for the benefit of many sentient beings. So he tries to awaken more of the Bodhisattva spirit in Rechungpa.

Vajradaka: You can imagine even just him saying that. It coming from his heart. It would be very difficult for Rechungpa to actually just see it literally. He would actually connect it with a whole feeling of Milarepa.

S: And he also says, 'I am now old and sick. Also I have fully realized my own mind. There is no need for me to go.' What do you learn from this. Milarepa has not obtained the remaining five Dakini Dharmas but he has fully realized his own mind, in other words he has gained full enlightenment. So what do you learn from that? Putting these two statements together?

Atula: He doesn't need all the teachings because he's gained enlightenment already.

S: Yes. But what does that tell you about the teachings?

Asvajit: They're really instrumental. They're a means to an end.

S: No, more than that. What it is saying is that in order to gain enlightenment you don't need all the teachings. It is not as though the different teachings or what seem to be the different teachings are as it were well different teachings They are different ways of putting the same basic truths. So they sort of overlap. You don't have to study all the scriptures in order to understand Buddhism because it isn't as though they represent different parts of a single whole and that every part is necessary to the whole. The same teaching is repeated in different ways from different points of view in the different parts of the scriptures. So Milarepa may not have learned those five extra Dakini Dharmas. Not that is to say, he hasn't learned the Vajrayana teaching in that particular form but he's learnt them and practised them in other forms. He's practised the essence of them. That's why he doesn't need them, because by practising the essence of them in another form he has gained enlightenment.

So it's quite important to realize this, that many of [27] the Buddhist scriptures are alternative formulations rather than additional teachings. So that you don't have to work your way

systematically through all the scriptures. I made this point to some extent towards the end of my review of that book by Geshe Rabten, his autobiography and teachings. Do you remember? Because among the Gelugpas it's as though they tend to develop that sort of attitude, that you need to study all the teachings, all the scriptures, all the different systems of philosophy before you have mastered Buddhism. But what happened in the Buddha's day. People gained enlightenment by hearing, understanding, practising a few verses, a few Dhammapada verses as we now have them. There were no scriptures and there were no extended teachings. So all these different sections of the teachings were the whole teaching so to speak so far as concerned a particular person at that particular time.

Asvajit: Even at the end of his life the Buddha gave only about forty ( ) message didn't he? That were really important to a number of people.

S: Yes he mentioned the thirty seven constituents of enlightenment all of which were practices, actual practices like the seven Bodhyangas and the four foundations of mindfulness.

So one mustn't think of the different teachings as sort of laid side by side so that in order to study and understand the whole dharma you have to cover them all, no. From a spiritual point of view you just need one particular sutra perhaps or even a few verses or the teaching of a particular school or a particular method of meditation, just for your own purpose just as regards practice. If you want to study the history of Buddhist philosophy that's another matter but you don't have to study the history of Buddhist philosophy in order to gain enlightenment unless of course you're one of these difficult intellectual people who can't approach even enlightenment except in that particular way but then you've given yourself quite a difficult task.

So even though there's no inconsistency in Milarepa saying, one, that these particular teachings will benefit many sentient beings, and saying that he doesn't need them. They will benefit those particular people to whom that particular approach is suitable.

Atula: Is it sort of speaking in terms of getting more teachings so that it spreads wider and can go to more people.

S: There's quite a lot of people who as it were on a purely intellectual level will try to learn something more about Buddhism without actually having yet put into practice what they already have learned. They spread themselves more horizontally instead of deepening their experience of Buddhism or elevating it.

But there's just one thing that we can comment upon here. The Formless Dakini Dharma series. What are Dakini Dharmas? Teachings of the Dakinis. Do you know anything about these? Who or what are Dakinis?

Malcolm: Energies.

Clive: Feminine qualities?

S: That's one of the meanings yes, but don't forget Were it's the formless dakini dharma series and I meant that formless means transcendental. So can you get transcendental teachings from as it were ordinary personified or embodied feminine qualities?

[28]

Malcolm: Sorry... ordinary..?

S: Ordinary feminine qualities.

Malcolm: What, receptivity and that kind of thing.

S: Yes, but that is a very as it were vague word. Receptivity can be on all sorts of levels. So if the formless dakini dharma series are transcendental teachings and if those teachings are given by the dakinis well those dakinis can only be transcendental dakinis, whatever dakinis are.

So what are transcendental dakinis? Here dakini can't just mean feminine quality in the ordinary sense. Is there such a thing as a transcendental feminine quality? If so what is it? What does that whole expression mean? What does dakini mean in this sort of sense?

Asvajit: Aspects of reality which leads to deeper communication.

S: Yes one could put it in that way certainly, yes.

Clive: Worldly qualities imbued with the transcendental.

S: Yes, or worldly qualities which are able to refract or reflect qualities of the transcendental. It's more like the transcendental appearing in as it were a feminine form. So when you get say teachings from the dakini aspect of reality let's say, what is the particular significance of that, what is the particular significance of those teachings?

Or put it in this way - let's make it sort of easier - these dakinis in this sense aren't sort of historical characters, they're not actually embodied in human form. One thinks for instance of enlightenment, so enlightenment isn't something abstract, enlightenment is something which is actually realized by an individual human being. You could say there's no such thing as enlightenment at all, there are only enlightened beings. We sometimes think of enlightenment as though it's something which exists apart from enlightened beings but actually outside sentient beings there are no Buddhas. So you can't really think of enlightenment at all, enlightenment is only a concept, it's only an abstract idea, you could say it's only a word, there's no such thing as enlightenment. But there are enlightened beings, there are Buddhas. All right, there are historical Buddhas and there are what we call archetypal Buddhas for want of a better term. That is to say there are Buddhas like say Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi and so on who are not or who never were historical beings, historical characters. They exist on a different sort of level altogether. So they give a sort of reflection of enlightenment so to speak because there isn't any such thing as enlightenment on the archetypal level. They are not you could say enlightened historical beings, they are enlightened archetypal beings. So when you think of say Amitabha, or when you think of Amoghasiddhi, you get a particular impression. Each of them as it were reveals a particular aspect of the archetypal Buddha or the Sambhogakaya Buddha as we say.

But in the Vajrayana you get embodiments in feminine form, so there must be a reason for that, there must be a significance in that. So what quality of enlightenment, and you're dealing with enlightenment not anything less, is as it were more appropriately or more effectively

communicated by the feminine form than the masculine form, because that is what a dakini is?

Malcolm: Compassion?

[29]

S: Do you think so? If you just think of dakinis as depicted in say Tibetan Buddhist art. I don't mean dakinis in the more mundane sense, but dakinis in the sense of say Sarvabuddhadakini, what particular quality is communicated because that is the aspect of enlightenment or enlightenment experience which is in question. What is communicated by that feminine form which could not, presumably, be equally well communicated by a masculine form?

Clive: Creative energy.

S: But the feminine, is it more creative than the masculine?

Clive: Well the receptivity.

S: Is the feminine more receptive than the masculine? What is it?

Clive: Well you do use it as an indication even though it may not actually be true. You normally say that receptivity is a feminine quality but you don't really mean female, a female quality. You mean a feminine quality in the sense of it being softer, sort of...

S: Perhaps it would nonetheless, it might be more helpful actually to speak of a female form rather than a feminine form because in a way there's no such thing as a feminine form is there? There's only a female form and the dakinis are definitely depicted as female. They may or may not be feminine. You may have a discussion as to what qualities are feminine, what qualities are masculine but there's no doubt about what form is female as distinguished from the male form. So all right you could say that one can think of the formless dakinis as having female form rather than male form. Buddhas have male forms, they don't have masculine forms. Well they're usually masculine too but primarily they have male forms.

So the dakinis have female forms. I think this will simplify and clarify. So supposing you are a male and you get into view a female form what is the sort of corresponding reaction or the natural reaction let us say?

Vajradaka: Attraction.

S: Attraction. Just attraction?

Clive: You experience your own masculinity.

S: Experience your own masculinity yes, even more than that.

: Passion.

S: Passion yes.

Clive: You've got a strong desire to go towards it.

S: Yes. So the dakini represents that aspect of enlightenment which arouses your passion as it were, which arouses your Bodhicitta, your Will to Enlightenment, which excites you, which, yes helps you to experience your own as it were spiritual masculinity, and Bodhicitta of course is spiritual masculinity.

So the Dakini Dharmas are those teachings, those Tantric teachings, which have as it were an exciting, an exhilarating [30] and impassioning effect upon you, on the transcendental level, just as the female has on the male, on the purely mundane level. Do you see what I mean?

So this is the significance. It is that aspect or that quality of enlightenment as very attractive and fascinating and exciting and impassioning which is more appropriately communicated by or through the female form though obviously there is infinite room for misunderstanding. The Vajrayana is of course a higher vehicle in principle than the Mahayana for more highly gifted, spiritually more highly gifted people, but you can see the significance of it can't you.

So if you think of the Buddha in a male form, well yes he looks fine, he looks grand and impressive but there may not be that sort of energizing or what I call impassioning sort of effect which is produced by the female Buddha form, i.e. by the dakini. But of course you have to confine, if that is the right expression, that sort of approach to your meditation. You must not... the very worst possible thing you can do is to identify or pseudo identify that transcendental dakini with some particular frail mortal woman. Do you see what I mean? Then of course instead of progressing through the Vajrayana and gaining enlightenment you just go to hell, quite literally in this life time and in the life to come. Just as on the intellectual level the teaching of Sunyata is meant to undo all attachment but if you become attached to sunyata what hope is there for you, if you become attached to the ideas and notions and concepts of sunyata. So similarly the symbol if you like, the figure of the dakini is meant to energize all your spiritual, even your transcendental energies. But if you misuse that and you think of the dakini as some particular young female who excites you in a quite different sort of way. If you confuse or if you misrepresent or misunderstand the Vajrayana in that sort of way well there's no help because there's no further yana beyond the Vajrayana to correct that particular error.

Malcolm: Does this mean that if you're in the process of arousing these dakinis then there's a danger that you're going to project those feelings on to a particular living female form kind of thing.

S: Well that is happening all the time. I think if you're actually genuinely meditating on a dakini form you'd be much less likely to do that. I think the danger is when you've only got an idea about it or are thinking about it. It's only a theory, but if you're actually meditating and you're able actually to visualize a dakini form well if you do it properly you'd never want to look at an ordinary female again!! It's just like the Buddha's cousin Nanda going up into Indra's heaven or being taken up there forcibly by the Buddha and seeing the heavenly nymphs. All his attraction to his wife ceases. So I think the danger is usually or almost always when one just has a theoretical understanding of these things, a merely intellectual understanding. If you really experience in meditation, even a quite limited experience of this kind of visionary form you are much less likely to confuse that with the mundane female.

So it is very much therefore a matter for practice, not for philosophising about. But the Vajrayana does make this point so to speak. The Vajrayana is very much concerned with energies because it knows so to speak. It's very easy just to understand theoretically but to arouse one's energies and to gear those energies to what you accept theoretically as your goal is a very different matter.

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S: ... well yes and no. An advanced female adept from the point of view of most Buddhist teaching would have so to speak in the course of her advancement turned into a man or become so to speak more masculine in the sense of the more forward going, responsible, initiative taking qualities would have come to the fore more than they usually are in women.

Malcolm: It must be easy to misinterpret those dharmas because I always thought a bit of the dakini forms as being a means to integrating those energies which I was projecting out all the time.

S: We're speaking now about transcendental dakinis, transcendental dharmas, formless dharmas and as I've said these formless dharmas can only come from formless dakinis if the dakinis are the authors of them. Dakinis exist so to speak on different levels. The word is used in different senses.

Malcolm: I was talking about the lower level.

S: So yes one can have a sort of psychological image of feminine qualities which you concern yourself with and try to develop them within yourself rather than project them on to some other person.

Malcolm: That's the integrated one.

S: Yes that's on a quite different level, that is still quite mundane. Here one is concerned with an image or symbol. An image of or symbol for an aspect of transcendental reality. But one can have this sort of inspirational quality or energizing quality on different levels. Here of course we're concerned on the transcendental level so to speak. So the Vajrayana is sort of saying that it's not enough to think about the absolute, to think about the transcendental. It isn't enough to have an adequate idea about it. It isn't enough to have the correct philosophy of it. You've got to think of or you've got rather to imagine, the absolute or enlightenment or the Buddha in such a way that you are energized and inspired. So Dakini Dharmas are inspirational dharmas. It's not a sort of flat dull sort of teaching but something that energizes and inspires you and fires you and that is really necessary. We mustn't think too sort of literally or technically in terms of Tantric teachings or those teachings being given by dakinis and what is a dakini etc., etc. Do you see what I mean. It's really that we must see or experience the goal, let's say enlightenment, in such a way that it's inspiring and invigorating. Not just in a dull flat unimaginative, conceptual sort of way. That isn't enough.

Malcolm: Do some forms of art have those qualities?

S: Well yes certainly because the Tibetan Buddhist art has something of these qualities. You can get at least a sort of feeling for what the teachings are really talking about through the art sometimes.

So after all Milarepa is a very skilful person. After all he's talking to Rechungpa. Rechungpa wants to go off to India in search of instruction in logic and science. So Milarepa has said OK go to India but I'm not permitting you to go there for the sake of the logic and science. So far as I'm concerned you're going for the sake of the formless Dakini Dharmas. [32] But don't you think there's some significance in that? That to a person like Rechungpa he is talking about Dakini Dharmas. That is to say those dharmas which issue from or which emphasize the inspirational, the experiential aspect of reality. It's suggesting that if one puts it in this way one is coming down to a lower level. It's as though Milarepa is suggesting that Rechungpa needs to balance. He's as it were too intellectual, he's too much concerned with logic, too much concerned with science. He must concern himself more with the so called feminine side though that again is as I said reducing it to a lower level. He needs more inspiration. He needs to be energized more, fired more.

Vajradaka: A bit more colour.

S: A bit more colour, a bit more life, a bit more imagination. He's still too dull and dry and intellectual and argumentative and competitive and egoistic and narrow and self-centred. Milarepa sees him no doubt quite clearly, he sees he needs those Dakini Dharmas, formless Dakini Dharmas. Well he needs the transcendental. Everybody needs the transcendental, but he needs that particular quality or aspect of the transcendental so to speak, the inspiration, the colourful, the vibrant, the exciting, the arousing, which is not a mundane of psychological exciting but something purely spiritual, something even transcendental. You could say the formless Dakini Dharmas are dharmas that really hit you, that you can't ignore, that produce a definite response in you, a definite reaction, though reaction is the wrong term here - it's a creative reaction. You find that you read some Buddhist text and you think oh these are very worthy, I agree with them, I accept them but they don't move you at all, they leave you quite cold, but other things really move you and stir you quite a lot. For you you could say those are Dakini Dharmas, even formless Dakini Dharmas perhaps.

Malcolm: Milarepa is a dakini dharma.

S: Yes right, you do find that or you do feel that with Milarepa himself. There's nothing dull, dry or abstract with Milarepa.

Adrian: As soon as Rechungpa starts to embody those teachings he's going to start communicating them to other people isn't he?

S: Yes indeed. In a sense there's a trap laid for Rechungpa. If he really does obtain those formless dakini dharma series the missing ones that is to say, he's going to be a very different person. You can't just get them, he's not going to presumably just get the texts, just learn the meaning intellectually, he's going to have to practise them and that's going to make a tremendous difference to him.



Adrian: It's like you start helping other sentient beings and you can't help but help them.

S: And also of course it's going to affect his communication with Milarepa. That's another aspect of the dakini isn't it, in a sense on a lower level, though again it applies on all levels.

All right let's go back over what we've done this morning to see whether there is any particular point that we've missed or anything that requires further explanation.

Vajradaka: I'd just like to ask a question related to what we've just [33] been talking about. Is there a balancing parallel to the dakini dharma in the Vajrayana for someone who might be polarized say with Rechungpa's approach, who might already be quite sort of imaginative and full of colour.

S: I would suggest that people like that need to study the Abhidharma. Abhidharma is very good for such people or Yogachara and Madhyamika philosophy after that. Ideally one should maintain the balance throughout at every level. There is also such a thing in a sense as a disciplined imagination. One isn't necessarily following a more inspirational approach. One is merely letting one's imagination run riot so to speak.

: Even into fantasy.

S: Well least of all when it's going into just fantasy.

Clive: If someone is into fantasy it doesn't imply that they've got a well developed imagination.

S: No, not necessarily, no.

Clive: So someone who is caught in that trap needs to develop imagination as much as they need to...

S: Yes you could say that one mustn't sort of imagine that because you are sort of fantasizing quite easily therefore you've got a good imagination and don't particularly need to develop that. No it's as though fantasy is the near enemy. You could say that in terms of the Vajrayana the complimentary figures are the dakini on the one hand and the Heruka on the other. If you can think of the absolute, if you can think of the enlightened state in as it were male/female, feminine/masculine terms well it's the dakini on the one hand and the Heruka on the other, and sometimes of course you get the Heruka with the corresponding dakini clinging on to the front of him in inseparable union. So this represents all these different polarities or the expression of that basic polarity at all the different levels, at the highest possible pitch and united. In terms of Enlightenment it's wisdom and compassion united and inseparable. There is a danger in this sort of approach because the symbols are so tangible that is there advantage also, so concrete that we can confuse them with quite mundane things.

Vajradaka: In that representation of the Heruka and the dakini is the Heruka wisdom and the dakini compassion?

S: No it's the other way around. In Buddhist symbolism or iconography the male or masculine always represents compassion that is when you get the two together and the female or

feminine represents wisdom.

Vajradaka: Is it always like that?

S: As far as I know it is, in the Vajrayana.

Vajradaka: It's just that I got a bit misled by the terms of the Heruka very often are that of discriminating intellect and laying waste to micchaditthis and things like that which seem to be the quality of wisdom rather than particularly of compassion.

S: Well that is true. Because in a way you can't separate them. [34] They are inseparable but it is said that the male represents compassion and the female represents wisdom but at that level surely yes they interpenetrate each other and the one has the qualities of the other if you look deeply enough. How can there be compassion without understanding. Compassion means giving people what they need. How can you give them what they need if unless you know what they need? So how can you just have compassion without wisdom? And similarly how can you really have wisdom without compassion? How's it possible really to see what people need and not want to give it to them?

All right any other point?

Adrian: I was quite interested in the idea of being open to somebody else because you've also got to be open to yourself. I think that with myself and I think perhaps it comes out in other people that you start to experience some new aspect of yourself and it can take on strange forms. It can seem sort of hostile or something you don't want to touch. If you can really be open to that and try and embody the new experience you can sort of break through those original concepts you had about it into something sort of much higher.

S: Yes. Well if there's a question of you being open to yourself obviously that you is not you in a sense that it is only part of you or a limited aspect of you. It's one part of you allowing itself to be penetrated by another part. One part of you being open to another part so that your whole being can be enlarged and enriched, or putting it in another way that the conscious and the unconscious could interpenetrate much more. As you so to speak, that is to say the conscious rational self with which you identify, as you accept other as it were unconscious or even rejected parts of yourself that original you is radically modified and in a sense even ceases to exist.

But the story so far, these two paragraphs, is that a sort of common theme or common thread running through them? Do they tie up? After all it's all an interplay so to speak between Milarepa and Rechungpa.

Asvajit: The first paragraph is to do with purity of motive. The second is in a way how Rechungpa is to attain that purity of motive.

S: Yes right. It's also a question of the element of communication. Rechungpa is one could say out of communication to quite a considerable degree with Milarepa. He is also out of communication with the people that he's supposed to be converting. That's shown by the fact that he wants to use forcible methods like logic and black magic. The question of communication also comes up in the second paragraph when Milarepa refers to the Dakini

Dharmas as being beneficial to many sentient beings. He reminds Rechungpa of that. In other words he reminds him that he's a follower of the Mahayana, reminds him he's a follower of the Vajrayana and that in theory at least, in principle, he's a follower of the Bodhisattva Ideal which of course brings in the whole question of communication in a very extreme form, because the Bodhisattva vows to communicate the dharma to all living beings. So also running through the two paragraphs is this theme or thread of communication and openness and not being wrapped up in ones own quite narrow concerns and interests.

So Milarepa is in a way saying be more open to the people that you are arguing with, be more open to the people that you are debating with, be more open to me he is saying, be more [35] open to me he is saying, be more open to all sentient beings.

End of session

Next Session

S: All right let's carry on then.

Would someone like to read the whole of this next prose paragraph and then we'll just take up any points that need to be dealt with. Page 398, Thereupon.

Vajradaka: "Thereupon the Jetsun and Rechungpa collected all the gold that people had offered them which totalled quite a large sum. Then Shindormo and Lezibum together with many patrons prepared a sacred banquet as a farewell party for Rechungpa. In the assembly the Jetsun presented his disciple with all the gold and said , 'Rechungpa my son listen to my song and think about it. You should try to secure the teachings in India in this manner.'"

S: All right any points of significance there? I don't know about you but there's one point that immediately catches my attention and this is that Jetsun and Rechungpa collected all the gold that people had offered them which totalled quite a large sum. So what does that suggest?

Vajradaka A lot of generosity.

S: A lot of generosity yes but then what does that suggest?

Suvajra: There must be a lot to give. It must be quite a rich community.

S: Not necessarily.

Asvajit: A real devotion to the Dharma.

S: A real devotion but again what does that suggest?

Brian Duff: People venerate Milarepa.

S: Venerate Milarepa but even more than that.

Clive: An awareness of spiritual attainment.

S: Yes, but again something even more than that! (Laughter)

: Trust.

S: Trust. But maybe you've gone a bit beyond what I was thinking of.

Aloka: Is it the fact that it's gold. They're giving some hard cash more or less.

S: That's a part of it no doubt yes.

Suvajra: Well it must be actually having an effect on the community then.

[36]

S: Having an effect but how is it possible for him to have an effect? What constitutes that effect?

Clive: That he's back in contact with the community.

S: Yes there is that point of course.

Brian: People are receptive to the fact of Milarepa's high attainment.

S: I wasn't quite thinking of that. No I think it's really quite simple, in a way it's staring us in the face. When do you spend money? If you spend money on something what does it usually mean? If you give money for something...

Asvajit: You value it.

S: You value it! It's not just that they have devotion. It's not just that they venerate Milarepa but they really value him and his teaching. In other words they think of it in a very - in a sense concrete practical way. I think I've mentioned before that this is one of the things that I noticed about Tibetan Buddhists - their almost materialistic way of thinking about the dharma. That one of the things I used to hear from my own Tibetan friends and pupils talking about the dharma, they never used to say oh the dharma is wonderful or the dharma is sublime or the dharma is the highest truth. They'd always say, yes the dharma is very useful! You see. So they looked at it in that very down to earth practical way. So here they are giving good gold and why. Because they just find the dharma so practical and useful. They value it so highly. This is what it shows. So if you really value something and really think highly of something you'll be prepared to pay in order to get it.

Malcolm: Invest.

S: Invest. Or you can reverse the statement and say if you're not prepared to give money for something you probably don't really value it very much. You notice that people are prepared to spend money on something that they really want, something that they attach value to. You can hear of people not having enough money to go on retreat but you might hear of them the next week having bought a new record player maybe for three hundred pounds or you might hear of them flying off on holiday somewhere spending several hundred pounds. So if people really want to do something, if they really value something they'll always find some money,

they'll always spend some money for that. But if there's a book, maybe a new translation of a sutra or maybe a translation of a sutra that's never been translated before and maybe the price is ten pounds they'll think oh that's a lot of money. So they think that ten pounds for a translation of a sutra that they've never read before is a lot to pay but three hundred pounds to pay for a record player's not very much! You see. So this does suggest their scale of values. Do you see what I mean?

Malcolm: Perhaps people don't think they can use the dharma practically. They can use a record player.

S: Well it's not perhaps so much that they think that they can't - it's more that they don't. Sometimes people even buy record [37] players just as sort of almost ornaments. They used to buy when I was younger these very elaborate sort of walnut polished gramophone record cabinets. You don't see those around now, and sometimes people would have a quite magnificent handsome gramophone cabinet in the sitting room and they might not play it or use it more than once or twice a year maybe at Christmas time. But it was there, it was a handsome piece of furniture and they'd spent a lot of money on it.

Malcolm: I noticed yesterday on the way up I paid twenty five pence for a paper and I thought to myself actually that I paid twenty five pence for this paper but I don't pay fifty pence for a Mitrata as soon as it comes out. But I have felt that I did read the paper whereas I can't avoid reading Mitrata.

S: Also there is such a thing as, someone mentioned, investment. You may not be able to read it immediately, maybe it isn't very useful immediately but it can be useful little by little as you understand it better. Or you could even say well is a newspaper useful? Once you've read it you've learned all about the war in Iran and Iraq and all about the latest accidents and divorces and squabbles in the Labour Party, well how useful has all that been to you actually? The only use is it's enabled you to pass the time in an unmindful manner probably. That's the only use. But don't you notice, this is something that we've talked about in the past or encountered in the past in connection with the FWBO, that people seem unwilling to pay for something that they say themselves is doing them tremendous benefit. Usually the unwillingness to pay takes the form of not putting anything in the dana bowl or putting such a small amount that it's quite derisory, but nonetheless those same people say that they're getting a tremendous amount out of it. You don't mind paying a couple of pounds to see a film but a couple of pounds to spend the evening at the centre, people seem to think it's quite outrageous.

So it's interesting isn't it and maybe it is a rough and ready index of the value you attach to something, how much you're prepared to pay for that thing. Not that in a sense you're really paying for it or buying it but at least the payment makes it available to you just as you buy the book it doesn't mean to say you can understand it but at least the possibility of reading and understanding the book is then there. So these people seem to have really appreciated what Milarepa was and what he said and they seem to have really valued his teaching and therefore they gave gold.

Atula: It does seem as though we've started we started not charging for things and then we started charging and people take it for granted when you do start charging.

Vajradaka: Is that happening?

Atula: We do charge now.

Vajradaka: No but is there a reaction?

Atula: I don't think so.

S: I think people have adjusted to it. That's the impression I got.

Atula: I don't think people do. The other month there was a [38] discussion within the Order and it was said that some people weren't happy about charging at all.

S: I think in this respect there has to be some clarity of thinking. That one doesn't in fact charge for the dharma but one charges for the facility because you need a place and that costs money and it is for that that you are charging. You can't charge for the dharma. What price is the dharma? It's the facilities.

Mangala: I suppose the difference here though is that Milarepa wasn't actually charging people, that people just had the need to ( ) they were naturally generous and gave them gold and stuff and I suppose if people in our centre were naturally generous in the same way we wouldn't need to charge.

S: Of course not. What would be the point? I remember - this is going back say twenty nine years - when the sacred relics of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana were brought to Kalimpong and then taken up to Gangtok, the bhikkhus, the Sinhalese and India bhikkhus who accompanied them were making the point to me that they noticed how very much more generous the Tibetan Buddhists were than the Indians, who were mostly Hindu anyway. And it was noticeable that... we saw with our own eyes constantly that where an Indian would give a small coin worth about a tenth of a farthing perhaps when he passed in front of the sacred relics the Tibetan would either give a two rupee note or five rupee note - never less than two rupees which was many many times what the Indian gave and they seemed to do this quite naturally. They seemed to have such a strong feeling for the dharma. In a sense they had a sense of the solidity and tangibility of the dharma, that it was as concrete as meat in the butcher's shop or cloth in the cloth merchant's shop, it was as solid and definite as that and it was useful and it lasted a long time and it did you a lot of good like a bottle of medicine. So of course you paid for it.

I think it was to some extent their sense of the concreteness and tangibility of the dharma, it wasn't just a matter of words and ideas. It was something that really helped you in your life, something you really got down to. Of course there were perhaps certain magical overtones in the case of people living in rural areas of Tibet even down to the present, that if you had a lama around reciting the sutras it helped ripen the crops and kept away the hail so it was useful in that sort of way. Maybe there was a mixture of that, but nonetheless their overall attitude seems always to have been that the dharma was very useful and very practical so of course it was something for which you paid like you paid for the services of a doctor or a lawyer. You didn't even pay, you just gave because you were so happy to have received it. So this is what we see here.

Jetsun and Rechungpa collected all the gold that people had offered them which totalled quite a large sum. Then Shindormo and Lezibum together with many patrons prepared a farewell

party for Rechungpa.' This farewell party seems to be quite and old established Buddhist tradition doesn't it! 'In the assembly the Jetsun presented his disciple with all the gold and said, 'Rechungpa my son listen to my song and think about it. You should try to secure the teachings in India in this manner.'

Just a few words about the general significance of this farewell party. Do you think there is any significance and if so what significance?

[39]

Asvajit: it does seem as though even though Rechungpa wasn't actually where he should be spiritually speaking, that he was very well liked, that people regarded... that his presence was of value, they were sorry to see him go.

S: Well what I was thinking was what is the significance, what is the value if someone say is let's say going to India, of giving them a farewell party why not just let them go? Is there any reason?

Asvajit: To let them go in the most positive possible manner.

S: Ah yes. How is it that sending them off with a farewell party is a positive thing. What makes it so positive?

Malcolm: The attention.

S: The attention, yes. What else?

Vajradaka: Well you're giving something.

S: You're giving something.

Suvajra: Rejoicing in merits.

S: Rejoicing, but more than that or in a sense simpler than that. What is happening?

Vajradaka: You're right behind them.

S: But you can be right behind them presumably without throwing a farewell party.

Clive: So that they actually experience it and it's with them on their journey.

S: So they actually experience it but how is it or why is it that the party helps them to experience it because surely they know this. You are with them and all that.

Clive: Because it's expressed.

S: Because it's expressed. So maybe it isn't too fanciful to connect this with the Vajrayana because one sort of characteristic or aspect of the Vajrayana is it's not just the yana of experience let us say and energy, it is the yana of expression. Do you see what I mean. It attaches importance not only to mind and to speech but to body and it is through the body that

things are expressed and in that way there is a reinforcement of the original feeling or the original understanding. You act things out. You don't merely think in your mind well I hope Rechungpa gets to India all right, sorry to see him go. You don't even just say it to Rechungpa that Rechungpa I hope you'll have a good journey. The whole thing is enacted, the whole thing is brought out into the open and sort of in a way performed, and in that way it is experienced by everybody more intensely, and whatever positivity is felt is enhanced. It becomes a form of communication in fact, more powerful communication than just saying it. You sort of act out your rejoicing in somebody's merits and your sorrow at seeing them go and your appreciation of what they've done and you act all that out. And I think one of the weaknesses perhaps of modern [40] life is that we don't do this or aren't able to do this sufficiently or at least not in the right sort of way.

Malcolm: People generally aren't showing their feelings.

S: It's not only that. It's as though very often people need a sort of structure of this kind to enable them to show their feelings.

Vajradaka: A sort of ceremony.

S: A sort of ceremony yes. So this is what happened here. You could say well this is why you have an ordination ceremony. Yes why have an ordination ceremony, why not just give someone a certificate quietly. So and so is hereby appointed or elected an Order member. Why do you have a ceremony? Well it is to bring the whole thing out into the open, to embody, to express it more fully and thereby experience it more intensely. Why do you even have things like wedding ceremonies, name giving ceremonies the general significance is the same.

So these things should not be just formalities. If they have become just formalities they've ceased to fulfil their true function and they should be discontinued. If everybody thinks they're just a nuisance and don't mean anything any more well just stop them by all means. You just have to find new ceremonies. Or maybe you don't want a ceremony for that type of thing any more because you don't want to attach any importance to it.

Malcolm: It brings a sense of reality to it.

S: Yes it brings a sense of reality to it. It is actually happening. It's become publicly acknowledged as it were.

Clive: Do you think that in the Friends we could get more into pujas and celebrations, one day celebrations and weekend celebrations much more in order to sort of get this thing moving.

S: Well it isn't just a question of celebration or even of ceremony. It suggests as it were or implies having a ceremony for everything that you consider of importance, because in that way... well if you consider somebody say leaving a community and going off to some other community, some other centre, if you consider that important, if it means something to you, well have a sort of ceremony if you see what I mean. Well a farewell party at least. Or you consider ordination important, all right you make it into a ceremony, you consider becoming a mitra important, all right let there be a ceremony. Ceremonies have been devalued. We think



in terms of meaningless rituals and meaningless ceremonies, well we don't want those. We have the ceremonies because we consider that particular thing important. The ceremony is a sort of enhancement of what is happening enabling us to experience it more intensely and realize its significance in a better sort of way.

So one might even say well what are the important things that we have and have ceremonies for and that we have but don't yet have ceremonies for. Could there be ceremonies for instance for other things?

Malcolm: Only for things that are joyful. You wouldn't have a ceremony for divorce would you.

S: Well why not. This has been suggested. (Laughter) We have a [41] ceremony for death which is (ibly) painful well why not? Because when people are divorced what does one often find happening? What does divorce mean? That two people who have been living together as husband and wife have now separated and are no longer living together as husband and wife, are no longer considering themselves husband and wife, no longer feeling that they are husband and wife. That is the actual position or what is supposed to be the position. But what we usually find happens is that though they may no longer be living together they haven't actually finished with each other. There are lots of feelings of resentment left over.

So supposing you had a ceremony just as you had for marriage where marriage ties the knot the divorce unties it officially and there is some way of saying or some way of them saying well we have lived together for such and such period of time, there have been good times and there have been bad times but we have decided now to part. Each is free to go his or her own way and there are no hard feelings. Maybe we did feel some resentment or maybe there was some incompatibility that we weren't able to overcome but never mind, we wish each other well. He wishes her well that she may be happy. She wishes him well that he may be happy and in that way they go their separate ways so surely that could help them.

Atula: It would be a lot better.

S: And everybody understands what the position is because sometimes you don't know whether two people are together any more or not together any more or are married or not married and that can sometimes be socially embarrassing.

Malcolm: The Jewish are quite... They go into it in more detail don't they. It's an actual official ceremony where they bring the two people together, in the orthodox church anyway.

S: So you could consider that if people are parting in that way well yes why not have a ceremony. Or you could even say well why do you consider it a painful occasion. Maybe it's likely to be a much more positive occasion than marriage Maybe you could say well here are these two people, actually they weren't two people they were just two halves and instead of trying to become wholes they tried to join together to make a whole out of two halves, but now they've realized that they should not be dependent upon each other in that way, they want to be real individuals now...

End of tape

Tape three

... more sort of spiritual occasions within the Friends.

Suvajra: Sangha Day and there's Dharma Day.

S: But it does seem - I got the impression perusing some minutes that people find it difficult to celebrate, they don't in a sense know quite what to do and there have been one or two complaints I was reading some minutes only yesterday - at one particular Centre about festivals not being celebrated properly or not enough energy going into them. So why is this do you think? It should be obvious in the light of what's just been said.

Malcolm: They just aren't aware of the importance of the occasion.

S: Aren't aware of the importance of the occasion, yes. [42] ...

break in recording...

experience that more by creating a ceremony. Can you think of other occasions where a ceremony could be appropriate?

Malcolm: Birth.

S: Birth. Well let's get away from the domestic or mundane. Yes birth or name giving let's say. You can hardly have a ceremony for birth. A ceremony for name giving.

Atula: Anniversaries of ordination.

S: Yes, anniversaries of ordination. We have a sort of ceremony for... we have a dedication ceremony don't we when we open a new Centre or when we just take over a building temporarily for a retreat. Anything else?

Atula: Anniversaries of Centres and things like that.

S: Well all right the anniversary, that's one possible form the ceremony can take but anything else?

Adrian: Haircuts.

S: Haircuts.

Brian: People joining a community.

S: People joining communities. Perhaps that would be a good thing because sometimes people join the community and maybe they're not sort of officially inducted or officially welcomed.

Malcolm: That's quite important.

S: Yes. We have of course a kalyana mitra ceremony because that is an important event and an important occasion. But it's interesting that we don't really quite know what to do in connection with festivals and things of that sort, or people are a bit half hearted about them as though they don't really know how to celebrate or rejoice.

Malcolm: It's usually because celebrations are usually kept with a few intimates aren't they.

S: Well they certainly aren't in India. Even an intimate occasion like a wedding they try to get at least five hundred people. Well to do people try and invite a hundred thousand guests. (Laughter) That's just a private ceremony!

Aloka: The thing that strikes me is the same as what you were saying about the gold. It's very practical, it's very down to earth. I think one of the things I've felt as far as celebrations is that there's a bit of an area where you don't want it to be too much of a social occasion that's going to somehow drag the importance of the day down; whereas reading about these going away parties in here it seems almost like that doesn't matter. You have the celebration. Whether or not there's a social aspect to it, that doesn't matter. That's just part of it. The main thing is that you have the celebration, you mark the occasion.

S: But even with regard to celebrations or modes of celebrating which are definitely as it were 'religious', inverted commas, people [43] don't seem very inventive or adventurous. For instance with regard to making offerings I was quite pleased to see when I went down to the women's retreat before the ordinations recently that on the previous evening the floor was literally covered with offerings because what they'd done was the previous evening they offered the thirty two offerings which are described in the Bodhicaryavatara including lotus lakes, they'd actually made lotus lakes. They had a big mirror and someone had created one might say pink and white lotus flowers which were strewn on this lake and they had trees with little birds in, and all sorts of things, all thirty two of them and they'd offered these and they must have had a lot of time preparing them.

So you don't have to in order to make the thing more elaborate, you don't have to sort of descend to a purely social level if you're sufficiently inventive and creative. You can have more elaborate offerings. Of course there must be an element of spontaneity and joy in it.

Asvajit: I think people are actually learning to celebrate much more fully in the Friends. Over the years they're really getting more into it and last Sangha Day in London it was really fine, really enjoyable. The shrine looked really tremendous.

S: Good.

Asvajit: And during the afternoon we had all sorts of offerings; musical offerings, poetry offerings.

S: Oh well things are improving then. Anyway can you think of any other occasions which might be ceremonialized. We mentioned someone joining a community.

Well sometimes people in some traditions they ceremonialize meals don't they? Certainly special meals with a bit of chanting or something like that.

Peter Shann: I think that whole attitude towards doing everything in that sort of way could be quite an innovation.

S: The important point is that you enact something, you don't allow it to remain just in your own mind. We tend sometimes to think if something remains just in your own mind it's more real or even more sincere. We forget that we are body, speech and mind so things should be brought out more fully, actually given utterance or given bodily expression. In that way we experience them more fully. It's a sort of antidote to alienation you could say.

Malcolm: Do you think the four seasons could be celebrated or is that a bit pagan?

S: Well how would one celebrate the four seasons? You mean the arrival of the different seasons. Yes one could certainly have a spring and autumn festival, certainly, why not. There's nothing wrong with the pagan or the pagan element so long as it is just kept in its proper place and it doesn't get out of hand.

Anyway perhaps the point has been sufficiently made. All right would someone like to read the song?

"I bow down to Marpa, the Translator.  
Pray bless us that we keep to your tradition. [44]  
This uninformed son of mine, the loser of debate  
And is about to wander far away to study.  
This is the very thing a yogi should avoid!

Rechungpa, when you arrive in India,  
Try to secure the Formless Dakini Dharmas  
Of the great Pandita Naropa's Succession;  
But, never give yourself to studying words!

In the beginning I met the right person,  
I put myself in the hands of Marpa.  
In the middle, I practised the right teaching,  
Meditating on the White Rock Mountain.

At the end, I asked for alms in the right places for alms;  
I beg here and there without friends or kinsmen.  
Since I have disposed of Samsara and Nirvana  
And have nor hope nor fear in my mind,  
I shall ne'er regress in my meditation.

When with my Guru Marpa on that steep hill  
He once said to me:

"The King of the Mighty Wheel holds (it as) the Jewel,  
And the Bird with Five Families  
Flies in its expanse of Dharma-Essence.  
Five special teachings in India still survive:  
First the Lamp of Illuminating Wisdom

Second, the Wheel Net of Nadi and Prana,  
Third the Great Bliss of Precious Words,  
Fourth, the Universal Mirror of Equality,  
And Fifth, the Self-liberation Mahamudra.  
These five teachings are still taught in India."

I am now too old to go but you, child of Marpa's Lineage should go to India to learn them!"

S: The first two lines of that song - there's something that needs to be understood there. What do you think that is?

Atula: Pray bless us that we keep to your Tradition.

S: Yes, pray bless us that we keep to your tradition. The prayer so to speak is addressed to Marpa. So what is Marpa's tradition?

: The Kargyupa lineage.

S: The Kargyupa lineage. Which literally means the lineage of the oral transmission. The Kargyupas attach much less importance to the study of the texts. They attach much more importance to the oral teaching of the guru which is of course a transmission in as much as he has received that teaching from his guru orally and so back to the beginning of the line which is traced back to the Buddha Vajradhara. But when Milarepa says addressing Marpa, pray bless us in that we keep to your tradition, is he giving expression to a narrow as it were sectarian attitude or not? If he is not then what is he actually saying?

Atula: That we keep to the enlightened expression.

S: Yes.

[45]

Brian: Is it a sort of ( )?

S: Yes.

Brian: That they keep to the true Kargyu...

S: Yes you could say that. We keep to your tradition. Perhaps the emphasis is not to be placed on your tradition but on keep. Pray bless us that we keep to your tradition. But nonetheless your tradition is mentioned, the Kargyupas are especially mentioned.

Mangala: Could this be more in a sense aimed at Rechungpa in that Rechungpa keeps to your tradition. In a sense he's going to be out of contact to some extent.

S: Well not only that but after all the Kargyupa lineage, the Kargyupa tradition is a tradition of oral lineage, or oral transmission but Rechungpa's got over preoccupied with books hasn't he. He's very concerned with going to India to study logic and science. He's got caught up in an intellectual approach one could say, and this really represents a departure from the Kargyupa tradition. He's abandoning his meditation. So Milarepa begins by saying I bow

down to Marpa the translator, pray bless us that we keep to your tradition, as if to say well I'm afraid this is not what Rechungpa is doing. He's gone astray and he's becoming too interested in logic and science and giving up his meditation.

But there does nonetheless arise this whole question of identifying oneself with a particular tradition in a sense of a particular form of Buddhism, because we know in the East Buddhism does exist in a number of forms and people identify with those forms quite strongly. Usually because they happen to be born into those particular branches of the Buddhist tradition just as in the West people are born into Catholic families or Methodist families or Anglican families and so on.

So what do you think should really be our attitude towards particular Buddhist traditions?

Mangala: It's probably best to sort of stick with one as it were but be sort of in a sense open and receptive to anything the others might have to offer but not allow them to kind of move you from your present course of action.

S: But in what way would you stick to one?

Mangala: Well in the sense of having one teacher and sort of following his teachings and not being very sectarian and closed to other teachings but at the same time taking from ( ) what could in a sense supplement your own practice without you diverging from that course of action. I suppose the danger is like the 'it's all one' attitude... (unclear)... (confined to any one tradition and if we start dabbling in all of them and just get very confused.)

S: Well this suggests a purely intellectual approach doesn't it. Because you can read a number of different books and just listen to a number of lecture by a number of different people but if you want to get down to serious practice well you have to establish contact with somebody who is himself into serious practice, and if [46] you want really to study the dharma deeply that means entering into communication with someone quite deeply and you obviously can't do that with a large number of people.

Asvajit: It seems to me even doubtful whether you can be devoted in the full sense to more than one person,

S: Yes. Well can you be sort of wholeheartedly devoted to more than one person because there's sure to be some sort of clash in a way even if not in principle, at least in practice because there's even the question of time. Can you spend all your time with more than one person?

So it's as though in Buddhism especially in the Vajrayana there needs to be the intensity which you get through a close contact with or communication with your own teacher, your own fellow disciples, that will certainly intensify your practice but you need to be quite open to others in the sense of not being completely closed to anything useful that they may have to say.

Adrian: There is the danger that the one tradition might in fact become some sort of end if you're quite closed. The tradition should just remain as a particular means, one that suits you.

S: But can one really think of tradition in that way. Isn't that taking tradition in a rather narrow sense. Can it be just a particular method for instance or is it not a whole broad approach. What about the Buddhist tradition itself? Some people would say to us well you're being very narrow in confining yourself to Buddhism, why don't you take in Christianity, take in Hinduism, take in Islam, be universal. What would you say to that?

Malcolm: I wouldn't like it to be put down on tape what I'd say. I'd probably be very rude. It's silly.

S: Well it is silly yes, but what makes it silly. It's silly actually because you can't do it, You might be able to do it in a very vague general theoretical sort of way and as long as you remain on that level. But if you're thinking in terms of your own life and your own practice and your experience it's quite meaningless to speak in terms of taking in Hinduism and taking in Christianity and taking in Islam. You've got all your work cut out taking in Buddhism. Not to speak of Buddhism you've got all your work cut out taking in the Mahayana, not to speak of the Mahayana, you've got all your work cut out taking in the FWBO, not to speak of the FWBO, you've got all your work cut out getting on with your mindfulness of breathing and your metta bhavana. Do you see what I mean?

Malcolm: Sometimes other people from other walks of life can survive can't they. I know a couple of people who are into other forms of Buddhism and to think of them I get quite inspired sometimes

S: All right let's carry on then.

Milarepa presumably still addressing Marpa says, "This uninformed son of mine, the loser of debate and full of doubts has stopped his meditation and is about to wander far away to study. This is the very thing a yogi should avoid!" So what is it that a yogi should avoid? Wandering far away to study. There are two things. First of all he's wandering far away, he's separating himself from Milarepa, and two, he's wandering far away to study. Even three things involved here. One, he's wandering about unnecessarily, two, he's separating himself from his teacher, [47] and three, he's studying or proposing to study in a way that doesn't help him spiritually.

So these are the very things that a yogi should avoid. So what are the things therefore that a yogi should not avoid? He shouldn't wander about aimlessly from place to place, he shouldn't separate himself from his teacher and he shouldn't engage in purely intellectual studies. This seems to be what Milarepa is saying. These are the things a yogi should avoid. Yogi presumably meaning not just someone who meditates in the narrow sense but someone who is trying to develop, someone who is trying to attain to a higher level of consciousness and being.

Mangala: I can't help feeling in a way that Milarepa if he really wanted him to stay could have hammered a bit harder and you also get the feeling that... I don't know how justified this is but like it's a bit like well somebody has to bring these teachings back from India and that Rechungpa was always meant to be that person... and in a way it doesn't read quite right. I somehow feel that although Milarepa's saying this about him that actually you wonder if he really means it.

S: Well Milarepa's made it clear, he doesn't mind him going to India but what he objects to is

his going there to study science and logic. So even though Milarepa has asked him to obtain those Dakini Dharmas there's still the danger that he'll be so preoccupied with reason, with science and logic that he won't do that. So perhaps Milarepa keeps on reminding him for that reason.

Mangala: It's definitely like there's a very strong connection there or that Milarepa must have tremendous faith in him because is he likely to send off somebody who's going to let him down, to bring back these presumably priceless teachings.

S: Well he doesn't know. I mean Milarepa may have great faith in him but that faith may be justified or it may not be justified. You can't be sure ever how somebody is going to act, but at least there is a possibility that he will bring back these teachings and he won't get ensnared in science and logic.

But he does in the next verse point out what apparently he considers to be the great danger. He says, 'Rechungpa when you arrive in India try to secure the Formless Dakini Dharmas of the Great Pandita Naropa's succession.' Naropa's succession being of course the Kagyupa succession from Naropa downwards, Naropa being the teacher of Marpa, 'but never give yourself to studying words!'

This last line is very important. That's the key so to speak. You remember in 'Hamlet' there is a scene in which Polonius finds Hamlet reading a book and he says what are you reading my Lord, and what does Hamlet say? He says 'words, words, words.' So this is very often what people read and very often what people study. They study just the words. Not really the meaning, just the words.

Brian: Nietzsche complains about that as well.

S: Yes. A sort of purely philological approach. So it's easier to get caught up in words, to miss the real meaning. But you could say even to study the meaning isn't enough. You have to go beyond the meaning even to the experience that the meaning is trying to point out.

Or you could say in a way that there are four stages. There's first of all the experience, then there is the meaning, then there is the idea and then there are the words. So you can either stay at the most superficial level, concern yourself with [48] the words or you can go from the words to the ideas. This is usually as far as a lot of people get or you can go from the ideas to the real meaning that someone is trying to communicate and from the meaning you can go even further to the experience that the meaning is throwing light on.

Malcolm: Does it follow that a person who reads a lot can sort of just take in a lot of words but is not actually feeling much. That person when he starts to feel more will not necessarily read so much, in fact he would cut down on his reading. He might even stop altogether. In fact if he was really feeling he might not be able to read hardly anything on some occasions.

S: Well sometimes people read a lot because what they read doesn't mean very much to them. It's just a way of passing the time. Because if you were really to take it in, really experience it, perhaps it would be too much for you.

Malcolm: I find that now. That there was a time when I could really devour books.



S: Well usually you can devour books more when you are young because it's not just that you're more receptive, you're more empty. There's scope for experience so to speak and you're still searching, you're still looking, but as you get older you've found maybe a more definite path, and you tend to be receptive more to what fits in with that. You're more discriminating.

Suvajra: What about words and logic? Wasn't Naropa a great logician and dialectician?

S: Naropa. He was originally... He was one of the four main teachers at Nalanda University. There is his biography which has been translated by Guenther and he was given a very tough time by his teacher Tilopa, who wanted to overcome his intellectualism and wanted to bring him more into contact with actual experience. So Naropa had a very difficult time indeed at the hands of his teacher.

Vajradaka: Was Tilopa an Indian too?

S: Tilopa was an India too yes, he was one of the Siddhas. And Milarepa's guru was Marpa, Marpa's guru was Naropa, Naropa's guru was Tilopa and Tilopa was supposed to have been taught directly by the Adi Buddha Vajradhara. In other words his teaching came directly from his own spiritual experience without him having at least for the purposes of the experience that later became transmitted in the Kargyupa tradition, any human teacher.

Malcolm: Would that be called the self enlightening man?

S: One could put it that way.

Anyway the real message here is never give yourself to studying words. Ask yourself what the words mean. Ask yourself what the meaning means. There is such a thing as the meaning of meaning.

All right, 'In the beginning I met the right person, put myself in the hands of Marpa.' So what does one learn from that. In the beginning I met the right person. Is it a matter of chance of karma? What is it? It's difficult to say.

[49]

Suvajra: Ability. Marpa was the one who had the abilities to lead him to enlightenment.

S: But how did he come to meet Marpa?

Malcolm: He sought him out didn't he?

S: He happened to just hear the name of Marpa didn't he and sort of was mysteriously attracted by that.

Adrian: Wasn't he recommended to Marpa by another teacher?

S: I don't remember that. He heard the name and he felt fascinated by the mere name without knowing anything about Marpa.

Asvajit: The instant he heard it the hairs of his body stood up.

S: But anyway once he came into contact with him 'I put myself in the hands of Marpa.' Now what does that mean?

Malcolm: He gave himself totally to the dharma.

S: Yes. This is a great characteristic of Milarepa's life. It's a characteristic of the whole Vajrayana tradition in a way.

Malcolm: It sounds like he was, in my experience of people it means that he was already some person already. He was able to give himself.

Brian: Quite a contrast from Rechungpa's approach.

S: Yes indeed.

Adrian: Weren't some of Milarepa's first words to Marpa that he gave his body, speech and mind?

S: Yes. Well in more traditional terms when you go for refuge you go for refuge with body, speech and mind, with the whole being, the whole personality. So Milarepa puts himself in the hands of Marpa. What do you think of that. Do you think this is actually psychologically possible any longer. Do people have that sort of faith? Do you think they can do it?

Malcolm: I think it's a matter of the person applying himself to whatever he's doing. If that man was going out and doing business he'd apply himself to business. If he was going to be a doctor he'd be a good doctor. If he's going to get enlightened he's going to apply himself to that.

Mangala: Somehow you feel there that the kind of existential intensity of Milarepa's position just doesn't happen any more, if you like. Where like somebody just put themselves completely in someone's hands as it were. Very very few people today would ever actually get to that position or find (us) in that situation.

S: Sometimes we do put ourselves in other people's hands. We put ourselves in other people's hands in situations where as it were expert advice is needed. We put ourselves in the hands of doctors don't we but we don't really understand what they're doing to us usually. We don't understand why they're giving us a certain treatment, what exact effect it is going to have. Usually just believe in the doctor. In the same way we have to go to law, we [50] usually have to just place ourselves in the hands of the lawyer, what else can we do, we don't know enough about the law. So all the time we're placing ourselves in the hands of other people. Because we recognize that we don't know. We may be a bit uneasy about doing that and not too happy but very often we don't have any alternative.

But what about placing oneself in the hands of another person in this more as it were existential way. What does it mean? Does it mean just doing everything the other person says? What does it imply, placing yourself in the hands of another person?

Vajradaka: More in the sense of direction, that you've gained a direction which is given to you rather than to particulars (perhaps) although particular things might come into it.

Malcolm: Being receptive too.

Suvajra: There's will. You don't have any will.

Asvajit: I see it in terms of developing one's own true individuality; with the help of the other person one has the trust or the faith or the confidence, whatever you call it, that the other person will actually reflect what is best in you, what is most individual, what is most real.

S: In a sense it means you regard the other person as the 'expert' inverted commas, the other person knows better than you, the other person sees further than you. Perhaps the other person knows you even better than you know yourself. So it means that in matters of doubt you are prepared to act upon the other person's advice implicitly. Do you see what I mean? That two courses of action may be before you, two alternatives, and you may be quite unable to decide yourself which will be the better for you. So you place yourself, you put yourself, in the hands of that other person. You say all right you decide. Whatever you decide I shall follow. But in that sort of relationship presumably putting yourself into the hands of the other person doesn't mean that the other person decides for you those things which you are quite capable of deciding for yourself. A person into whose hands you could put yourself with confidence wouldn't function in that sort of way anyway.

Mangala: That would be more like a mother wouldn't it.

S: Yes indeed, yes.

Mangala: You'd just be being irresponsible on your part.

S: So you put yourself in the hands of somebody else in the sense that you're prepared to go all out to do whatever is best and right as far as you can see it, but in cases of doubt when you're not sure what to do well then you follow what the other person says or even you might say... you have sufficient confidence, you put yourself in the hands of the other person in the sense that even though you think that you know what is right and what is best for you if that person says well no, that isn't so you're prepared to follow that person's advice. Which Rechungpa wasn't. Milarepa advised him to not go to India but he insisted on going to India. So Rechungpa hadn't put himself in Milarepa's hands you could say in the way that Milarepa had put himself in Marpa's hands. Perhaps [51] Milarepa's getting a little dig in at Rechungpa here. He says 'In the beginning I met the right person. I put myself in the hands of Marpa.' It's as though Milarepa's saying well it's not enough to meet the right person, you've got to put yourself in his hands. Rechungpa has met the right person, he's met Milarepa but has he put himself in the hands of Milarepa? No, he still wants to go on doing things his own way.

But this has to be understood properly, this putting yourself in the hands of somebody else. It is not a weaker will submitting to a more powerful will. Do you see what I mean by that? It is not knuckling under. If it's a matter of knuckling under well resentment may be produced. So it isn't easy to put yourself in somebody else's hands. Giving into somebody is not putting yourself in their hands. If you do it their way or you go along with them because you're afraid of offending them or you don't want to lose their regard or their affection that is not putting yourself in their hands. You can only really put yourself in another person's hands if you are convinced that the other person to use the language we've been using in the past, operates in accordance with the love mode and not the power mode. It seems that Rechungpa did not in

fact have that sort of faith in Milarepa because... no sorry this is in the other chapter. In the other chapter Rechungpa accuses Milarepa of being bitter and egoistic, so he clearly is not believing that Milarepa is operating in accordance with the love mode rather than the power mode. So you can in fact place yourself or put yourself in the hands of another person only if you really do feel, if you really are convinced that they are operating in accordance with the love mode. You're not giving them an opportunity of ordering you about, you're not giving them an opportunity of bossing you when you put yourself in their hands. It isn't that at all. It's a quite different sort of relationship, a quite different sort of experience.

Mangala: Is it also something that also develops it like, at first you're a bit open and you think well there's something I can learn here and then a few years later maybe you just gradually become more open and receptive.

S: At first you may sort of think in terms of well that person just knows more than me or that person is more experienced than me or that person has got certain skills that I'd like to acquire. It goes no further than that. So that is not putting yourself in the hands of another person. That is just making use of another person, admittedly in a quite positive manner, in the interests of your development. But putting yourself in the hands of another person is something much more existential and you can only do that when you do really feel or see that that person is operating in accordance with the love mode, not the power mode.

Malcolm: Would it occur when you have to make a major decision about life or something and you can't make a decision...

S: Yes you might say find yourself in a position of not being able to make a decision and then you may look around for somebody to make it for you, but if you put yourself in the hands of somebody in this sort of way, then that's quite different from asking some sort of higher authority to make the decision for you. It's not that. The higher authority represents a sort of superior power to which you submit and say well all right you decide. The guru or say Marpa is not like that. It's not a superior power, it's not a power at all, because as I said it's a question of the love mode not the power mode. So when you put yourself in the hands of someone [52] who operates in accordance with the love mode and not in accordance with the power mode and when they give you a certain advice which is the expression of the love mode because that is the mode in accordance with which they are operating and when you act upon that advice then you are going beyond your own egoistic type of functioning. You yourself are to that extent at least passively not functioning in accordance with the power mode. You could say you're functioning passively with regard to the love mode, passively rather than actively. Passively in the sense you're just accepting it from another rather than initiating it yourself, and that requires of course a great deal of openness.

Malcolm: Could it apply slightly to somebody who was trying to be more receptive to say the Order or the FWBO's influences.

S: Well at least you can say to yourself well the Movement as a whole or Order members as a whole whatever individual exceptions there may be, do represent an influence more positive than that which I experience myself. So to the extent that it does represent something more positive than I am myself I should open myself to it and be receptive to it. But that, even that is not putting oneself in the hands of the Order in the sense that Milarepa...

End of tape side.

Next side

... just supposing they gave you conflicting advice. On the other hand you can say well you can put yourself into the hands of more than one person provided those persons are all Buddhas, because Buddhas presumably would not give conflicting advice. Because all the Buddha's are one Buddha in the sense that they all share the same enlightenment in a manner of speaking. But this putting of oneself in somebody's hands even to a limited extent, though that may seem self contradictory, requires a sort of trust. Quite often we place ourselves in somebody else's hands to a limited extent, as when we go to a doctor, as when we consult a lawyer, or even in other affairs of ordinary life, but in the case of the guru in the Vajrayana tradition you put yourself in the hands of another person in a much more existential and even total manner.

But this does not mean, this does not imply any sort of arbitrariness in that person's treatment of you. There's no such thing as sort of testing your faith in that sort of sense. Or just telling you to do something to see if you'll do it. That would be an exercise of power, not an exercise of love.

So it isn't very easy to trust another person.

Malcolm: Is there a place for that in this context? In an FWBO context?

S: Well there's a place for it to the extent that the FWBO is a spiritual tradition and does emphasize the importance of individual communication, whether it's communication with those who are less developed than one is oneself or equally developed or more developed. I think for most people there will be a time or there will be situations in which they feel they cannot trust their own judgement, that it isn't just a question of taking advice and then yourself deciding whether you're going to follow that advice or not. It's a question of just doing what somebody else tells you to do. Of course that doesn't happen every day, and you shouldn't ask other people what you should do in circumstances where you should be quite capable of making up your own mind. They come in in that sort of way as a last resort, and you should always distrust anybody who's too anxious or too eager to tell you what to do, as distinct from just giving you a friendly [page 53 missed in original numbering] [54] suggestion or bit of advice.

Adrian: Before you actually ask someone's advice you should actually decide that you're actually going to act in accordance with what they say. Otherwise there's the possibility that someone could actually tell you or advise you to do something in a certain way and it can actually sort of maybe confuse the situation even more.

S: Well you must make up your mind whether you are asking someone for his advice or whether you are putting yourself in the hands of someone. These are two quite distinct things. You may know somebody whom you are convinced is more experienced is wiser than you are and you may ask their advice. But asking advice suggests that you're just going to consider what they tell you. If you think it's a good idea then you'll act upon it. But putting yourself in somebody's hands means that you have already decided that you'll act upon what they say regardless of what it is and regardless of your own feelings about it. You are not asking for

advice, you are asking to be told what to do and that is a quite different thing. If you are clear in your own mind what exactly you are doing whether you are asking for advice or asking to be told what to do, well the question doesn't arise. If you just ask for advice you may of course add to your own confusion because another point of view is presented to you. Another suggestion for you to consider and think about. But if you put yourself in somebody else's hands and you just in effect ask to be told what to do well that simplifies things considerably because you don't have to think or to bother about it any more. You just have to bother about how to carry out that... well I won't say order, it almost suggests the power mode - but that direction let us say.

And also it's not always even a question of being told to do the right thing rather than the wrong thing. Sometimes you just need to be told to do something. In a sense it doesn't matter. You've just confused yourself with so many possibilities so many alternatives, so you just think all right I give up, I just don't know, right you tell me what to do. And someone says all right you do this, you do that. So if you've sufficient confidence in them and the fact that you put yourself in their hands suggests that, well you just happily act upon what they say. Cut the Gordian knot.

Adrian: Presumably you could not actually want to act and your mind sort of rationalizes reasons why you shouldn't act. So somebody can actually see that and realize you actually just need to do something.

S: Yes, in a sense it doesn't matter. They may tell you to do something that you've already thought of yourself but you've thought about it so much that you haven't been able to summon up sufficient energy to actually act on in. In any case you're not sure if it's the right thing. You're considering so many other possibilities too. They say OK you just do that. As I said it may be something you've thought about already. It's nothing new to you but because they tell you to do it you're able to act. You're freed from your own uncertainty. But that implies again as I've said that you really have put yourself in that person's hands, otherwise they come up with something for you to do which you've already thought of yourself and you might think, Oh [55] well I've already thought of that, I didn't need him to tell me. It's one of the possibilities I've already considered. So the fact that you put yourself in somebody else's hands doesn't necessarily mean that he'll tell you to do something that you've never thought of or imagined or something really new and spectacular and fantastic. It may be something that you've already thought of but have not been able to make up your mind to do.

So you can see it's a very unconditioned sort of thing, a very unconditioned sort of relationship in a way; when you put yourself in somebody else's hands. You've removed all your defences, there's no possibility of your reacting. Actually if one is or can be in the position of being told what to do by somebody else in this sort of way you're in a very fortunate position really.

Peter Shann: It's quite a liberating situation.

S: Yes. The difficulty is, the trouble is, that there are only too many people around wanting to tell others what to do. But people who want to tell others what to do are usually people who are not operating in accordance with the love mode, people are just simply wanting to exercise power, and one has to exercise discrimination and not put oneself in the hands of people of that sort. In fact you can't really put yourself in their hands, you can only really

submit to them which is quite another matter.

Vajradaka: Are you thinking of Gurus?

S: Yes. I would say pseudo-gurus who ask for submission and who actually give you orders rather than as it were allowing you to put yourself in their hands and then themselves operating in accordance with what I call the love mode, which is quite a different thing. Sometimes people who are supposed to be gurus in fact are just group leaders who are bossing other weaker psychologically weaker people around. That's quite a different thing. You get that even in India or course, or even Tibet. It's not confined to the West.

Vajradaka: When you say Tibet you're thinking of Buddhists?

S: Oh yes. It happens even there.

So there's quite an important point - 'In the beginning I met the right person. I put myself in the hands of Marpa'. Milarepa put himself in the hands of Marpa totally. Well he had no choice because he was already in an extreme existential situation of either having to gain enlightenment in this life or go to Hell. So what else could he do but put himself in the hands of someone like Marpa.

Malcolm: Life or death.

S: Life or worse than death.

TEA BREAK

...

Vajradaka: What was the first one again?

Asvajit: An unreasonable independence.

S: So what is an unreasonable independence. How is a person unreasonably independent. That is to say when a person is unreasonably [56] independent, when he insists on being independent, in those situations in which it would be more positive and more skilful for him to be dependent in the sense that other people know better than he does. Just to give you an example. Supposing you fall ill and you say 'Oh I know what's wrong with me, I know the best sort of treatment' and you start dosing yourself with different sorts of medicines instead of going to a doctor who really might be able to find out what is wrong with you and to treat you in accordance with that diagnosis. Do you see what I mean? So here you're being unreasonably independent.

In the same way in the spiritual situation someone says 'Oh I know what's good for me, I know what's the best kind of meditation, I know how to meditate, I don't need anybody to tell me, I don't need a teacher'. This is the attitude encouraged by the Krishnamurti type of approach. I don't need a guru. I can understand things perfectly well for myself etc., etc. So this is unreasonable independence. Being independent when you ought to be dependent. In fact you're not even being independent You're actually being dependent but you're being

dependent on the very person that you ought not to be dependent on. Namely Yourself. So this is unreasonable independence.

So what did I say next?

Asvajit: Reasonable independence.

S: Reasonable independence. Reasonable independence is being dependent with regard to those matters or in those circumstances where you're quite able to be independent, where you have a genuine experience, a genuine understanding. So you are able to act independently in a quite reasonable manner, and you should act independently, you should not depend upon others when you're able to depend upon yourself. So that is reasonable independence.

What came next?

Asvajit: Unreasonable dependence.

S: So unreasonable dependence is in fact depending upon others to do for you things which you are able in fact or ought to be able to do for yourself. In this I include the so called surrender of weak people to so called gurus expecting the gurus to give them salvation and everything else.

What was the fourth one

Asvajit: Reasonable dependence.

S: So reasonable dependence is when you give yourself into the hands of another person with the trust that they in fact know better than you, not just in a worldly sort of way but with the trust and the confidence that they act from the love mode rather than from the power mode and whatever they tell you to do will be genuinely for your benefit in a deeper spiritual sense

So Rechungpa is being unreasonably independent. Milarepa is advising him to be reasonably dependant. You could give a quite useful talk or lecture on these four types of person couldn't you because these are the sort of attitudes which we do encounter among people who come along to centres and who even live in communities. Sometimes you find for instance old people being unreasonably independent. They say 'Oh it's all right don't bother to help me, I can do it myself, I've always done it myself CRASH - yes indeed (Laughter) one has seen these sort of things.

Adrian: It almost implies that at some later time you can become [57] more unreasonably dependent on the person you were trying to be independent from in the first place.

S: Yes. I think this issue of independence is quite important for a lot of people nowadays due to all sorts of secular and pseudo liberal ideas that may be around. People often think that they are in fact independent when they are really quite dependant in all sorts of ways that they don't recognize. Or they think that they're free when in fact they're not.

Peter Shann: I find it quite difficult to know whether it's advisable to be dependent or whether my dependence is good or bad. It's quite difficult to actually tell at the time.



Clive: Apart from the obvious what are the areas of dependence. Say financial, emotional.

S: The areas of dependence in any sense or reasonable dependence.

Clive: That depends on the individual presumably. What are the areas.

S: Well to begin with there's material dependence. That one is dependant upon others for material things. This raises in a way an interesting point, because traditionally in Buddhism the bhikkhu, the monk, is dependent upon the lay supporters for four things and he may reasonably expect those four things from them. That is to say food, clothing, shelter and medicine. So that suggests that if you are say a bhikkhu, if you are devoting yourself entirely to the spiritual life, if you're meditating and studying the dharma you may reasonably expect those four things from the lay community. That is to say your dependence on them for those material requisites is a reasonable dependence. Do you see what I mean? The modern attitude might be that everybody should work and provide himself with food, clothing, shelter and medicine as the result of his own labour. That is not the traditional Buddhist point of view. I'm not discussing now whether that is right or wrong but it's not the traditional Buddhist point of view. So this suggests that the traditional Buddhist point of view is that if you are devoting yourself to meditation and study you may quite reasonably be dependent on others for all material things, but you notice that the Buddha mentions the monks, that is to say by definition those who are practising meditation and studying the dharma or teaching the dharma full time, he is speaking of them as being dependent and reasonably dependent on the lay community for material things but only for material things. They are not dependent on the lay community for inspiration, they are not dependent of course on the lay community for teaching, they are not dependent on the lay community for anything except material things. So as I said this suggests that to be dependent on others for material things is not necessarily unreasonable. Certainly it is not unreasonable for those who are devoting themselves to full time meditation and dharma study and dharma teaching.

Then there's another point from traditional Buddhism. It's what is called Nissaya. The relationship between a younger monk and an older monk who is teaching him is referred to as Nissaya, it's relationship of dependence and it's a sort of official and recognized thing in the Sangha that this relationship of Nissaya subsists between two monks, one junior and one senior and you are not supposed to leave someone who is teaching you, a senior monk, without being released from your Nissaya, being officially released from your dependence upon him. So of course [58] you are dependent upon him for dharma teaching and dharma guidance so this is a reasonable dependence, that is to say a younger less experienced monk depending on an older more experienced monk. So you are dependent on others for material things. The question was about areas of dependence, or you can be dependent upon others for material things. Usually we are. Even if we earn money and buy things we're dependent on others to make them for us, we don't produce them ourselves. We can be dependent upon others for knowledge quite reasonably because we don't write the text books that we read - we depend upon others for our knowledge, and that would seem to be a quite reasonable thing especially when we are young, to be dependent upon others for knowledge.

We may even be dependent upon others for inspiration. So these are all areas one might say of legitimate dependence. But what about what we might call illegitimate dependence. What is that? What is it that you can be dependent on others for but which you should not be dependent upon others for?

Atula: Supporting your image of yourself.

S: Supporting your image of yourself or even more intimately than that, your experience of yourself. For instance some people can't experience themselves unless there's a lot of people looking at them. This is why it is said that some people become actors and they take to the stage. They don't really experience themselves unless a lot of other people are experiencing them. So you should not be dependent it would seem upon others for your own experience of yourself. Perhaps - I don't know, I'm not sure, but perhaps in a way that is the basic illegitimate dependence.

Peter Shann: I suppose emotional dependence can be either.

S: Yes because there is a legitimate emotional dependence as when you are dependent upon others for inspiration and encouragement to attain higher levels of experience, but not when you are dependent upon others for your very happiness, that you can't even be reasonably happy and contented without certain people around, without the company of certain people, that is an illegitimate dependence. Or when you are dependent upon others for knowledge which you are quite able to find out for yourself, which you are quite able to discover for yourself. Or when you are dependant upon others for making up your mind for you what to do, when you ought at least in certain instances to think it out for yourself and make up your own mind. I'm not thinking of the situation where you've no alternative but to put yourself in somebody else's hands. So you can be illegitimately dependent for decisions legitimately and illegitimately.

So to recapitulate you can be dependent upon others for material things, for knowledge, you can be dependent upon others for emotional support, inspiration, decisions. You can also be dependent upon other people, this perhaps belongs to the material things, say for protection. We depend upon the police for protection don't we?

So one might say that in a properly organized state you can reasonably depend upon others for protection, depend upon the police because that is the safeguard or the condition of your leading a peaceful life, a life in the course of which you can practise the dharma.

Mangala: This is one of the principal aspects of real friendship, that a kind of mutual unreasonable dependence isn't fostered or [59] encouraged.

S: Right, yes. You don't bolster up each others little weaknesses. But I think the point in view of the attitudes of a lot of people that we know, that we meet, I think we have to emphasize that there's nothing to be ashamed of in a reasonable dependence and a lot to be ashamed of in an unreasonable dependence. You can't be completely independent.

Malcolm: Supposing somebody's sort of working very hard to support somebody who's sort of not working very hard. That's not right is it? If somebody's going to go out and work hard all day and sort of be in an unfit state to practise himself to keep someone... that's an area I'm not too sure about - supporting somebody else's positive frame of mind when you could be sort of damaging your own.

S: Well you can discuss it in terms of the classic Buddhist situation of the lay people supporting the monks. In most Buddhist countries the lay supporters they provide the monk

with food, clothing and shelter and medicine and monks get on with so to speak full time dharma activities whether meditating, studying, teaching, there's a sort of division of labour.

Of course this can be carried to extremes but one could say, putting the most positive construction on that sort of situation, that you may be aware of your own limitations in a quite genuine objective healthy way. You may be aware that you are unable to do something, but you are also aware that somebody else is able to do that so you are quite happy to function in a supportive capacity. You as it were say the important thing is that those things are done. It doesn't matter whether I do them or he does them. So even if I can't do them myself I will support him while he is doing them. The sort of unhealthy development of that is when there's a hard and fast division between monks and lay people and the lay people in a manner of speaking pay the monks to practise the dharma for them. That is quite another matter, that does of course happen.

Malcolm: That would be the communist sort of argument that you've got serfs and people living like nobility.

S: Well that is even worse because the monks actually may be practising the dharma genuinely and the laity may believe that the monks are practising it for them too, and that they don't have to practise anything themselves. That would be a wrong attitude even if the monks were actually practising the Dharma. If the monks are only pretending to practise the dharma and living just like the laity, but the laity are supporting under the impression that they are practising the dharma well that is even worse.

But supposing you for instance feel that somebody needs to go away on solitary retreat, and if that person was able to go away on solitary retreat it would not only benefit them but benefit others indirectly. If you were not able to go away on solitary retreat for one reason or another well you might be quite happy to work to support that person on solitary retreat and that could be a quite positive thing.

Peter Shann: Reasonable support is given isn't it rather than the unreasonable support which would be an exchange.

[60]

S: But there is also this tendency on the part of people very often of resenting working while others are not working. I was reading something about some tribe somewhere that was described by some traveller and one of the characteristics of this tribe apparently was that they didn't mind working even while others didn't. Apparently it was some maybe railway contractor or someone like that building railways who had to hire labour from among primitive tribes belonging to the area through which the railway was passing and he found that some tribes if he hired say a dozen of them eight of them would work and four would sit around while the others did all the work. But those who were doing the work didn't mind that the others sat around not working. They felt like working so they worked. The others didn't feel like working so they didn't work and no one minded. (Laughter) So we have to watch that sort of attitude. Resenting working when somebody else is not or resenting working so that somebody else doesn't have to work. We should not allow ourselves to be exploited by other people but on the other hand we shouldn't rule out altogether the possibility that we may be working while somebody else is not working. If we resent somebody else not working while we are working it suggests we're not enjoying our work and perhaps we should question our

motives for working.

Malcolm: And metta isn't there either.

S: And metta isn't there either.

Malcolm: A man thinks nothing of going out and supporting a wife and five children but to support one other Order member you have to think about that more carefully.

S: In Buddhist countries the attitude very often is well the monks are meditating , I wouldn't have to like to meditate. It's a much more difficult thing than working in the fields. They're only too happy to let the monks get on with the meditation while they do a comparatively more easy work!

Mangala: Also one shouldn't feel guilty if one isn't working.

S: That too. If one is feeling guilty for not working well either you should actually be working and you're not taking your full share of the communal burden even though you are able to or else your feeling of guilt is a quite irrational feeling left over as a vestige from the remains of the Christian work ethic or puritan work ethic.

Atula: Do you think that's the only place it comes from? Guilt.

S: Guilt about work?

Atula: Well guilt in general.

S: I'm not sure about that but guilt about work one doesn't for instance find in India. In India no one feels guilty about not working. They might feel anxious that they don't have a job and therefore that they're not going to get money but about not working as such they don't feel any guilt at all . You find in big joint families maybe two or three brothers are out working and supporting the whole family. Other brothers are living at home, even brothers with wives even brothers with wives [61] and children and are not doing anything and no one thinks that particularly wrong. Because if enough money is coming in it's not necessary for everybody to work, what does it matter if some don't. That's the way they look at it. And those who are not working certainly don't feel guilty that they and their wives and their children are all being supported by their hard working brothers. They think it a perfectly natural arrangement.

Atula: I feel I have to justify my existence. It's a quite strong feeling.

S: Well that means that people don't value their existence as such. Your existence has to be justified in terms of work, output, money, utility. It's as though your existence, your being, doesn't have any value in itself, that you don't have any value in yourself. I was reading the other day a discussion, I think it was by G.K. Chesterton, of the word 'worker', the workers - he was in a way having a dig at the communists, the Marxists. He was saying what a horrible word, this word worker. He said the word really should be work man, a man who happens to work, but they've made that into worker as though the fact that he's a man isn't important. The important thing is that he works. The man has been identified completely with his function. So it's not a work man but a worker, one who just works. He's defined in accordance with that

particular activity. So G.K. Chesterton is strongly protesting against that, he thinks it very characteristic - this may be justified or not justified - he thinks it very characteristic that communism speaks of the worker rather than of the work man.

Malcolm: What do you think makes people so impressed about working hard? Is it the fact that they do lots of work or is it the energy? You hear down in the West Country - oh he's a good man to work he works hard and you hear it anywhere actually.

S: Do you.

Malcolm: Such and such is a good worker. He does work hard.

S: But who says that he's a good worker? Is it the man who employs him?

Malcolm: No perhaps the person who's talking about them or valuing or measuring that person.

Clive: Quite often that sort of person who says that in the next breath if the other person has a week off or something he's a lazy bugger. It doesn't take long for that to change.

Malcolm: It's the praise usually isn't it that the people are after.

S: Well I think broadly speaking we tend to value the worker or to speak well of the worker or to speak of someone as a good worker because we value production. In the Soviet Union they used to have these heroes of Soviet Labour. What made you a hero of Soviet Labour and how was that ascertained, how was that measured, in terms of production. So a good worker is a worker who produces more, a good worker in other words is the worker who makes more money for whoever employs him. He may of course get himself a bigger cut of that than the poor worker, or not. They maybe are all paid the same but clearly the employer will be more pleased with the good worker than the bad one because the good worker is a greater asset to him, a greater economic asset because [62] he produces more and the employer therefore makes more money.

Clive: If someone's a good worker it's sort of become like he's a good man. It means the same thing.

S: This is more from the point of view of the employer. From The point of view of the employee or the other employees the good worker may be just a fool.

Malcolm: Or the wife appreciates a good worker ( unclear ) husband.

S: Yes right.

Malcolm: The Dhammapada appreciates the man who shakes off laziness.

Clive: Well what's laziness?

S: Yes. Well Milarepa defines laziness somewhere doesn't he as being constantly busy with politics and business. (laughter) and neglecting the spiritual life; that is laziness.

Aloka: It does mean a lot to people though if somebody works hard. You can see it when Sukhavati was being done, still being built in Bethnal Green there was a lot of initial suspicion about what was going on there but after a bit they said oh they're good boys -they work hard. Once everybody in the area saw that they were prepared to work hard that seemed to cancel out quite a lot of ...

S: I think this is not so much the Protestant work ethic but almost the working class ethic, because I remember that D. H. Lawrence refers to this - I'm not sure if it's in some of his stories or in some of his essays but talking about the miners and the life of the miners, he makes the point that among the women a good husband was the man who was a good worker and who brought his wages home to his wife at the end of the week and just sort of gave her every penny and didn't spend anything on drink. That was the good husband so you have to be a good worker in order to be a good husband. So the good worker indirectly or by connotation is the man who cares for his family, the man who looks after his family, the man who supports his family properly. You can't do that unless you're a good worker. So to say that someone is a good worker it implies that he's a good family man, he's discharging his domestic responsibilities in looking after his wife and kids. So it becomes a general term of social approbation.

Aloka: You don't think there's anything to do with just the Christian work ethic.

S: There could be a touch of that too.

Malcolm: Good potential husbands.

S: They're all good potential husbands, they're all good potential breadwinners, yes. I think when these sort of comments were made around Bethnal Green about our lads I think it meant something of that sort, that they'd make good husbands! (laughter)

Clive: There is something else. People who in a way don't have much appreciation of what a human being could be can only see people when they're working, can only see what they produce and [63] their attitude towards it so they can only actually get a gauge of their quality by...

S: They can see them knocking down a brick wall or even building a brick wall or making a window frame or something of that sort.

Asvajit: That means that people are seeing it in terms of function rather than essence.

S: But of course again one mustn't go to the other extreme because function has got something to do with essence. Function does express essence to some extent. You can't define a man as a worker but a man does work and the fact that he works is a genuine even if partial expression of himself. But to go back to what I was saying about the Indians they certainly don't have any feeling of guilt about not working. They're quite happy to sit in the sun doing nothing all day. I don't think they even feel bored, they certainly don't ever feel guilty.

Suvajra: Does resentment creep in from the two working to support the rest of the family?

S: Usually it doesn't. Sometimes an older brother who is working say may if he feels a bit

hard pressed and there's not quite enough money to go round he might say well I wish my younger brother would get a job, but if there's enough money for them all and they can all live on what is being earned they probably wouldn't feel any resentment at all.

Atula: So it would be something to do with conditioning.

S: Yes, they'd only sort of start feeling resentful when the family as a whole was feeling the pinch.

Malcolm: Do the men ever, when they don't work, fall to pieces like our men do? Men in this country tend to sort of fall to pieces a bit.

S: Well yes and no. I think probably you could say that those who work in some ways are more admirable than those who don't. You could say that the brothers who stay at home around the house and don't work are probably a bit womanish. You could probably say that - I don't want to generalize too much - but I have seen instances of this sort. There are men who don't really feel like facing the world and are a bit lazy and a bit dull, not much energy, not much vigour and that's sort of recognized in the family and it's sort of recognized ... well they're not fit to go out and work really, they don't actually say well they're not really men, they don't put it in that way but well everybody accepts that they're not just that type. So OK they don't go out to work. They just potter around the house and chat with the womenfolk and the men think well they're doing some sort of function, they are around the house. At least men are there in the house it means that the women are much more safe, so they don't mind. And they give them odd jobs to do around the house or they send them shopping, something like that.

END OF TAPE

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Clive: ... It should have photographed and sort of this is a holiday resort for workers for two weeks of the year and ill workers, workers with diseases or something like that. This is a holiday resort for ill workers. This sort of thing. It is as if everyone is just a worker.

S: Just a worker. A bee is just a bee. The worker bees. The whole function of their lives is just to work and when they stop working they either die or they're killed.

Clive: That's the feeling you get from one or two of the photographs of the older people. As if that's all they've done all their lives is go out to work each day for eight hours or ten hours.

S: You get that in India too with older people. They just work all their lives and when they stop it's because they're exhausted and can't work any more and they just sit around for a few years and then they die.

Anyway how did we get on to this? Areas of dependence wasn't it. This is a question of material dependence. I think we were talking about the monk being dependant upon the laity. I think you have to be quite careful. So far as the FWBO is concerned and the WBO I've tended to emphasize that there shouldn't be too much of this sort of distribution of labour so

to speak with some people doing all the spiritual work and other people doing the material work and supporting the people who are doing the spiritual work. If you are a Buddhist at all, if you've gone for refuge at all, then you are responsible for your own spiritual development and as it were you help one another you could say. It's not that you've got a whole community of lay people supporting a whole community of monks.

Malcolm: You do have people who have to be in a more positive frame of mind for classes. That's the one that comes up quite a lot especially in smaller communities. A couple of people have got to be on the ball for classes and be able to answer questions. So they can't really work much that day.

S: That's true, assuming that work does make you a bit negative.

Malcolm: Well it sometimes it makes you a bit gross. It depends upon the nature of the work but sometimes it can.

S: I must say I'm not altogether clear about this or maybe I should say I'm not altogether convinced. I'm not sure. It sounds plausible. I suppose when you work physically during the day you are on a sort of gross wavelength let's say and that isn't very good if you have to answer questions about the dharma in the evening.

Malcolm: You get pretty tired.

S: I can understand that . That's another matter, that you're tired and you need of course not to be tired if you are going to take a class. That is understandable.

But that when you're working physically you are on some sort of gross wavelength and then you have to switch in the evening to some sort of subtle wavelength I don't feel so sure about that.

Atula: Isn't it more that a lot of people are still very limited as far as jobs and that. Some people are doing things that they [65] really when it comes down to it don't particularly want to do as a choice and are doing them.

S: Well supposing you spent the day happily knocking down a brick wall, happily knocking it down and supposing you are not tired, you've still got plenty of energy left why should you not be able to lead a meditation or take a dharma class in the evening?

Vajradaka: For some people you actually wouldn't perhaps have had time to turn over the ideas in your mind.

S: Well let's deal with that. That you've got those ideas already turned over, maybe you've taken dharma classes of that sort dozens of times before, you don't need any preparation.

Vajradaka: That is rare.

S: So in other words you're still saying that it is not anything inherently in the fact that you've been working that prevents you from taking a dharma class in the evening, it is an accidental reason, the fact that you actually in point of fact need time in which to prepare. But you're not



saying that working in that way puts you on such a gross wavelength that in the evening you couldn't function on the subtler wavelength of taking a dharma class.

Atula: But there are the sort of approaches where people say I'm going to get into physical work as though it's a different sort of function to mental work and that approach to things and people seem to be approaching it in the sense of bringing up gross energy, and I know if sometimes you spend a day sort of not doing something like concreting an ( ) or something like that and you're working in that way that you can quite understand why navvies spend a lot of time drinking afterwards because it does ( ) that sort of thing.

S: What is it that is happening?

Atula: You're bringing up something that's just not, that you're not able particularly well to deal with I think.

S: Well what is that?

Malcolm: You're getting unmindful I reckon from my experience.

S: But do you have to be unmindful in doing physical work?

Atula: No.

Asvajit: I would say that in the case of printing which I've been learning recently you have to be very mindful. In fact it makes you really on the ball.

S: Some people might say that printing wasn't really physical work in the full sense. Would you agree with that?

Asvajit: Not at all.

S: You can imagine that if the work that you've been doing has involved a lot of mental strain you might not be in a very good mental state to take a dharma class in the evening. I'm talking especially about simple physical work, the sort of work which is regarded as rather gross, whether when you do that work you are in [66] fact operating on such a different wavelength that it prevents you from engaging in an activity in the evening like taking a dharma class presuming of course that you haven't been exhausted and that you are sufficiently prepared to take the dharma class.

Asvajit: I can't see any basis whatsoever myself.

S: Right.

Malcolm: I can see perhaps, knowing what communication in co-operatives can be rather (hard) from new businesses sometimes.

S: But that is only incidental, that is not the work itself but something incidental to the work that doesn't necessarily belong to it. You might have had a blazing row with someone in the course of the day in a coop but that blazing row is not an inherent part of the work itself.

Those are work conditions.

You could say that certain work conditions are not very conducive to your taking a Dhamma class in the evening but that's not because of the work itself but the nature of the work conditions which may be quite accidental.

Mangala: I think there is definitely an attitude that yes work... there needs to be a break or a gap between work and say spiritual practice as it were. I think that's actually unfounded.

S: Because one might say that one needs a break from time to time during the day to maybe recoup your energies, just maybe ten or fifteen minutes or half an hour like you have a tea break even when you are working. So in the same way you can have a tea break between the end of knocking your wall down and taking your dharma study class. I get a bit of suspicion people are sometimes a bit precious about these things. 'I got my hands a bit dirty today so I mustn't have anything to do with the dharma in the evening' - it's a bit like that.

Brian Duff: Is there a difference here between the example you're making of taking a dharma class in the evening than from actually really trying to get into deep meditation? For example I read in your biography about when you started wandering up through India that you actually had to stop walking to really get into your practice.

S: Yes, I think as far as I can remember in may case I was just tired out. I wasn't used to walking in that sort of way and of course there was the heat and all that sort of thing.

Brian: But is there not also a similarity between very heavy work and...

S: And that's why I say if you are tired in the evening, you haven't got any energy left to take a dharma class well that's another matter, but I'm just doubting very much whether the mere fact that you've been doing physical work, even though you are not exhausted in the evening, automatically incapacitates you for taking a dharma class in the evening. That is what I am questioning.

Malcolm: My experience of physical work is it does make me very tired actually, especially if the weather is not quite right. You've been out and it's windy and you come home and you've had it sometimes.

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S: But again though I would raise this point. I've noticed actually sometimes people say work hard all day physically. They don't want to go and meditate, they don't want to go and attend a class or listen to a lecture even, but you say to them come on let's go to the cinema or let's go to the theatre, well they brighten up immediately and there seems to be loads of energy there. I even hear people say let's go and have a game of squash. There seems to be plenty of energy for that so it doesn't seem to be lack of energy. It seems to be lack of interest in that particular evening activity.

Adrian: It only takes a fairly short period of time for the body to recoup after a sort of heavy day's work anyway. I think it's only about an hour and a half or so.

S: OH. Well I'm glad you told me that.

Clive: Well it's more than that. It's like changing the mode of functioning but you can do it because even on the two extremes like say Tyn-y-Ddol you're into meditation quite a lot and then you have a physical work period which in some cases can be quite vigorous.

S: I would say if anything it's easier to make the transition from meditation to work than from meditation to study because in meditation there's not mental activity and in work I won't say there's no mental activity but very simple straightforward work doesn't involve overmuch thinking whereas in dharma study there may be a lot of thinking involved and you may not feel like thinking after meditating. But you may be quite happily able to engage in some simple physical activity which may be quite hard like chopping wood which doesn't involve much in the way of thinking.

Peter Shann: Does it work the other way around? Work to meditation?

S: I think providing you're not physically exhausted I would say it did.

Adrian: If you immerse yourself in your body you can actually give your mind a chance to actually relax or when you get into a study situation well it just functions naturally rather than maybe you get reactive thoughts sort of drifting round in your head all day.

S: So one notices for instance that the Zen tradition, the classical Zen tradition was meditation and work. They did not seem to find work incompatible with meditation. They found study incompatible with meditation but not work. But of course it was rather simple uncomplicated hard work - chopping wood, pounding rice, planting paddy, mending the roof. Just the sort of things you're doing at Tyn-y-Ddol.

Aloka: I think it is more what you were talking about of the work situation, rather than...

S: For instance if you're working in a noisy factory well the noise and the din can give you a headache which may be lingering on in the evening and you're not in a fit state to teach the dharma then.

Malcolm: Or you're sitting in a traffic jam for half an hour or an hour in London.

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S: Well there is the question of your own reactions of impatience which perhaps are giving you more trouble than the fact that you are just having to sit there in the midst of all the noise.

Malcolm: It is rather a waste of time.

S: If you can just sit there and quietly meditate what time has been wasted?

Peter Shann: It seems to me that you've got to be able to work if you're going to work and then do something in the evening. You've got to be quite adept.

S: Yes. In handling your own being, your own energy. But going back to what I was saying about the bhikkhus, the monks, the full timers so to speak being supported by the laity I have come on the whole to the conclusion that that is not a very positive or spiritual arrangement, because I've come to the conclusion that the average person, the average man in the interests

of or in the course of his own development, needs a certain amount of physical work which monks by very definition that is to say Theravada monks especially, don't get. So I think that work is in a sense even part of one's spiritual life. I mean physical work here. I think that there should be an element of that in the life of everybody who is engaged in spiritual development. I don't mean equally all the time. Yes you may have a month when you go away for a solitary retreat and you don't do any physical work, but on the whole and broadly speaking I think work should be an integral part of one's spiritual life. Therefore I do not believe that there should be a whole class of people, that is to say all those who are allegedly into full time spiritual life, who never do any work as usually happens with Theravada bhikkhus. I think, I come to the conclusion from my own observation of them not working and of other people I've known in this country in communities and co-ops working, I've come to the conclusion from my own observation of them not working and of other people working I've come to the conclusion that the way Theravada bhikkhus live nowadays is not in accordance with their own needs from a spiritual point of view.

Mangala: They don't do any kind of work at all?

S: No. Usually this is all done by the laity. According to the vinaya a bhikkhu should not even kindle a fire. Absolutely everything is done for them by lay people. To give some of them their due they're not always very happy with this. There are Theravada bhikkhus whom I've known who like to work, who try to work but the laity rush forward and stop them because they think it's a reflection upon their devotion. If the bhikkhu is working he's sort of suggesting he hasn't got a very devoted laity around him so they rush forward and stop him doing it, but I know some bhikkhus like to work and if they get a chance say in a place like India where there aren't many devoted lay people around they do work. I don't see many of them but some are capable of working and like working and don't mind working, but broadly speaking especially in the Theravada countries themselves the bhikkhu doesn't work and is not expected to work. The sort of traditional justification is that he gets enough exercise if he goes out on his alms round but that isn't much exercise even if he does go out on his alms [69] round, but that isn't much exercise, even if he does go out on his alms round which usually he doesn't nowadays. He usually eats in the vihara.

Clive: What is the main function of work then in that sense. Is it just exercise?

S: It would seem to be exercise in the sense that through physical work apart from the productive side which may be necessary in the wider interests of the community, one experiences one's energies and therefore oneself more fully.

Malcolm. So ideally there ought to be perhaps work situations which are very simple say like gardening or something, somebody can go in and doesn't have to learn, just does it and...

S: I think from the spiritual point of view especially as regards beginners in spiritual life so to speak and beginners in meditation, the work should be simple. It should not involve a lot of paper work or a lot of thinking or a lot of responsibility especially responsibility for other people. It should just involve simple physical activity of an uncomplicated nature. Gardening is a good example unless it's really elaborate landscape gardening or something like that. Knocking down walls is OK. I don't know about plastering. People have mixed ideas about that.

Atula: I think much of work is to do with your attitude to it. It's so difficult because some people seem to enjoy plastering - it seems to have got quite a bad name.

Peter: My experience of that sort of thing is that if the work is more of a knack and you don't actually think about it, don't think how you're doing that plastering, you just do it, you don't... you wouldn't be able to explain how to do it perhaps technically. That sort of work I think is perhaps more conducive to meditative states. Whereas bookwork is where everything is always new and you're always having to think something why and how.

Clive: We've only mentioned the sort of therapeutic aspect of work that is where it fits in with the spiritual...

S: Not exactly therapeutic but let's say developmental. Therapeutic suggests a cure for a sort of illness.

Clive: Well the exercise aspect then was just the personal aspect as if to say if someone just mowed the lawn or swept the garden on their own that would be sufficient. But what about working with others?

S: Yes. Then arises the whole question of interaction, working with others as even a means of communication. Work has that value too doesn't it?

Brian: In some cases I find that's the best way to communicate with certain people. It's difficult to actually speak to them but when you're working with them you have very good communication with them.

S: Do you think that actually is so? Is it really communication do you think? The fact that you are able to work together and get a job done together, does it necessarily mean that you're [70] enjoying a good communication?

Vajradaka: Not necessarily.

S: Not necessarily.

Aloka: Isn't it just that it puts you... you get in contact with that person in some way which sets up a more sort of fertile ground for communication on top of that.

S: I'm thinking in terms of say someone who is allegedly very inarticulate and can't communicate in words. Could one regard the sort of communication you get working together as an adequate substitute for that?

Brian: I wasn't thinking of somebody who was inarticulate though.

Clive: You can maybe get to know someone a bit better if you ( ) and then from the basis of that try and communicate outside of it but just the work in itself doesn't really go that deep. Communication.

S: You may not necessarily know someone better by working with them but you know more about them which may be quite important and quite relevant even to your communication

with them eventually. You can see very easily whether they are confident or not confident, sure of themselves or not sure of themselves. Those sort of things come out quite quickly in the work situation don't they?

: The barriers come down don't they?

S: Do they? I'm not so sure about that.

Peter: I think if you're working with somebody day after day in the end the real person comes out.

S: You mean they forget themselves sometimes and they drop a box on their foot and swear. Then it is difficult for them to keep a certain kind of image again after that.

But there's another aspect of work which is the productive aspect which hasn't been touched upon. That maybe is significant because I think nowadays especially in religious or pseudo religious fields or areas people tend to stress the subjective much more than the objective. So there is this whole productive aspect of work. Of work as actually producing something which is of course important within the community especially the wider community.

Malcolm: If it's just producing for Mr Jones down the road and you're not going to actually see the work all you're producing is money.

S: Yes. This is what it usually amounts to under let's say capitalism.

Malcolm: If you're actually sort of doing the work within the community you're doing something you can see.

S: But for instance to take the extreme almost the classic example - if you were working on the land and growing your own [71] food then you might have the three aspects - you're working, you're experiencing your own energies in a particular way and therefore experiencing yourself; you're working with other people and thereby relating to other people through work, and you're producing something which you need for your very existence. One could also say that within the context of publications you are working together, you are also producing something. Namely you are producing the books and magazines and pamphlets themselves. So there are these three aspects really to work perhaps one could say. There is the developmental which includes the therapeutic, the social let's say or community oriented or communication oriented and the productive, if you like the economic in a broader sense. Or you could say even the psychological the social and the economic all of which are interconnected.

Perhaps one should look at every work situation from this point of view. Is it helping me to develop, is it enabling me to relate better to people and is it producing something which is useful to the community especially the spiritual community even if it's only money?

Clive: I think it's quite interesting to think would people actually work if there weren't those motivations? Would they work purely from a point of view of the exercise being for their own development?

Asvajit: Well someone who devotes himself to yoga for instance is in that particular sort of situation.

Clive: I suppose he is in that sense.

Aloka: I had an argument with someone who was saying that if you had somebody that had a private income and quite enough to live on they were trying to tell me that if they were in that situation the whole thing of co-ops or team based right livelihood would be completely irrelevant to them, or that's what they were trying to say because they didn't actually have to work. The whole thing of there being any significance as far as the person's development goes to working especially working with other people was just a way of dressing up the fact that you've got to work. That if you took that away...

S: Well perhaps it is for some people but I don't think it necessarily is so. I think there are people who would rather not work. I think that this is partly because for such a long time we have divorced work from play. If you were to say then all right OK you wouldn't work if you didn't have to and they said no I wouldn't and supposing you said well would you play? and they'd say of course I would yes, I'd like to play but supposing there was no difference between work and play what would they say then?

Asvajit: I find Nagabodhi's attitude is very good in that way. Working in publications he has a very playful attitude and sometimes I can get a little bit serious and a little bit worried about the machinery and whether it's going all right and somehow he just has the knack of saying something which places it in the context of a game and immediately my attitude changes.

S: Well I think it's because he thoroughly enjoys working in publications. It really is in a way his life. Certainly his [72] practical active life.

Asvajit: It's really a valuable attitude.

S: So if work is not divided from play the whole question of not working any longer when you don't have to just falls to the ground doesn't it?

Clive: Can work be play if it's not creative, if you don't feel that you're being creative in it.

S: Well it does seem that repetitious work cannot be play.

Clive: Thinking about doing the 'Dodo' job for instance. I don't think even though different people experience different things I think mainly once you've poured so many thousand tins it's very difficult to feel that you can be creative in that.

S: Well it is interesting that in, let's say for the sake of using the term, primitive communities, when they are engaged in repetitious activities and they may have to be engaged in activities which are at least relatively repetitious; let's say like planting seeds, like sowing. They may have to spend weeks and weeks just sowing - the same simple activity over and over again. What do they do?

Clive: Sing.

S: They sing. They might even dance in connection with certain activities. So that helps to, well more than neutralize, to make more positive that repetitive element. Do you see what I mean? For instance just like in music you get the beat bonk, bonk, bonk, bonk, all the way through a piece of music, you don't think that that is boring and monotonous because that just provides the sort of base as it were - I don't know what the correct musical term is - but the melody and the harmony are all based upon that. So it's as though repetitious work by itself can be very stultifying but if some song or sort of play or art element is super induced or superimposed upon it, it loses that purely repetitious quality. Or that repetitious quality becomes an element in something greater. I think there's an essay by G.K. Chesterton - he suggests songs for all sorts of repetitious modern activities - actually it's all a bit ridiculous, maybe he means to make it all seem a bit ridiculous because perhaps still there are certain repetitious jobs you just can't do in that sort of way. Sort of singing and dancing. Vajradaka might or might have a good try but maybe a lot of other people couldn't.

Mangala: Maybe also like doing that kind of work if you are just sort of thinking about being creative - you're not really into doing what you should be doing. You think what else you could be doing all the time.

Clive: I (don't) doubt that it would be possible for someone to let's say stay in touch doing something like that.

S: It is said that say women factory workers who are doing very repetitious and not very demanding work, just talk all the [73] time. That sort of in a way takes their mind off the work so that they're not interested in what they're doing, they can do that without thinking, they're interested in what they're talking about - the new hat they bought the day before or last week's wedding and they chatter the whole time about those things. That isn't very positive in itself but it means there is some means of almost rising above the purely repetitious situation.

Mangala: I suppose you have to be sort of creative in that situation and somehow make it more creative than it actually is. I mean the fact that it's so boring means that your mental state is a very dull one...

S: On the other hand though sometimes it happens that your work, though repetitious, takes enough of your mental energy and mental activity to prevent you preoccupying yourself with your own thoughts while you're doing that work. Do you see what I mean? You can neither put all of your mental activity into the work because the work is not as it were big enough to take it, but at the same time you are prevented from getting on with your own thoughts and mental processes.

Vajradaka: Do you see that as a positive thing?

S: No I don't. I see it as quite a negative thing because you're not able... the work isn't big enough to take your thoughts but it's big enough to take enough of them to prevent you from ignoring the work and getting on with your own reflections and contemplations.

Peter Shann: I find that doing repetitive jobs can be quite meditative, quite pleasant, like chopping a pile of logs.

S: Ah but then they have to be quite simple uncomplicated jobs because then you're either



free from them in the sense of being able to think your own thoughts or not to think at all if you don't want to. There are a lot of jobs which take enough of your mental activity and mental energy to prevent you from being in a meditative mood while you are working or to prevent you from thinking while you are working but they don't give you real satisfaction because they can't take enough of your thinking capacity to be able to do that.

Asvajit: Even quite a complicated job like printing actually can be broken down into simple elements. Eventually when you have a certain amount of confidence.

S: Yes, a certain amount of practice.

Adrian: I used to find when I was doing boring jobs I used to be really guilty of fantasizing quite a lot. I sort of removed myself into a completely different world. I did that for ages and I suddenly realized quite recently what I'd been doing.

Clive: That's the problem I think. That can happen and then you get out of touch with yourself and that's what causes the problem. Because like you say there's just enough mental activity you've got to use your brain just so much in order to keep the thing together so that means your brain's actually working so the tendency is for it to fantasize.

S: Anyway we've said quite a bit about Milarepa putting himself [74] in the hands of Marpa. Dependence and independence. Dependence upon material things, work, that seems to have been the connection. Let's do a little bit more then.

At the end, so he's described what he did at the beginning, what he did in the middle. 'In the beginning I met the right person, I put myself in the hands of Marpa. In the middle I Practised the right teaching, meditating on the White Rock Mountain.' Let's discuss a bit about practising the right teaching. What do you think he mean by the right teaching?

Mangala: Meditation. That's presumably the Kargyupa's...

S: I wasn't thinking so much in that sense but more in the sense of what does 'right teaching' mean. How does one determine the right teaching. Right teaching in what sense?

Asvajit: The teaching that can actually work for you.

S: The teaching that actually works for you, that is one way of looking at it, that's a more subjective way. The true teaching.

Suvajra: The teaching that comes from enlightened experience.

S: The teaching that comes from enlightened experience. Yes.

Clive: You don't get the sense that he's studied the dharma in an abstract formulas. He's taking those which are relevant to his particular situation and concentrated on that.

S: Yes, indeed. And this is also where putting yourself in the hands of the right person is useful, say in connection with what particular teachings you practise, because you may be desperately in need of practising something now. You haven't got time perhaps to study all

the scriptures. Your situation is too desperate. Maybe you haven't got the talent to study all the scriptures so you need to place yourself in the hands of someone who knows quite a lot of teachings, quite a lot of approaches and who can select from all those the one which is suitable for you. Sometimes that is necessary. Very often we don't know ourselves what is best for us. Not that we're incapable of making up our own minds but that we just don't know the field, we're not aware of all the possibilities. It's like someone might come to an Order member and say I can go and stay anywhere in England, I'm such and such kind of person what centre would be the best one for me to live near and to go along to? Well you presumably know all the different centres and so you can say well I think this one would suit you or that one would suit you - they don't know - they've never been, they've never gone. They could of course go around on a little visit and see them all and then decide for themselves but it may be that they don't know themselves well enough or that in the course of a short visit they wouldn't be able to find out enough about all the different centres, so they ask you and then you tell them after sort of finding out what sort of person they are.

So they place themselves in your hands to that extent. There is this question of the right teaching for you but on the other hand at the same time I think about this too we mustn't be too precious. You notice this outside the Friends, one doesn't notice it so much inside the Friends now, that people are aware that there are many different kinds of meditation, many different kinds of meditation teachers so if they aren't getting on too well with their meditation, with the particular [75] practice they're doing they say or they start saying, I don't think this is the right practice for me, maybe some other method would suit me better. So this happens every time. They've tried this method for a few weeks or a few days, they don't seem to be making much progress, they change to something else, that doesn't work very well they think so they change to something else and they can do the same thing with teachers and groups and movements. So one mustn't be too precious about finding what just exactly suits you. You may just not be facing up to the fact that even the right teaching, even the right practice, has actually to be practised, it's not going to work automatically.

Asvajit: Perhaps it would better to say it's the practice that you need.

S: Yes, right. So sometimes I adopt the opposite point of view and I say well the best practice for you is the one that you actually practise. It's as though there is an abstract right practice, apart from simple things like well if you've got a very bad cross temper well obviously you should practise the metta bhavana. But apart from simple things like that, obvious things like that, it may not be that there is a right teaching just for you. Not anything that can be say found in books or found in the scriptures of Buddhist tradition. So you might make just as much progress with one or with the other, it's just a question of whether you practise it or don't practise it. If you practise it it's sure to do you good, it's sure to help you.

So some people are over precious in finding just the right community for them, just the exactly right meditation practice, just exactly the right kind of people to stay with and just exactly the right kind of books to read.

Mangala: The right kind of work.

S: The right kind of work.

Suvajra: Usually it's just a rationalization because they don't want to do it.

Clive: Responding to the objective needs of a situation. You're just getting stuck in and you're doing one thing.

Vajradaka: I've got a feeling we're going to come across a lot of this in the States. This last attitude of the right practice. Perhaps more individualized.

S: Well there is an element of truth in that which one mustn't overlook, one mustn't reject. That is there is a need of the precept as it were in the Kadampa sense. The teaching that is addressed just to you, but that's a different thing from there being a sort of objective classical Buddhist method of meditation, or spiritual practice, which is the one that you've got to find. All of them however specific they may seem are very general when it comes to relating to the needs of the individual. The precept can only come from another individual so that means that they have got to, if they want individual teaching, they've got to have an individual teacher, and that doesn't just mean glorifying one particular person and regarding him as god so to speak it means really entering into an existential communication [76] with someone more experienced than themselves, entering into a relationship of kalyana mitrata. I don't think much is really understood in the States at present about that kind of thing as we understand it.

So you can say well yes OK you're quite right in wanting an individual teaching, something tailored to your needs but then those needs have to be known, they have to be known to someone capable of describing to you the teaching that you need and that means you've got to enter into that sort of relationship with someone and that is not an easy matter, are you prepared for that?

Malcolm: What does that mean?, the precept?

S: The precept is the personal teaching of so to speak the guru to the disciple exactly adapted to the disciple's needs. It's a sort of almost digest and condensation of the teaching, to meet the needs of the pupil, the disciple. The guru puts the matter as a result of his study, meditation, experience, in a few simple words, which he knows are going to help that particular person. He reduces the whole thing to that. That's called a precept in the sense of upadesa, an individual instruction. Sometimes you can read all the sutras and they don't seem to say the word that really speaks to your condition as the phrase is. It's all general, you need something that hits the nail right on the head so far as you are concerned. That can only come from another individual who really knows you. Sometimes you get it from the scriptures when maybe the Buddha is speaking to someone who is in the same position that you are in or who was in the same position that you are in, the things that the Buddha says to the person apply directly to you, but that doesn't very often happen. You may feel that well what the Buddha says in the scriptures... well it's all perfectly true, it's all wonderful, I agree with it, I accept it, but I need something more individualized than that, something applies to the very situation which I am at this moment ... end of side

... next side

Clive: ... want their own particular colour, like you get these sort of coloured mixtures in paint shops and come up with quite individual colour and they want that straightaway.

S: What they're really trying to say is I'm rather special. Well maybe they are but they think of themselves as specially special, they forget that everybody is special.

: In a sense that what the TM's catered for isn't it. When you go they tell you 'your special mantra is...' (laughter)

Asvajit: Apparently they all get the same one.

Malcolm: You mustn't tell anybody else. (Laughter)

S: Yes.

Malcolm: They diagnose you don't they.

Atula: Do they all get the same one?

Asvajit: Everyone I've spoken to who's actually revealed it so [77] far.

Adrian: There's only about three or four different mantras.

S: So in the middle I practised the right teaching, meditating on the White Rock Mountain. At the end I asked for alms in the right places for alms. I beg here and there without friends or kinsmen.' I asked for alms in the right places for alms. What do you think that means? It might be a sort of technical reference to the vinaya - rules governing begging by monks. A monk for instance shouldn't beg for alms outside a wine shop or a brothel or places of that sort.

Vajradaka: Different from the Salvation Army. Going into the pub.

Suvajra: But why at the end?

S: Yes. Why at the end? Maybe it's just his way of putting things.

Asvajit: Maybe he just sort of discovered the right places and some places were more sort of fruitful than others.

S: Well first of all he's got to meet a teacher, then he's got to practise the teaching and then he's got to support himself while he is practising. That seems to be the sequence of beginning, middle and end.

Adrian: He didn't actually try to support himself for quite a long while did he. People actually used to bring him food.

S: Yes. For some time he did without food altogether and gathered wild nettles and boiled them.

I beg here and there without friends or kinsmen. Now what does that suggest?

Asvajit: Independence.

S: Independence, non-attachment. He regards everybody equally. He doesn't make special friends amongst them as I think Rechungpa probably wanted to do when he wanted to spend

the night in that village on the way. Or was that the other (laughter) Well it's the same Rechungpa! The same naughty Rechungpa.

What he is saying about I beg here and there without friends or kinsmen means that he doesn't enter into relations with people simply because of some common worldly interest or some tie of blood. The only basis for relationship which he recognizes now is the dharma itself. He certainly say relates to Rechungpa but that is on a spiritual basis. He relates to the lay supporters too but on a spiritual basis. He doesn't make friends of any of them simply on a basis of common worldly interest or on the basis of blood relationship.

Asvajit: I find it's important to try and make that distinction - of course it's not always possible - with my own relations.

To try and explain to them well I'm relating to you just as a friend, someone who I want to communicate with, not because you happen to be my aunt, my sister or...

S: On the other hand they might say well that is not altogether [78] straightforward because in that case why should you come and see me because the starting point is that you are blood related to them.

Asvajit: That's the starting point.

S: Well then in that case why not just go and see the person next door to where you are living. Why as it were take all the trouble to go and see that particular blood relation and communicate with them? And if one was strictly consistent one shouldn't take any trouble to see one's blood relations at all. If they came to the centre yes you'd speak to them just like you speak to anybody else but why should you make a journey for instance to see any of them?

Asvajit: Well logically there isn't any reason.

S: Yes. I suppose one feels well one has got some sort of connection, one might as well try to make something of it. One usually thinks in that sort of way.

Malcolm: A lot of hermits in their poetry do tend to think of themselves if they haven't got a spiritual friend then they are alone and they call themselves - I think Ryokan in his poetry calls himself a 'one man sangha'. So he does actually think of himself as a one man spiritual community or something like that.

S: That sounds like an open ended commitment doesn't it? Maybe this also was mentioned in the other group.

Suvajra: It wasn't here.

S: I read somewhere about some therapeutic group or something of that sort in America, this is all for Vajradaka's benefit, and they were talking about open ended relationships - well that's fair enough, but also open ended commitments. So that sounds a bit odd doesn't it.

Malcolm: Well I think he meant that he would go with a spiritual friend but he wouldn't go with anybody worldly.

S: No if you say that you are a one man sangha, one man spiritual community, in a sense that is a bit contradictory isn't it? I'd rather put it around the other way and say that if you are with a spiritual friend you are at the same time alone. Spiritual friendship does not exclude being an individual - in fact it's based on being an individual but you can be with a spiritual friend and still be alone in the positive sense. Whereas when you're with someone on a basis of some common worldly interest, even when you are with them you are not really with them.

Malcolm: To do justice to Ryokan's poetry I do think that he did in fact mean that. Perhaps the way I said it.

S: If I heard somebody actually say that, well I'm a one man spiritual community I'd suspect a rationalization that they were probably alienated and out of communication with other people.

Malcolm: I think Ryokan was sad that he didn't have a spiritual [79] friend. But even so he wouldn't stop his spiritual development because of that.

S: Well he would be a good friend to himself if there was nobody else to be a friend to. But even that would only be so to speak metaphorical wouldn't it. Even that is a bit of a sort of consolation for not having a spiritual friend. You have to be a spiritual friend to yourself. In the strict sense how can you be? You might reach a point where you need to put yourself in the hands of somebody else.

Malcolm: But if there are no spiritual friends available ...

S: Well I think then I would say you should face up to the fact well I'm on my own. I've no spiritual friends. Even if you say well I'll be a spiritual friend to myself, at least not let the expression bluff you or prevent you from recognizing that - Yes you are on your own, you don't have any spiritual friends, you've got to get on without them.

Asvajit: That's not an altogether negative situation anyway.

S: Take a spiritual friend as a bonus as it were.

Anyway we have to stop there, it's six 0 clock.

## NEXT SESSION

All right we're on page 399 and we've come to the end of one section of Milarepa's song and Milarepa is saying that, 'Since I have disposed of Samsara and Nirvana and have nor hope nor fear in my mind, I shall ne'er regress in my meditation.' Why do you think he's making this point that he will never regress in his meditation?

Mangala: Because it's not sort of dependent on hopes or fears in his mind. He's just sort of meditating as it were because he enjoys it.

S: No I was thinking of the context. Bearing in mind the overall context of the song why was he making that point? Well surely he was making it with reference to Rechung. Rechung if he hadn't actually regressed already was certainly about to regress in his meditation because he was haring off to India in pursuit of logic and science and had not been keeping up his

meditation very well and perhaps wouldn't be able to do so in India. So Milarepa is explaining that he, himself, will never regress in his meditation and he also explains why. And he says since I have disposed of Samsara and Nirvana and have no hope nor fear in my mind I shall ne'er regress from my meditation. So how does one dispose of Samsara and Nirvana. What does one mean in any case by disposing of Samsara and Nirvana. What does one mean by Samsara and Nirvana themselves?

Malcolm: Worldly aims.

S: No.

Mangala: They're like words or concepts which Milarepa has presumably transcended whereas Rechungpa's still very much caught up with words and ideas, concepts, intellectual.

S: But is it easy to dispose of those concepts. Is it easy even [80] to think of disposing of those concepts? Because to dispose of the concept of samsara and Nirvana that means in a sense to go beyond the whole framework of Buddhism itself, certainly beyond the framework of the Hinayana doesn't it. For the Hinayana, for the Theravada let's say, that being the surviving Hinayana school Samsara and Nirvana are ultimate concepts. The whole spiritual life is based upon them, that you get off that wheel of life, the wheel of life represents the Samsara, you go up the spiral path, you realize Nirvana.

So your whole spiritual life is based upon those concepts, those antithetical concepts of samsara and nirvana. And the whole spiritual life is a movement away from the conditioned in the direction of the unconditioned. So your whole spiritual life is based upon the reality of those concepts of samsara and nirvana, conditioned and unconditioned. The whole idea of development is from a lower to a higher state. Do you see what I mean? So if you think in terms of spiritual life at all, if you think in terms of spiritual growth and development at all you think in effect in terms of samsara and nirvana, a state which you get away from, a state that you move in the direction of. If you dispose of samsara and nirvana you dispose of the whole basis, framework, of the spiritual life itself. So is that an easy thing to do? How does one do that or when does one do that or in what sense does one do that?

Malcolm: It sounds rather like that Zen thing where you're breaking up the Buddha to obtain an ultimate realization.

S: Yes. So the Mahayana would take the view that in the ultimate analysis samsara and nirvana are concepts, they are concepts which are to be transcended. If you are in fact to reach the very end of the path. Though of course if you dispose of the concepts of samsara and nirvana you dispose also of the concept of the path - the path as it were links samsara and nirvana. The path is the means of transition from samsara to Nirvana. So to dispose of samsara and nirvana is something that for the vast majority of people even on the spiritual path, is quite unthinkable. It's cutting the ground from under their own feet, but nonetheless Milarepa is saying that that is what one has to do. If one does not wish to regress in one's meditation that is what one has to do, and that suggests that he also has a much deeper conception of meditation. Meditation isn't just keeping the mind concentrated. He seems to use the word meditation for the whole spiritual life itself, for the whole process of raising the level of consciousness, the whole process of following the path. It's as though he's saying you won't really travel on the path, you won't really reach the end of the path until you get rid of

the concept of path altogether. So probably for the majority of people even on the spiritual path, it's quite impossible for them really to realize that the path is only a concept, that samsara and nirvana are only concepts. They can as it were imagine themselves doing that, they can have a theoretical understanding of that, but can they really dispose of samsara and nirvana, that is to say those concepts, can they really dispose of the path.

Peter Shann: Don't they just dispose of the thought that you can attain, in the sense of ...?

S: Well do they even do that? Because their experience is that they are striving, that they are making an effort, that they are experiencing, that they are attaining. Do they really, in actual [81] fact dispose of the concept of the self?

Mangala: Isn't it more of a process which happens over a period of time. You accept that they're if you like operational concepts and they're not ultimate realities in themselves, and you start on that premise, and then through your meditation, spiritual practice, you come more and more to realize in fact what you'd only realized...

S: You could even go so far as to say that the idea that such terms as samsara and nirvana are only operational concepts, that idea is itself only an operational concept. Do you see what I mean? Because it isn't real for you to begin with, the idea that they're only operational concepts. That doesn't enable you to dispose of them in Milarepa's terms, it only enables you to have a theoretical idea of the fact that concepts, that samsara and nirvana are only operational concepts.

So we shouldn't think it's all that easy. It's very easy to read the passage and to agree with it and speak in terms of samsara and nirvana are only concepts, and the path is only a concept and the self is only a concept, but you don't actually experience them as just concepts which would mean really to go beyond them, we only have a concept of their being concepts, we don't have an actual experience or realization of them being concepts and that is quite a different matter.

So Milarepa's teaching is addressed to Rechungpa but taking it more broadly it's addressed to people of a very high level of spiritual development indeed. So if you reach that point of disposing of all such concepts well you won't regress in your meditation because you've even gone beyond the idea of progress. Regression is a concept which has significance only in relation to the counter concept of progress. But if you reach the level that Milarepa is talking about there's no question of progress. Well what is progress? It's going from samsara to nirvana, so if you've disposed of the concepts of samsara and nirvana what will you go from to what? There's nothing to go from and nothing to go to. There's no path, there's no person travelling the path. So the possibility of regression, even the possibility of meditation you could say is no longer there. So he is pointing out to Rechungpa a very profound state of realization indeed. So he is as it were saying to Rechungpa well you've regressed in your meditation but it isn't enough just not to regress in the sense of just sticking at your meditation and actually making progress or experiencing yourself as making progress and believing that you're moving from a real samsara to a real nirvana, even that isn't enough you've got to transcend all these concepts altogether. Of course Rechungpa is a very long way from doing that.

So Milarepa is pointing out to him a very high level of spiritual experience indeed. One can't



even call it a level because if you say a higher level it supposes a lower level and that as it were supposes a path and that is exactly what Milarepa is denying. He denies the concept of path when he disposes of the concept of samsara and the concept of nirvana. So of course he's got no hope and no fear. He's got no hope of nirvana, no hope or fear of samsara because he's disposed of those concepts and therefore he doesn't regress. It's not that he doesn't regress in the sense that he's always making progress - he's gone beyond the concept of regression and therefore the concept of progress. In other words he's gone beyond concepts altogether. He's quite free from concepts. But that isn't easy because [82] we need what one might call a provisional framework made up of operational concepts to provide the basis of our spiritual life and we cannot take those, though those operational concepts are operational concepts, we only have a theoretical idea of the fact that they are operational concepts. We take them for real and we cannot but take them for real. We cannot but think there's a real samsara and a real nirvana and a real path and a real person who's travelling that path. We cannot but think in that way, really.

Malcolm: Do people mistake that spiritual experience for having no thought. I remember a long time ago there seemed to be a thing about having no thought. It's not that kind of thing is it.

S: Well when one says no thought what does one mean? Very often one means someone goes through the day with no directed thought, he goes through the day with woolly wandering thoughts. But you can have somebody who say is meditating and for the time beings doesn't experience discursive mental activity. He has not gone beyond concepts because when he comes out of that meditation state he starts thinking again and using concepts in the ordinary way. So there is only a temporary suspension of the use of concepts. He has not disposed of concepts. If someone did actually go through the day without thinking well he'd probably be in a sort of catatonic state and that certainly isn't a state of transcending concepts or disposing of concepts.

So one maybe should bear in mind that these lines come at the end of a section of Milarepa's song. He says 'In the beginning I met the right person, I put myself in the hands of Marpa, in the middle I practised the right teaching, meditating on the White Rock Mountain. At the end I asked for alms in the right places for alms. I begged here and there without friends or kinsmen. Since I have disposed of samsara and nirvana and have no hope nor fear in my mind, I shall ne'er regress in my meditation.' So in this section he's giving a sort of summary of his whole spiritual career: meeting his guru, his attitude to his guru, his practice of meditation, his way of life and his ultimate spiritual realization.

So what happened in the beginning? He met the right person, his guru Marpa. What attitude did he adopt towards him, he put himself in Marpa's hands. How did he practise? He spent his time meditating in Rocky Mountains. What was his way of life? He just begged from place to place for alms in the right places for alms without friends or kinsmen. What was his mental state? That of disposing of all concepts. That's a summary of his entire career, his sort of biography in a nutshell. If there was a sort of who's who at that time, if he'd been asked for an entry this maybe is what he would have written or sung. That's the summary of his career.

Vajradaka: Can we just go back to transcending samsara and nirvana. The practice of the four Sunyatas are done regularly like say the first sunyata of samsara is empty of nirvana and just turning it over in one's mind every day for a period of time, just doing that regularly maybe

for years and then a certain kind of point emerges that one actually then starts [83] turning over in one's mind the second sunyata, that nirvana is empty of samsara. Do you think that this is a useful practice to this end?

S: Oh yes because that means that one is practising vipassana in the Mahayana way because this is how insight is developed according to the classical procedure, that is to say you practise meditation, meditation in the sense of Samata, the mind is calmed down, the energies are all united and then when you are in that mentally calm state with all of your energies united you take up the consideration or reflection on, in the Hinayana context it's the impermanence, the transitoriness, the painfulness, and insubstantiality let us say, of all phenomena. From a Mahayana point of view you take up or you can take up - there are several formulations - the recollection of or contemplation of the four Sunyatas. So because one's discursive mental activity has been brought under control and you're reflecting in a directed, purposeful sort of way you develop a sort of understanding of those teachings and they serve as a sort of bridge or springboard if you like for the actual experience of insight. They are sort of conceptual symbols, they are means of transition from an intellectual understanding to an intuitive understanding, because the Buddha originally had a certain spiritual experience, a certain transcendental experience, and wanted to communicate that or to communicate the means of realizing that, give some idea about that. So he spoke in terms of impermanence and painfulness and so on, spoke in terms of the four Sunyatas. So those particular concepts can be used as keys to unlock so to speak the experience that the Buddha had, that they symbolize, provided of course that, they are reflected on or contemplated on by a mind which has previously been suffused by the experience of meditation in the sense of Samata. This is the classical procedure. If you think about them with your usual ordinary and wandering mind you won't penetrate very deeply into them. Because usually your mind is disturbed, your energies are scattered, your energies are divided, so you need the preliminary practice of Samata to make your mind really one pointed, so that with that one pointed mind you can take up any aspect of the Buddha's teaching, but especially these particular formulations which give some clue to the nature of the transcendental, and contemplate on them in such a way as to develop real insight, and that insight as it is deepened will have a transforming effect on the whole personality, the whole being.

So that is the classical procedure for meditation, that is to say essentially for the development of insight based upon the experience of calm. So in as much as one could say, the Mahayana goes deeper into the nature of reality, into the nature of the Buddha's experience, than does the Hinayana. Instead of the three characteristics of conditioned existence to contemplate on you have the four Sunyatas, or even the eighteen Sunyatas or the thirty two Sunyatas. The four really summarize all the others, and as I said that is the classic procedure. I was going to say before you spoke or as you spoke, that probably when you're in the States, when you meet people who are a little familiar with Buddhist literature, and maybe lamas and Zen masters, you may well hear quite a bit about going beyond samsara and nirvana. I think you'll probably hear quite a lot of talk about samsara and nirvana are only concepts etc., etc., and one mustn't be attached to them, by [84] people who have not really started on the spiritual path at all, and one needs then to make it really clear to them, bluntly if necessary, that it is not that they have transcended the concepts of samsara and nirvana at all. They've only got a theoretical idea of transcending which is quite another matter. Actually for them the samsara is real. They are immersed in it, they are not free from it, and for them therefore nirvana is real and they've got to start trying to move towards it - In other words they've got to be made to appreciate where they really are at. Otherwise I gather from various indications that there are lots of people in

the States connected with Buddhist groups and Buddhist movements who are entirely in their heads, and who've got a most conceited idea about themselves and their own spiritual understanding and spiritual attainments and who have to be brought right down to earth and their involvement with Zen and Tibetan Buddhism has not helped them in the least. It's only inflated them, and I suspect that you may have, if you come into contact with these people at all or they come into contact with you and I'm sure there are a lot of them around, you'll have quite a hard job bringing them down to earth and making them realize where they really are at, and getting them started on real spiritual practice. Because they're so much in their heads and their intellects are so alienated from the rest of their being, that they can read something like this and say, oh yes one has to dispose of samsara and nirvana well of course all these dualistic concepts have only got a relative validity and of course we've seen through all that so there's no question of our giving up the samsara and realizing the nirvana, it's all one, it's all the same. My ordinary daily life, it's the life of the Bodhisattva, the life of the Buddha, I don't have to give up anything. They're just living and experiencing and suffering just like any other good American, with the delusion that they are Buddhists and they've gone beyond all concepts and that they're just like Milarepa himself, not to speak of Rechungpa.

I suspect that if such people don't shy away from you completely you may have to deal with quite a bit of this sort of thing.

Adrian: You have to formulate a right sort of concept to be able to start growing in the first place. You have to actually sort of formulate the concept of samsara and nirvana and then sort of eventually transcend that.

S: But you don't even formulate the concept in the way of as it were deliberately formulating a concept - you start off with your own experience, that you've a sort of painful experience, an unsatisfactory experience - you just want to move away from that.

Malcolm: That, what you mentioned in America doesn't just apply to America. In my experience it's in parts of England. To study the people that are actually like that, think like that, their lives are a joke. You look at their lives it's silly.

S: But they don't realize that do they, they don't know where they're at. They even gather people around them, even set themselves up as mini gurus and all the rest of it.

All right let's go on.

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S: Just read the rest of those verses.

Malcolm:

'When with my Guru Marpa on that steep hill  
He once said to me:

'The King of the Mighty wheel holds (it as) the Jewel,  
And the Bird with Five Families  
Flies in (it's) expanse of Dharma-Essence.  
Five special teachings in India still survive:

First, the Lamp of Illuminating Wisdom,  
Second, the Wheel Net of Nadi and Prana,  
Third, the Great Bliss of Precious Words,  
Fourth, the Universal Mirror of Equality,  
And Fifth the Self-Liberation Mahamudra.  
These five teachings are still taught in India.

I am too old now to go,  
But you, child of Marpa's Lineage,  
Should go to India to learn them!

S: There's a note here after the third line.

'The meaning of these two statements is very enigmatic. The translator presumes that the first statement, the King of the Mighty Wheel, Cakravati, holds it as the Jewel, is an expression of praise for the teaching of the Dakini. It in the brackets in both the first and second statements implies the total teaching of the Dakinis.' Because you remember Rechungpa's going in search of or going to obtain the formless Dakini Dharmas. Anyway we'll come to that in a minute. There's another point to attend to first.

'When with my Guru Marpa on that steep hill he once said to me:' Do you notice anything special about these two lines? Anything deserving of comment.

Malcolm: That steep hill.

S: Yes, what about it?

Malcolm: Does it refer to the White Rock Mountain?

S: No, because the White Rock Mountain is where he meditated.

: The difficulty of the path?

S: One could look at it like that but I don't think it's even that. Why should he mention that? Why should he not just say well my Guru Marpa said to me. Why did he say, when with my Guru Marpa on that steep hill...'

Atula: ... (unclear)

S: No.

Suvajra: They're both on it together.

S: Yes, but why specify. Obviously if Marpa says something to Milarepa they're together but why specify, on that steep hill?

Malcolm: It's poetical.

S: Yes.

Asvajit: It requires effort.

S: No. It requires effort of course but what does it suggest? Doesn't it suggest that he's got a picture of the whole scene, but why should he have a picture, why should he retain a picture?

Vajradaka: Because it was very vivid.

S: Because it was very vivid.

Haven't you ever noticed that when something happens to you or when someone says something to you or you have an experience or you read a book which makes a tremendous impression on you, you remember the whole of the surrounding scene. Haven't you ever noticed that? For instance maybe you read a particular Buddhist text and you come across it for the first time and it makes a tremendous impression and you remember exactly where you were sitting, you were sitting under a tree and there was a sparrow on that particular branch. The whole picture is very very vivid in your mind because the experience was so intense that retain an image of the whole scene. So it seems rather like that. When with my Guru Marpa on that steep hill - the whole episode is vividly present in his mind. He remembers the time and he remembers the place and the scene when Marpa spoke to him in that particular way so it suggests that Marpa's words made a tremendous impression on him, so tremendous that he got a vivid picture of the circumstances under which Marpa spoke those words.

So when with my Guru Marpa on that steep hill, he once said to me - this is what he said, it's very ambiguous as the translator remarks. He presumably is referring to these five Dakini Dharmas that Milarepa did not in fact obtain and which he hopes Rechungpa will now be able to obtain, that is to say Highly esoteric Vajrayana teachings according to tradition, the product of the forces of inspiration, transcendental forces of inspiration, represented by those Dakini figures. We've just got the names or titles of them and obviously that doesn't tell us very much. Perhaps we could just consider the first three lines - 'The King of the Mighty Wheel holds it as the Jewel and the Bird with Five Families flies in Its expanse of Dharma-Essence.' That's sufficiently cryptic. As the translator says the first statement is an expression of praise to the teachings of the Dakini. It in the brackets in both the first and second statement' implies the total teaching of the Dakini. So the King of the Mighty Wheel holds it, the whole body of those Dakini teachings, as the Jewel, and the bird with Five Families flies in its, that is to say the whole body of that particular teachings, expanse of Dharma-Essence. This is very poetic but it's quite obscure isn't it?

Who is this King of the Mighty Wheel? Who is the Cakravatiraja who holds these teachings as a Jewel?

Atula: Would it be Vairocana?

S: It could be, it could be a guru figure, it could refer to some particular teacher who has these teachings. He is like a king with the wish granting jewel in his hand. It probably refers to the teacher or the master, the Tantric guru, whoever he may be, who has these teachings in his hands, but what about 'And the Bird with Five Families flies in its expanse of Dharma-Essence.'?

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... It could refer to the five Buddha families, the five Buddha families fly or unfold or that is to say all the many sided spiritual realizations represented by the five Buddha families unfold within the expanse of the dharma essence of those teachings. In other words by following or practising those formless dakini dharmas all the Buddha bodies as unfolded in all five Buddha families are attained. It probably means something like that or at least that is one of the meanings.

Anyway Milarepa is just indicating to Rechungpa it would seem the sort of teachings that he hopes he will be able to bring from India, these formless dakini dharmas.

: It's very evocative isn't it.

S: It is, yes it's evocative but at the same time mysterious. We don't really know what Milarepa is talking about because the titles of these teachings are just like labels. They don't give us really any clue. Whether the tradition of them does continue in Tibet I don't know. There are of course Mahamudra traditions which have been handed down. That is certain especially with the Kagyupa school itself. Whether the other teachings and traditions were handed down I can't be sure.

Anyway Milarepa concludes by saying, 'I am now too old to go but you child of Marpa's lineage, should go to India to learn them.' There's just one more point that perhaps requires comment. That is to say the very last line of what Marpa says: 'These five teachings are still taught in India.' Have you any idea what period of history.

: Tenth Century wasn't it?

S: The Eleventh Century actually. You can remember it easily. If you want to remember when Milarepa lived it was around the time of the Norman conquest - 1066 and all that. So it's quite easy to remember when Milarepa lived. But what was happening in India at that time? In England there was the Norman conquest so what sort of conquest had begun in India? - the Muslim conquest. So what sort of effect was that having on Buddhism - a very destructive effect, monasteries were being destroyed, monks were being killed, gurus were being scattered, teachings were being lost, because the people who knew those teachings were not surviving. That is a disadvantage of an oral tradition. If the holder of that oral tradition dies or is killed the tradition itself is lost.

So this is why I think Marpa is saying these five teachings are still taught in India. That is to say these lines of gurus and disciples are still present. They haven't been cut off yet by the invaders. We do know a lot of teachings were lost at about that time. A lot of books were burned and a lot of oral teachings were lost because the transmitters of those teachings were killed or perhaps they died before, owing to the unsettled conditions of the times, they were able to pass on those teachings to pupils. So perhaps Milarepa had all that in mind. He wanted Rechungpa to obtain these teachings from India before they died out altogether because after a hundred or two hundred years Buddhism did virtually disappear from India as a result of the Muslim invasion and conquest. Persecution of Buddhism, destruction of Buddhism.

: Was it a very concentrated conscious destruction?

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S: It would seem so. For instance Nalanda was destroyed. The Library of Nalanda was destroyed. Some monks of course sought refuge in Tibet just as in more recent times Tibetan monks after the Chinese invasion sought refuge in India.

I've heard it said that one of the reasons it was so easy for the conquest was because most of the teachings were all centred around large monastic areas.

S: This is true. I've mentioned this in one of the lectures I think. Yes this is true. There's over centralization you could say.

All right let's go on. The two prose lines and then Rechungpa's song.

Adrian Macro: "Rechungpa was delighted. He picked up the best piece of gold, tossed it to the Jetsun as his farewell offering and sang:

Bless me my teacher, lest me risk my life to fulfil the guru's will.

Pray help me get the Dakini's teachings as prophesied.

With your great wisdom and compassion pray e'er protect and ne'er part from me.

Pray at all times look after this your son, who has no kinsman and no friend.

Pray conquer all his hindrances and save him from going astray.

Pray safeguard him where're he goes in India, a land of danger and full of bandits.

Pray lead him to the right teacher as he wanders on alone in that foreign land."

S: So Rechungpa was delighted, and of course - he was having his own way. He was going off to India and he was going to study science and logic. Of course by the way he's also pick up these formless dakini dharmas as directed by Milarepa - he was having to do that - but basically he was getting his own way and doing what he wanted. He was doing his own thing. So he was delighted. So here he is at the feast. Milarepa's sung his song. So what happens. He picked up the best piece of gold, tossed it to the Jetsun as his farewell offering and sang. What do you notice about that?

: It's rather casual!

S: It's rather casual , yes.

Sudhana: It's a bit Don Giovanni like.

S: He's a bit carried away, he's a bit exuberant. Maybe he's had a bit of chang, who knows. It's a Tibetan farewell feast. So he does offer the best piece of gold to Milarepa as his farewell offering but he doesn't seem to do it in a very respectful way. He just sort of tosses it to him. He's getting a bit carried away.

And then he sings his song. He says, Bless me my teacher. Let me risk my life to fulfil the guru's will. (laughter) Well he's been almost the classic example of disobedience so far. He doesn't want to do what Milarepa wanted. I'm just trying to sort out what happened in this chapter from what happens in the other.

Yes in spite of his guru's advice Rechungpa pressed the [89] Jetsun to grant him permission

to go to India. So that doesn't suggest any great willingness to fulfil the guru's will but nonetheless he says, bless me my teacher. Let me risk my life to fulfil the guru's will. Some people can genuinely believe that sort of thing. They can sort of really go against what somebody says but at the same time they can genuinely consider themselves as the most loyal and faithful of disciples. That is not impossible for any means. So pray help me get the Dakini's teachings as prophesied. With your great wisdom and compassion pray e'er protect and ne'er part from me. Pray at all times look after this, your son, who has no kinsmen and no friend. Well Rechungpa seems very keen on being looked after and protected.

Maybe this is in keeping with his attitude of having his own way all the time and Milarepa having to go along with him rather than him go along with Milarepa.

And then he says, which is rather ironical, Pray conquer all his hindrances and save him from going astray. Milarepa has said in an earlier song, this uninformed son of mine, the loser of debate and full of doubts, has stopped his meditation and is about to wander far away to study. This is the very thing that a yogi should avoid. But then Rechungpa having got his own way sings very piously, please save me from going astray. Again you get what I talked about - I think it was in this group about someone wanting to do what he wanted to do but at the same time wanting to obtain the approval of the appropriate authority. Really you are going against that authority but you want to keep up the pretence almost that you're not going against it. Maybe you don't dare to go against it. At the same time you do want to have your own way. So you try by hook or by crook to get the approval, the blessing, of the appropriate authority on what you are doing even though it even goes against what that authority is telling you. This seems to be Rechungpa's position.

Pray safeguard him where're he goes in India, a land of danger and full of bandits. Pray lead him to the right teacher. Well you could say the right teacher in India, or the right teacher who will impart to him the formless dakini dharmas, but he doesn't say that. It's almost as though well he doesn't realize that Milarepa is the right teacher and that he ought to be following Milarepa's advice. It seems he doesn't realize that or he doesn't realize that he's actually met the right teacher already which seems really very strange. It's a bit like what I was saying yesterday. Again I'm not sure whether it was in this group or the other, when people go from one meditation method to another. Was it in this group? Yes I think it was. They say practise a particular kind of meditation whether the metta bhavana or mindfulness of breathing or whatever for a short while and they don't seem to be getting the result that they expected so they think oh well maybe this meditation doesn't suit me, so they try another one and they don't get on very well with that so after a few days they want to change to yet another method of meditation. So it's almost the same one might say with teachers or gurus. Rechungpa doesn't seem in a sense to have great faith in Milarepa. he certainly doesn't follow his advice implicitly. So it's as though often you find this situation where people aren't very happy with a particular teacher or a particular guru. They say well he doesn't suit me or he doesn't understand me. What they really mean is he's not allowing me to do the things I want to do. He's not just giving his blessing on me to do whatever I want to do. That's the sort of guru that they're really looking for. So maybe Rechungpa when he says pray lead him, that is to say Rechungpa himself to the right teacher, maybe he's still got [90] the idea at the back of his mind that Milarepa's not quite the right teacher for him, Milarepa doesn't understand him. Milarepa doesn't appreciate his needs and he's not really willing to let him do the things that he wants to do. So he says pray help him to find the right teacher. In other words he doesn't understand what the right teacher really means. Undoubtedly Milarepa is the right teacher for



him.

In the west of course it's very difficult when this sort of situation arises because there's nothing really to keep the disciple with the right teacher. In the East at least you've got the force of tradition or maybe your parents handed you over to that particular teacher. You don't dare to go against your parents so you stay with that particular teacher. But in the West you're free to change, you're free to go from one to another. If one teacher gives you advice that you don't like you're free to say well he doesn't understand me, he doesn't understand my needs and go off and join somebody else. There's nothing to hold you to the right teacher. So one is in a much more dangerous and vulnerable position. If you for instance were to speak to some of those Americans of the sort that I've mentioned who might come to you in the way that I've suggested what might they say if you didn't do it quite skilfully? "Vajradaka doesn't understand anything, Vajradaka's a very elementary sort of Buddhist. He doesn't even understand things like transcending Samsara and Nirvana and he doesn't appreciate us, he doesn't realize how far we've gone. He doesn't appreciate the way that we are living in the world but we are not of it. He's got this very sort of elementary Hinayana type attitude. You actually have to practise the Dharma and give up things. We've gone beyond all that. Vajradaka doesn't understand us." That could well be their sort of attitude. But no doubt you'll have to devise means of dealing even with that and not letting them get away with it.

But it would be very difficult perhaps to stop people not coming to the centre any more for those sort of reasons. They might sort of turn up and you might not even have a chance to speak to them personally. They might hear you saying something of that sort and say "oh well Vajradaka's not the man for us. He doesn't know anything about Buddhism. He's still taking Samsara and Nirvana quite seriously. He even thinks you have to meditate every day on this dull discipline! We've gone beyond that long ago. We've had all these wonderful advanced esoteric initiations from all sorts of lamas."

Sudhana: Perhaps a bit of blasphemy would bring out their true colours.

S: Yes.

Sudhana: It very often goes that it's all very Christian. I know one (Dharma) successor in this country who goes to one of the Abbeys for his retreats!

S: So what sort of impression does one get of Rechungpa overall just from this particular song?

: Very naive.

S: Very naive. Yes. He also likes having his own way doesn't he. He's very pleased when he gets his own way. He's a bit blind also.

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Vajradaka: Pretty stubborn.

S: And pretty stubborn yes. Even quite childish as we mentioned I think yesterday.

Sudhana: It sounds like he's just saying this to please his teacher. He sounds like a young



it's not difficult to string them together in lines with a definite rhythm and beat and then you've got a simple tune which you pick out on the one string of a simple musical instrument and there you are. You've got your song. It's more like a sort of chant with a bit of (guitar) accompaniment. If someone can play the guitar in a simple sort of way. They can go plonk plonk plonk, plonk plonk plonk, plonk plonk plonk. One is sort of chanting in this sort of way. So I think the Tibetans could do this almost spontaneously. Partly because of the structure of their language and the simplicity of that sort of musical accompaniment. We mustn't imagine very elaborate Schubert-like songs. It's much more simple and primitive than that. Not even Beatles-like songs. They're pretty sophisticated and elaborate aren't they?

But you get the sort of idea.

Mangala: You hear of like Walt Whitman's songs and stuff like that.

S: It's different from those because that is free verse. This is very regular, in the sense that the lines have a fixed number of syllables and beats.

Mangala: Like the word song doesn't necessarily mean with a musical accompaniment as it were. Musical accompaniment.

S: Yes. I think as you as you get in India when there is a sort of fixed melody with which to sing each line or pair of lines or each four lines. Just as say with hymns you've got a simple melody and you sing each verse to the same melody. In the same way in a more simple way you've got just a very simple - not even a melody, a very simple succession of notes to which you sing each line or each two lines or each four lines do you see what I mean? - over and over again, and since it's very easy just to speak in units of four lines or units of say eight syllables or units twelve syllables, and to chant those lines to that sort of accompaniment, you get a simple song which you can just extemporise.

Is that clear? I haven't expressed it perhaps in very technical terms but you get the idea?

Mangala: Presumably that wouldn't apply to say Walt Whitman. He refers to them as songs.

S: Oh no. That's just a poetic expression for verses - poems. He didn't sing them anyway, not as far as I know.

Vajrananda: Do the Tibetans still sing these songs?

S: I believe they do yes. Chanting is very popular and very widespread among the Tibetans. I've know Tibetan beggars, whether lay beggars or monk beggars coming to the door in [93] Kalimpong and chanting verses of blessing on the house where they were begging and it's very melodious. They have a definite quite attractive tune and they chant stanzas in this sort of way accompanying themselves on a little drum at the same time. So this sort of thing is or was quite widespread in Tibet.

And of course the chanting by the monks in monasteries in connection with the puja is of this same simple kind with musical accompaniment.

Sudhana: It sounds quite attractive.

S: And it's very vigorous.

Well we've come to the end of that song. Perhaps we'd better have our coffee and then spend all the time after the coffee break on the rest of the chapter.

S: All right let's go on to Milarepa's song. Read the whole song and then we'll go through it verse by verse. There are quite a few important points here.

Kevala: "My son Rechungpa on your way to India remember these seven trinities of counsel:

The skilful path of Tantra, the guru's pith instruction and one's own judgement are three important things for your remembrance.

Respect and serve the learned, have faith in your guru, be determined and persevering. These are the three things you should remember.

Rightly to direct the lifestream (prana), to enter the dharma essence and to master all the teachings are three techniques you should remember.

The views of the Bliss Void, of the myriad forms of reasoning and following the scriptures, are three essentials you should remember.

A partner qualified in mudra, experience of the Bliss therein and the elephantine work, these are three delights you should remember.

To instruct an idler brings misfortune, to speak of one's experience leads to loss, in towns to wander damages one's yoga. These are three dangers to remember.

To join the assembly of the brethren, to attend the meeting of dakinis and be present at the secret feasts, these are the three occasions not to miss.

Think of the meaning of this song and put them into practice."

S: So Jetsun Milarepa says or sings 'My son Rechungpa on your way to India remember these seven trinities of counsel.' These seven trinities or groups of three of a counsel or advice.

So the skilful path of Tantra, the guru's pith instruction and one's own judgement are three important things for your remembrance. The Tantra is sometimes called upayamarga which is not just skilful path but skilful means path. So why do you think it is called upayamarga? The path of skilful means?

Asvajit: It suggests something creative.

S: Yes.

: Action.

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S: Action yes.

Kevala: The right action for the right circumstance.

S: The right action for the right circumstances yes. In other words the path of the Tantra, the Vajrayana, is not concerned with philosophy or theory at all you could say. Strictly speaking there's no Tantric philosophy, there's no Tantric theory. There is a Hinayana philosophy which you'll find in the Sarvastivadin school and the Sautrantika school. There is a Mahayana philosophy which you find in the Madhyamika school and the Yogachara school but there is no corresponding Vajrayana philosophy. The Vajrayana is entirely concerned with practice, entirely concerned with experience. It presupposes or if you like it takes over the philosophy of the Mahayana which is the philosophy of the Madhyamika plus the Yogachara school. But there is no distinctive Vajrayana philosophy. The Vajrayana as it were takes Buddhist philosophy, takes Mahayana philosophy for granted and proceeds to practise on that basis but the Vajrayana itself consists simply of skilful means. That is particular methods suited to particular circumstances of particular individuals. This is in a way the fundamental characteristic of the Vajrayana.

So therefore Milarepa speaks of the skilful path, the upayamarga, or the Tantra. So the Tantra or the Vajrayana gives one ones, in this particular context, that is of the Kagyupa school, gives ones broad spiritual context. This is the path that one is following, the path of the Vajrayana. So this is an important thing, that Rechungpa should remember. That he's on the Vajrayana path, that he is concerned with the actual practice, the actual realization of the truths of Buddhism.

And then, the Guru's pith instruction. The Vajrayana path, yes, is a path of skilful means. there are certain broad practices laid down, certain kinds of meditation and so on, but even that is not enough. That in a way is still too broad, still too general. So you need the guru's pith instruction.

So what does that pith instruction mean? I think we touched upon this yesterday.

: A precept.

S: A precept you could say in the sense of an upadesa. The guru knows Buddhism, yes, the Guru knows the Vajrayana. Not that he has just a theoretical, just an academic knowledge of it - he has some personal experience of it. He really knows what he is talking about with regard to the dharma. At the same time he knows the disciple. So he makes the connection between what that dharma says, what Buddhism says and the needs of the disciple. He brings the dharma into relation with the needs of the disciple and he does that with or by means of the pith instructions. They are called instructions for obvious reasons. Pith instructions because they give the essence of the matter, the essence of the dharma as it relates to the actual situation in which the disciple finds himself. It's very easy to lay down general principles but in the pith instructions the guru takes those general principles and applies them to exactly where the disciple is at at this particular moment. So this is why the guru is so necessary.

There is a reference in Hinduism to the Bhagavad Gita in a way which throws some light on this. I'll just see if I can remember it properly. It's said that the Vedas are the cow, the Bhagavad Gita which gives the essence of the Vedas is the milk [95] of the cow and Sri Krsna who is the teacher of the Bhagavad Gita is the man who is drawing the milk from the

cow for the benefit of the consumer. So that illustrates the same sort of thing. You could say that the Buddhist scriptures are the cow, the cow gives milk but the person who draws that milk from the cow and sort of gives it to the disciple when he needs it, that is the guru.

: It's a good analogy.

S: Oh no I think I've missed out a stage. Yes. Let me go into a bit more deeply. The cow represents the Vedas, the milk is the Upanishads which are the essence of the Vedas but then having drawn the milk the man who milks the cow churns butter from the milk, that butter is the Bhagavad Gita. So in the same way you could say that the cow is Buddhism, the milk is the Vajrayana, the butter is the pith instruction. That gives you a fuller picture.

: You could say that some people need cheese, some people need butter, some people need yoghurt.

S: Well some people need butter with salt and others butter without salt.

And one's own judgement. This is quite important. You need these three things. That is as it were the general teaching of Buddhism - in this case the general teaching of the Vajrayana and then there is the guru's pith instruction which is that general teaching as applied by the guru to your specific need. But then there's your own judgement. That is to say you need to exercise your own judgement at least in the actual carrying out of the pith instruction. It's not a question of blindly following it but of using your own judgement too.

So you have to take into account, one, the general Buddhist tradition, what Buddhism says; what the guru says, applying that tradition to your specific needs and your own intelligence, your own understanding, your own judgement. These three things are to be taken into consideration. As if to say well what Buddhism says, what the guru says and what you say. When these three things are in agreement then you can really go forward with confidence.

So therefore Milarepa says to Rechungpa, these are three important things for your remembrance. That is to say for you to remember. Remember the general Buddhist, in this case Vajrayana, teachings. Remember the way in which the guru has applied these in the form of pith instruction, to your particular needs. The songs themselves to Rechungpa are pith instructions. And remember also to use your own judgement, which doesn't mean just doing your own thing, doing what you want to do and doing things in your own way but no, genuinely and responsibly using your own judgement and your understanding of Buddhism and your implementation of the guru's instructions, his pith instructions.

All right then Milarepa says or sings, 'Respect and serve the learned. Have faith in your guru. Be determined and persevering. These are three things that you should remember.' What does Milarepa mean by the learned? Who are the learned in this context. Learned in what?

Sudhana: The truth.

S: Perhaps that's a bit too broad.

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Dharmavira: The learned in the dakini dharmas.

S: But learned. What does the word learned usually mean?

Kevala: It usually means intellectual attainments.

S: Yes it usually means intellectual attainment or intellectual understanding and that is not depreciated in Buddhism. The pundit, the learned man, is not underestimated but a clear distinction is made between a learned man with whom you may study Buddhist texts, and understand then quite well up to a point, and a guru who is able to illumine the real meaning of those texts. So respect and serve the learned by all means. Milarepa is saying nothing against that but he's only suggesting that that is not enough. So respect, revere, honour the learned, and serve the learned. That's an interesting thing. Why this distinction. Why also serve the learned. How do you serve the learned.

: By listening to them.

S: No. I don't think that is actually what is meant.

Kevala: Support them while they study.

S: Support them yes, but even more specifically than that.

: Listen to them.

S: No. More general than that. This goes back to the Indian tradition that when you study with someone you should not only learn from him but attend upon him. This is very strong in Buddhism too. Your relation to your teacher even the teacher with whom you merely study the scriptures in a more or less intellectual way, not to speak of spiritual teachers. It's not actually limited so to speak to the hours of learning. It's not that you go along to him, listen respectfully and have your class and go away. You also serve him and that usually means you live with him, you go and fetch water for him, you wash his clothes. You bring his food. Being a pupil even in a purely as we would say academic sort of sense involves this for Indian tradition. Hindu tradition and Buddhist tradition. you see what I mean? So it's as though one needs to establish a rapport with the teacher, with the learned teacher, not to speak of the guru. But even with the learned teacher, by serving him in this sort of practical way as well as actually receiving instruction from him and respecting him.

Vajrananda: Is it a sort of practical expression of your receptivity?

S: Yes it's a practical expression of your receptivity or your gratitude and so on. So this is considered very important by all the Indian spiritual traditions. That you not only respect the teacher but you serve the teacher. You do little things for the teacher. This is considered very important. It is an expression of your receptivity, your willingness to learn, your gratitude for what you've been taught and so on. The idea of just going along to a lesson and when you've received your lesson you say good-bye to the guru for the day or the teacher for the [97] day. This would be considered very inadequate, even very disrespectful according to the orthodox Indian tradition.

Asvajit?: I think it's also to some extent in the Greek and Renaissance tradition isn't it Bhante, that an apprentice or...

S: Yes. You do get it more on the level of apprenticeship but I think not so much on the University level let us say, not even in the Middle Ages probably.

Vajrananda: Perhaps there's a lot of alienation there from the actual emotions.

S: Also of course another point is that professors started teaching huge gatherings of some hundreds of students, whereas in the old days certainly in India it was just three or four or five. It was like a spiritual family. Again it's not just even the guru, it's even teaching things like phonetics or music or mathematics. The basis is the same, that you stay with the teacher, you live with the teacher, he teaches you regularly and you do things for him. You look after the cooking and cleaning and so on. You serve the teacher as well as actually studying with him. But when the teacher has got hundreds of students and he's spending just an hour with four or five dozen of them and another hour with another four or five dozen some other time in the day, then that whole arrangement breaks down and the teacher lives at home with his wife...

end of Side One

Side Two

... are you referring to?

Sudhana: Well in the Tibetan tradition.

S: Well yes among the Nyingmapas you do find and some of my own teachers in Kalimpong were married but I must say that I observed that it was a hindrance to them being married because sometimes the wife resented the husband spending so much time with his disciples and she'd be more concerned with the offerings that they made than with anything else. So when you also have a family to support all those sort of considerations come in which aren't always very fortunate from the Dharma point of view.

Sudhana: Why should they get married if they're skilful?

S: Well I remember something that my friend Mr Chen used to say. He used to say all these incarnate lamas - he was especially speaking about the Nyingmapas, they are so corrupt, so degenerate nowadays. He said the way they practise the sexual Tantra has completely corrupted. What do you think they do? They even practise these things with their own wives! (Laughter) Of course accordingly if one takes at least one Tantric tradition literally there are certain practices that one should enter into with sixteen year old girls especially selected for the purpose. But according to Mr Chen this all degenerated and instead of just for that occasion and that particular purpose deliberately selecting the right sort of girl - a sixteen year old girl with all the necessary attributes - you just got married and you sort of did all those things with your wife. In other words you'd confused a particular practice, admittedly with a sexual element with just being married. Do you see what I mean? And that seems to be what at least in some cases has happened.

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: There's so much room for rationalization there!



S: Indeed. There's almost infinite room for rationalization.

Sudhana: One young man I knew who went over there and got married. He said oh it's so the children can be in a fortunate position to study the dharma. And it's the last thing the children are interested in.

S: Anyway that is a rather unfortunate development perhaps. We just note that it constitutes a dreadful warning and move on. I hope Vajradaka's not coming back from America surrounded by a retinue of eight dakinis... If they're real dakinis I've no objection but... (Laughter) Anyway enough said.

So respect and serve the learned. So even more than the learned, have faith in your guru. This doesn't really require much in the way of comment. We've already discussed what Milarepa says about his putting himself in the hands of Marpa. The two things are very similar. Your putting yourself in the hands so to speak of the guru is an act of faith. If you don't put yourself in the hands of the guru well clearly you've no faith. You could say that putting yourself in the hands of the guru is the volitional side of what you do, having faith is the emotional side. So obviously the two are closely connected. So having faith in the guru is not just believing in the guru in the sense of believing certain things about the guru. A lot of people nowadays who take up with oriental gurus tend to think that faith in the guru means believing all sorts of wild and fantastic things about the guru, and they may be not actually practising any spiritual teaching or tradition at all. They just believe lots of inflated things about the guru. That he can read all their thoughts and that he is an incarnation of god or he's enlightened. They believe that having faith in the guru means believing all sorts of things of that sort about the guru. But that is belief, not to say blind belief, that is not faith. Faith is the sort of emotional attitude with which or as the result of which you actually put yourself in the hands of the guru which is quite a different thing.

It's when you reach the end of your own resources. You don't know what to do, you don't know which way to turn and unreservedly you - one can only say put yourself in the hands of the guru and you say you tell me, you decide - whatever it is I'll do it. Not that you want the guru to tell you what to do with regard to something about which you ought to be able to make your own mind but you have genuinely reached the end of your tether. You don't really know what to do. You don't know which direction to turn. So having done all that you could, being unable to do any more you then just put the matter to the guru and ask him what he thinks you should do.

So that is the sort of attitude that accompanies faith, that is faith. So this is what is meant. Not just believing all sorts of extraordinary and improbable things about the guru. Some people think that they show their faith in the guru by making all sorts of exaggerated statements about him. Well that is just no so.

Vajradaka: There seems to be a ( ) of interpretations of faith. On one side of the line you've actually got an emotional response to the guru as feeling that there is... that guru actually has a higher experience and will see things in a more real way, truly real way, than you and that, even though it's [99] very unformed in you and you might be very confused but there is a kind of empathy, and then on the other side of the line you've got the feeling of perhaps weakness in contrast to something very strong and a sort of subservient feeling. So it is a kind of a faith in a way. You feel that this person is stronger than you. You can interpret that in lots of ways

as realized whatever it is - God - and because in a sense they're both emotional it's quite difficult sometimes to actually explain to people.

S: Yes right. Well I think one can explain, one can make the matter clear, by speaking in terms of the distinction between the power mode and the love mode, provided you clarify what you mean by love of course and what you mean by power. But from the Buddhist point of view at least the guru operates on the love mode and not on the power mode. He's not someone who is more powerful than you or who is trying to control you. He's not a group leader, he's not a boss, he's not an authority figure, he's not a father figure but something quite different from all those things.

So respect and serve the learned, Have faith in your Guru, Be determined and persevering. These are three things you should remember. Determined and persevering. What do you think is the point of distinction between these two things. To be determined and to be persevering.

Asvajit: One is as it were the active mode, the other is the passive.

S: I wouldn't say that.

Vajradaka: One is more like your mental appreciation, the other is your actual (action). Affiliating your action with that.

S: Determination is really making up your mind. You decide definitely this is what I'm going to do. That's being determined. But persevering is just sticking to that indefinitely or until your end is attained. So be determined, make up your mind, come to a definite decision and then stick to that and just carry on. Be determined and persevering. It's a bit like the Buddha's Upamadenasampadetha - with mindfulness strive! The mindfulness includes mindfulness of purpose, what it is that you are really about, and the striving of course suggests the persistence in that. So to be determined and persevering is really very important because people very often just don't make up their minds definitely one way or the other. If you're not determined there can be no question of perseverance.

Kevala: I'm just thinking doing this with the long term goal is one thing but you need to do it ( little ) all the time.

S: Oh yes because even a very long chain is made up of lots of little links. Little drops of water, little grains of sand and all that. You know that little verse? It's a famous little verse from a famous hymn - Little drops of water, little grains of sand, make the mighty ocean and the pleasant land. There's a verse in the Dhammapada like that. Just as by the constant falling of drops of water so, little by little a man fills himself with good. Or in the Scottish idiom - many a mickle makes a muckle! (Laughter) So be determined and persevering. Very often you are [100] not determined and not persevering because you think little things don't matter. You think oh well just miss the meditation just for today, what does it matter. It doesn't make any difference, after all in the course of the next ten or fifteen years I'll be doing thousands of hours of meditation. What does missing it just once for one hour really matter.

I'll say no more. You seem to have got the point.

So respect and serve the learned. Have faith in your guru. Be determined and persevering.

These are the three things you should remember.

Rightly to direct the Life-stream (Prana), to enter the Dharma Essence and to master all the teachings, are three techniques you should remember. So rightly to direct the Life-Stream, which the translator says means the Prana. Well in Vajrayanic, in Tantric terms, rightly to direct the life Stream, the Prana, the energy, is to direct it into the median nerve. That is so to speak a way of saying that the energies of the being should be totally unified. The unification of energy. This is a supremely important point. It's this that the Vajrayana deals with quite a lot. It isn't really in a sense anything very esoteric, it's quite plain and practical and down to earth. All one's energies, of the conscious mind, the unconscious mind, intellectual, volitional, emotional - all these must be unified.

Sudhana: Practising the precepts. Could you look at it like that? Like not misusing energy, not obstructing energy.

S: Yes one could look at it in those terms certainly.

So rightly to direct the Life Stream. It's not just a question of directing it but rightly directing it. Unifying the Life stream by directing it towards the ideal one could say. In every person both in the physical body and in the mind there's a tremendous amount of energy locked up that either just isn't used or is blocked or is short circuiting or is trickling or leaking away. So the Vajrayana even more than the Mahayana and the Hinayana stresses the unification of all this energy. It won't allow so to speak any energy to be left outside. It doesn't allow you to say oh that energy doesn't matter or that energy is too gross or that energy is too refined. No you need them all. They've all got to be unified. So what does that mean in practical terms and how does one do that? That's another quite big question.

But nonetheless the principle is clear. That the whole life stream, all the energies are to be rightly directed, are to be unified. I said something about this under the heading of horizontal and vertical integration haven't I in the lecture on what meditation really is. One could say if one wanted to be a little bit ironical that before there can be any talk of rightly directing or unifying the energies well one's got to have energy, one's got to experience one's energies and for many people that is the first task. To realize that they have energies, to get in contact with them. Only then can there be any question of them unifying those energies and rightly directing them.

One does feel as one encounters various people even in the context of the Friends that the energy level is very low.

Mangala: Sometimes I think that actually maybe our movement in a sense almost needs to go back a stage and I think that maybe the majority of people just start off sort of meditating and pujas and it's almost like too sort of refined, and that

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S: Well what do you suggest that they did?

Mangala: Well maybe there needs to be like, well like perhaps centres or communities or both or whatever where people come in and they do it just more sort of as let's call it positive group activities. There could be all sorts of things like arts and maybe even sports, things like

that, and then just maybe gradually for those who seem a bit more... make it sort of gradual. Take up meditation in just a very ... just little by little

S: Well perhaps what you're really saying is that we should recruit people from amongst such people. People who are already into such activities. In other words not recruit people into the Friends from amongst those who are interested in Buddhism or interested in Eastern philosophies but from amongst those who are into the arts or sports or so on, which means that we've got to go out to such people and get them and establish channels of communication with them. Rather than ourselves starting Centres for those activities perhaps. The centres for those activities are already there. In some cases set up by the local authorities. We've only got to establish contact with them and interest those people.

It's almost as though, I almost come to the conclusion that broadly speaking those people who profess to be or believe they are interested in Buddhism are the ones who are least suitable with a few exceptions, for the FWBO. I sometimes am very tempted to think that. I think they've been thinking that or suspecting that in Norwich recently. According to some minutes that I've been reading, well we've got Aloka here to tell us perhaps - I think I'm correct in saying that it was reported that quite a weird lot of people had turned up for the latest course and I gather, they may be right or they may be wrong in this assessment, but I gather that some of the Order members around had thought that these people were not at all the sort of people that we were looking for. Have you anything to say about this?

Aloka: What came up was that if you put out just general advertising featuring the word meditation, featuring the word Buddhism, unless you put out something very specific with that that gives people some definite idea of what's going on or what your approach is, people just relate to you via their own misconceptions and that's what brings them along. It was crazy.

S: Tell us more! I was quite intrigued because I must confess I couldn't help thinking well perhaps they're not being, that is to say the Order members especially, maybe they're not being as efficiently sympathetic or thinking too rigidly in terms of a particular type of person that they want. Do you think there was any element of that or that they really were just unsuitable?

Aloka: Well Vajrakumara who was leading the course had a definite idea of the sort of person he wanted to come along, but I don't - in fact nobody like that came along - (Laughter)

S: Yes six foot tall, blonde and with blue eyes...

Aloka: And it was for the Dharma course, so what was attracting people was Buddhism. you were going to learn something about Buddhism and it was made pretty clear that it was going to be fairly basic and straightforward but fifty percent of the [102] class was complete newcomers and there were about.

S: Well that in itself was good.

Kevala: What kind of people were they?

S: Well this is what I'm trying to extract from Aloka What made them so weird or unsuitable

etc.

Aloka: A good fifty percent of those seemed to be real nut cases.

S: Yes that was the expression that intrigued me in the minutes nut cases! - well tell us more. What is a nut, what is a nutcase. Some people almost say that you're all nut cases. There are nut cases and nut cases.

Kevala: What were they into?

Aloka: Spiritualism and astral travel and I think a couple of them reckoned they were Enlightened. That was a quite interesting thing. I think quite a few people were there just to have their own misconceptions reinforced.

S: Yes right

Aloka: They didn't come along to learn anything. They actually didn't come along with an open attitude at all and they just came along for us to say yes we're all doing the same thing and you're doing the right thing which of course didn't happen.

S: I think actually one is going to get quite a lot of people like that. One just has to handle them a bit skilfully. I think one shouldn't be too harsh if one finds well people are spiritualists or whatnot, because after all very often people just catch hold of whatever is to hand and that's all they've come in contact with and clearly it can't be completely satisfactory otherwise they wouldn't come along to you.

So I think one should make allowance for the difficulty of establishing contact with something genuine. At least they've realized well they're not going to find it in the church so they've abandoned the church so they're looking around and spiritualism is a quite widespread movement - there are spiritualist groups all over the place and very many of them are on a very ordinary sort of working class level. So the not very cultured, not very educated person who is looking around is quite likely to encounter a spiritualist group and be a bit drawn by that especially as they do genuinely wonder well do we die when we die, is there life after death. They might be genuinely interested in that question. So we shouldn't just dismiss people or label them as nut cases just because they're spiritualists. Or even if they think they're enlightened. Because they might have read a book written by some maybe Theravada Buddhist that if you think clearly and if your attitude is quite rational well you're enlightened. Theravada Buddhists do write in that sort of way. And so they read this book and in good faith they think well I'm a pretty clear thinking rational sort of person. It seems as though according to Buddhism I'm enlightened and they may genuinely think that. So one shouldn't be too dismissive of that. Just gently point out well there's a bit more to enlightenment than that and you've a bit further to go. (Laughter) Do you see what I mean? For me a genuine nutcase means [103] someone who is actually schizophrenic or something like that. If they're not actually schizophrenic I think if they're at least a little bit open and the fact that they've come along suggests they are at least a little bit open, one should do one's best with them and not be too disappointed that they're not the blue eyed wonders that you expected or hoped for. Do you see what I mean? Though I agree, I admit that such people can be very tiresome and a real drag. I encountered quite a few of them in New Zealand as I moved around because these sort of people are still coming to all the Centres there, all the FWBO Centres.

But nonetheless if one doesn't take it too seriously and has a bit of fun with them you can sometimes establish some communication and put over some valid points. So I think one shouldn't be too disappointed if one gets some of these sort of people along. Just do one's best with them. Some of you might have been nut cases five or six years or eight or ten years ago!! (Laughter) You don't know what I thought when I first saw you. I might tell you one day!!

Asvajit: I hope completely round the bend! (Laughter)

Sudhana: I was turning into a nutcase by going along to the wrong kind of school. I had a grip on things and then I went to the wrong kind of Dharma school and they enforced certain really weird ideas. It's taken me years to weed it out actually. Through the Bud. Soc.

S: Yes

Aloka: We actually didn't sort of write them off straight away. We spent time talking, quite a lot of time, to the people who came along and you do know if somebody's just got... picked up a few screwy ideas but basically they're all right underneath but I really felt that quite a number of these people were very rigid and entrenched in their particular views that they'd got and were very unreceptive. Even quite antagonistic. If you weren't just going to pat them on the head and say...

S: I encountered a few of these people in New Zealand I must say also.

Adrian: There is still a possibility that they can change though.

S: Oh indeed yes. You just mustn't allow them to be too disruptive otherwise it just spoils it for others who are there who are perhaps being more receptive.

Atula: It certainly seems it's best to spend your time with them.

Vajradaka: That was something I was going to say about letting them take over. I was really surprised at the end of Trungpa's talk in Boston when they had a question and answer period he let this absolute madman rave on for a really long time about him not being a human being and coming from outer space - and then pandering to him and letting him go on even more almost like just playing with him and it was just going further and further and further and further away from anything really Dharmic.

S: What was the reaction of all the other people present?

Vajradaka: Boredom.

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S: Boredom. Yes.

Vajradaka: A lot of people walked out then, and then the guy walked out, but I think perhaps because he's been given what he wanted. Attention.

S: People don't have nowadays. If you told them to just go off and build a tower they probably wouldn't do it. It's difficult enough for them to work in a co-op.

Atula: I suppose it goes back to yesterday, to one of the things of bringing energies together is to work in some form or other.

S: All right rightly to direct the Life Stream, to unify all the energies in the right sort of way. We've probably said enough about that.

To enter the Dharma Essence. What do you think that means. What is that all about? To enter the essence of the dharma. In a way that is complimentary to the previous line isn't it. Unify all your energies, enter the Dharma essence. Almost sort of unify the dharma. You first of all deal with quite, with general teachings but as you proceed, as you progress, then your practice becomes more and more specific. You as it were enter more and more into the essence of the dharma.

: Perhaps see the interconnectedness of all the separate teachings

S: Indeed.

: Is this like the pith instruction then. The Dharma Essence?

S: Except that the pith instruction comes to you from the outside, from the guru, but here the suggestion is that you yourself by virtue of your practice, by virtue of your experience, by virtue of your realization, are penetrating more and more deeply into the dharma. You can perhaps imagine, visualize the dharma as a sort of cone, a hollow cone and you enter in at the broad end at the base and you go further and deeper into it it narrows, it becomes more concentrated, you penetrate more and more into the essence of it. Do you see what I mean?

Vajradaka: Can you just jump back a line - I'm thinking about the translation of prana here. I've been thinking about this a lot over the past month and feel quite frustrated by the fact that we don't actually have a term in common usage to denote a holistic approach to energy, something which actually denotes our emotional, conscious, unconscious feeling, vitality, stamina all these things. We've got all these different words but with prana you've got one word or chi or ki or whatever.

S: Though the word prana is in a sense has a quite restricted meaning in Sanskrit. The original meaning is the breath but it's also used in the sense of the vital energy especially in the more Tantric context. But we tend to use it, take it over and make it a sort of adopted English word and use it just as energy in the broadest sense. It doesn't always mean that in Sanskrit or in the Indian languages. But nonetheless we do need a general sort of word.

Mangala: What about libido?

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S: I think libido though Freud uses it in a quite general way, and I think Jung even more so, it does have specifically sexual connotations doesn't it.

Vajradaka: I was thinking of vital energy although two words still isn't broad enough in a way.

S: It's a bit too physical. You don't think of it in terms of more refined emotional energy or as

say artistic creativity.

: ... inspirational energies but perhaps that's too much the other way

Kevala: Is it the Minator in Greek mythology which is the symbol for creative energy.

S: The Minator.

Kevala: Maybe it's another thing which is a symbol for creative energy. The man's body with the bull's head.

S: That is the Minator.

Kevala: I think it's the symbol for creative energy then.

S: It's certainly not in general use

Mangala: It's the ankh in the Egyptian. I think it's called an ankh. It's a circle with a cross at the bottom.

S: No that is life, eternal life. The ankh yes. No it's not energy especially. Not at all.

: In homeopathy they use the word life-force to denote the sort of overall.

S: But life-force most people would understand as just pertaining to ordinary biological existence. They probably wouldn't regard it as including say creative energy in the more aesthetic sense or spiritual sense.

Sudhana: In 'Star Wars' they use the term 'force'.

S: There have been terms invented like odic force or odic energy.

: Who uses that.

S: I think it was coined at the beginning of the last century. I'm not quite sure by whom but I think in connection with mesmerism.

: Wilhelm Reich uses...

S: Orgone energy. But then again though that is quite good for covering what we would regard as grosser forms of energy it's no use as regards covering the more refined forms of energy. Perhaps we'll have to search Blake and see if he has something to say.

Kevala: Why can't we just invent a word?

S: All right. Come on then. Maybe we can get a word from the Greek. That isn't impossible perhaps.



Mangala: What about elan. The French word.

S: Yes. That is quite good actually. It's spirit, vitality, drive, life. That is quite good actually.

Vajradaka: It is also used in some translations as well.

: It's used as a translation for vital force.

Atula: How do you spell that?

Mangala: E acute, L A N.

Vajradaka: The only thing I can think against that is it also has an association of charisma. Sort of being rather chic. French man very well dressed.

S: A sort of buoyancy.

Vajradaka: But almost a social sense. He's got elan.

S: Well it includes that doesn't it!

Anyway we'll just have to give it further thought and not linger over it now perhaps. I was going to say rightly to direct the life stream - to enter the dharma essence. I don't know if there is something about these two being complementary. Perhaps I've touched upon that sufficiently already. Do you see what I mean about the two being complementary. Ah! I know what it was I was going to say touching on this. You notice that when new people come into Buddhism, come along to the Centre, the sort of things that they want to talk about, the sort of questions that they ask, are things which are very very general. So general that they've got no practical direct applicability for them at least at all... They want to discuss things like Nirvana. They want to discuss things like enlightenment. Do you see what I mean. So the more general in an abstract sense the things that the people want to discuss, the more likely they are to be beginners or to be completely new.

So to enter the dharma essence means to go from the more general in the abstract sense to the more and more specific, the more and more individual and therefore the more and more experienced. I mean Order members for instance don't sit around at Order (meetings) discussing Nirvana do they? They're much more likely to discuss the organization of a co-op or a specific point in meditation practice. But the newcomer, the beginner, if he asks you about anything he'll probably ask you about Nirvana or enlightenment or something of that sort.

And of course there are people who spend years discussing these things. So to enter the Dharma essence means to move more and more from the general and the abstract and the theoretical and the intellectual to the specific and the concrete and the practical and the experiential. And that represents a unification just as rightly directing the life stream represents a unification.

The fact that people think that it's possible really to discuss Nirvana at all means they haven't even begun even to think about practising the dharma. So if you meet someone who asks you

about Nirvana you know just where that person stands at once. If they ask you about enlightenment or about the one mind, you know exactly where they stand. Well in terms of Buddhism they don't stand anywhere at all! (Laughter)

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All right 'and to master all the teachings.' Why should you master all the teachings? Presumably all the teachings means all the teachings.

Adrian: Is the emphasis actually on all or master.

S: I would say it's equally on both. Master all the teachings. Presumably not just those of the Vajrayana but those of the Mahayana, those of the Hinayana. Master all the teachings.

Sudhana: It's like the Bodhisattva Vow isn't it?

S: Yes it's like the Bodhisattva Vow. Yes indeed. So why should you want to master all the teachings. It can only be for the benefit of others. You don't need to master all the teachings just for your own sake, for the sake of your own spiritual progress. Perhaps one or two or three teachings will be quite enough but you're not concerned only with yourself. You're concerned with other living beings, you're concerned with helping them. You need skilful means. You might have found the Abhidharma very attractive and inspiring, other people might not find the Abhidharma attractive and inspiring at all. They might be attracted and inspired by the Madhyamika teachings. You have to learn those teachings so as to be able to place those teachings at their disposal.

Sudhana: Is that really part of a Bodhisattva's life?

S: Well yes indeed if you take the Bodhisattva Ideal really seriously. According to the Mahayana sutras you should not only master all the dharmas you should even learn all the secular arts and sciences so that you've got a greater number of means of communication and therefore can communicate with a greater number of people.

: Presumably you have to balance this though with actual attainment yourself and also credibility of actually having (any time to) teach anybody or ( )

S: Well yes of course. Some people are more versatile than others.

Mangala: You can only really possibly master one thing at a time and that might take you a lifetime.

S: It might yes.

Mangala: ( ) shooting around neurotically trying to do fifty things at once. To learn a hundred different...

S: Well don't forget the Mahayana perspective, that the Bodhisattva's career extends over three unthinkable kalpas. But you can understand the principle of the thing. All sorts of odd bits and pieces of knowledge come in handy sometimes in communicating with people. You might suddenly in the heart of America meet somebody who for instance - well let's say has

been to Sicily and you've been to Sicily too - that's the only thing you have in common as far as you can see. You both talk about Sicily and your experiences there. You've started communicating. You've established some sort of rapport. Then maybe the Dharma can be brought in. So every bit of knowledge can be utilized in this sort of way.

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: I suppose when it comes down to sort of secular knowledge and so on perhaps you should be thinking in terms of studying things that are applicable within the society around you. If it's Western art or something like that.

S: Economics.

: What would be most useful?

S: Have a means of communication other than the Dharma itself. You may not be able to start off communicating directly in terms of the traditional Dharma. Also of course one mustn't again take this literally that there you are attending evening classes every night of the week and learning about philately and photography and Ancient Greek history just so that you master all these profane sciences. It also suggests a certain flexibility in your approach, that you don't sort of go straight along and hit people over the head with the Dharma at once.

It doesn't mean that necessarily you've literally got to learn all these different subjects. Because you've got a whole rag bag of odd bits and pieces of knowledge haven't you. So use all those fully, bring them out.

I remember I once met somebody who was in - for some reason or other I think he had some connection with the coal trade so I started talking to him about the coal trade. We had quite a discussion about the coal trade because in my younger days I worked in an office, a firm that sold coal for about seven months, so I knew quite a bit about the coal trade. So all this came back to me, all these details about the coal trade. So I had quite a chat with him and then we started talking about other things. So this is the sort of thing that can happen. But not that you need to go off to evening classes and learn all about the coal trade just in case you happen to meet someone who's interested in it. Use whatever bits and pieces of knowledge you've got. You'll probably be surprised sometimes the odd sort of things that you do know, the odd sort of things you have read about or seen or experienced or heard about. So utilize it all in establishing contact with people, in communicating the dharma. This is what really this line is getting at. Don't take it too literalistically.

Sudhana: It's not like knowing every single list in the Abhidharma and that kind of stuff.

S: Not necessarily though some people find the Abhidharma really interesting and they do just that.

So this verse says rightly to direct the life stream, to enter the dharma essence and to master all the teachings are three techniques you should remember.

End of tape five

Tape Six

... it doesn't suggest something mechanical that can be operated without regard to mental attitude but it suggests a definite method, a definite practical approach, real genuine know-how as it were.

All right the views of the Bliss Void, of the myriad forms, of reasoning and following the scriptures, are three essentials you should remember. The construction of this verse in translation is not completely clear is it. The grammatical [109] construction. The views of the Bliss Void. Presumably the views of the myriad forms, the views of reasoning and following the scriptures, are three essentials you should remember. Presumably it's that. So views. What does one mean by views here? I don't think it means just views in general but more like something like right views. The right sort of outlook.

: Penetration.

S: The right sort of penetration or appreciation. But the Bliss Void. What is the Bliss Void? What does mean by speaking in terms of the Bliss Void? Was it this group that we touched upon this yesterday? The Bliss Void. Well clearly a sort of compound is meant isn't it. So what are the elements of the compound? So to speak.

Asvajit: Well bliss is the feeling or devotional side. Void is the more intellectual.

S: In a way that is true but it goes even beyond that. It connects up with we could say this disposing of samsara and Nirvana.

Vajrananda: The sort of bliss aspect of the void.

S: It's not quite that. Void represents the experience of sunyata. It represents the experience of the transcendental. It represents the experience of nirvana. Bliss represents the experience of samsara but at its highest and most as it were sublimated level, and the view of or the views of the bliss void are those views concerning the bringing together, the unification of these two. The Vajrayana in contradistinction to the Mahayana stresses very much the experience of the body or with the body, through the body, the experience of energy. So it stresses in a way the fact that the whole samsaric side of things is not to be left out, is not simply to be rejected or ignored as even perhaps the Mahayana seems to be, but it's to be brought in, that the energies which are inherent in the samsara are to be led in the direction of enlightenment and these energies are experienced, are to be experienced as successively higher degrees of bliss, culminating in what is called Mahasuhka, the Great `Bliss.

Vajradaka: Does it then become transcendental when it's the Mahasuhka?

S: Well the Mahasuhka you could say is that experience of bliss which is united with the experience of Void. Do you see what I mean? So to speak in terms of the unification of the void and bliss is speaking in more psychological, even experiential terms of the same thing that one speaks of when one speaks of disposing of or uniting or transcending Nirvana and samsara. Do you see what I mean?

It also correlates with punya and jnana. The two accumulations. The accumulation of punya of merits and the accumulation of knowledge or awareness.

Suvajra: How does this connect up?

S: Jnana pertains to the unconditioned. Punya pertains to the conditioned. Punya represents the highest and the most positive and skilful level of the mundane whereas jnana represents the transcendental. So it's as though the Vajrayana says that one [110] must have a thorough experience of the samsara at the highest level and that experience of the samsara at the highest level especially in the form of a sort of ecstatic bliss is to be united with the purely transcendental realization of the void, and that the ultimate realization which goes beyond all duality is to be thought of as a unification therefore of the void and bliss or of nirvana and samsara or of - what can one also say? - the unconditioned and the conditioned.

Mangala: This is to be united with the realization of the void?

S: Yes. In practical terms, in terms of practical Vajrayana, it consists in practising, well one could say in ordinary Buddhist terms, samatha meditations which heighten the experience of bliss and that one retains the experience of bliss while developing the experience of insight and unites the blissful experience with the insight experience. So the Vajrayana does this in the highest and fullest possible sense. It unites the experience of psycho-physical bliss with the purely spiritual experience, that is to say in the form of insight, of the void, and it regards this as a complete if you like balanced spiritual, in the sense of transcendental, experience and it carries this or pursues this to the limit.

Atula: Blake talks about improvement in sensual joys in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

S: Right, yes. It does tie up with that.

Suvajra: Does that tie up with (the visualization practice too then) - having the form in the sense of almost the highest samsaric...?

S: Yes indeed, yes. Because even the Buddha's form as you normally perceive it in a way represents the mundane in its perfection.

So the views of the bliss void, the views of the myriad forms. What do you think is meant by myriad forms here? What are these myriad forms or what are the forms? What forms are being referred to? It's not very clear because we are dealing with a not very sort of exact translation. It would appear to mean forms in the sense of rupa. The myriad forms the myriad appearances of things as you actually perceive them, especially as you see them.

So the views of the myriad forms. Presumably this refers to the fact that all these myriad forms are sunyata, that rupa is inseparable from sunyata, sunyata is inseparable from rupa. In much the same way that sunyata and bliss are inseparable. One could look at it like that, that bliss is something that you experience, form is something that you see, but both are to be unified with sunyata, both the subjective and the objective. Bliss representing the subjective, rupa representing the objective. That the subject/object duality is to be transcended in all its forms. The two lines appear to mean something like that.

Right. The views of reasoning and following the scriptures. Here also you've got two things that are to be balanced. Reasoning cannot be discarded, at the same time the scriptures are not to be discarded. The general Buddhist tradition holds that correct reasoning so far as it goes

will be in accordance with the conclusions of the scriptures, that the conclusions of the scriptures cannot be in conflict with those of true reasoning. [111] In other words genuine experience and the scriptures after all communicate the Buddha's genuine spiritual experience, the genuine spiritual experience cannot be not in harmony with the conclusions of valid reasoning. This is the general Buddhist position.

So why do you think the term essentials is used for these three?

Atula: They're central to the teaching.

S: Yes.

: You couldn't get more central really.

S: Yes.

Mangala: Talking about the Tantric emphasizing the need to have an experience of samsara on higher and higher levels, is there really any other way. Other schools of Buddhism don't sort of see it like that but is there actually any other way of achieving enlightenment other than by sublimating one's basic energies.

S: Well the Vajrayana would say not so. One could perhaps say that the Vajrayana makes this fully explicit whereas the other traditions don't, the Hinayana and the Mahayana don't. Certainly the Hinayana doesn't. Perhaps it wasn't necessary for them to do that. One gets the impression if one reads say the Pali scriptures that though the Buddha doesn't speak in terms of energy there he was speaking to people whose energies were already fully galvanized. He was not speaking to people with blocked energies or whose energies were leaking away. So they could take the simple teachings that he gave them and at once fully and vigorously apply them and bring their whole being into line with those teachings.

Atula: It's like the fire sermon.

S: It's as though the teachings of the Buddha in the Pali Canon assume that the listener is already fully in contact with his emotions and energies and does not need to be brought into contact with them. That all he needs is the Dharma, that the mundane side of things is already fully looked after, that his development on that side has been already fully attended to. Even the Mahayana in a way tends to assume that in it's description of the Bodhisattva, that all you need is the dharma, all you need is the transcendental.

So it's as though in the Buddha's day the mundane side of things was already developed in a very full and healthy sort of manner.

Mangala: I feel like in that case for most people I come in contact with the Vajrayana seems to be easily...

S: It's not so much the Vajrayana as a school, in the sense that you'd best go off to follow a Tibetan lama but that particular principle or point which is emphasized by the Vajrayana and which is implicit in Buddhism as a whole is especially applicable to people nowadays.

Mangala: Because I think otherwise Buddhism can still seem a bit [112] soul less, a bit sort of lifeless and energyless and pseudo spiritual.

S: Well you could say Buddhism in the sense of the Hinayana and the Mahayana says nothing about that energy because it assumes that you've already got it. It's like when a child goes to school the teacher doesn't expect to have to say well wipe your feet on the mat and wipe your nose etc., he assumes that the child has been taught all those things at home already and the teacher assumes all that he has got to do is just to teach the child and it's becoming more and more the case, we know, that the child is being trained less and less at home and teachers are having to take over more and more of the work that formerly was done by the parents. Not just teach history and geography but teach other quite practical things. So it's much the same in the case of Buddhism. It's as though the Hinayana and the Mahayana teachings make no mention of the development of the mundane and the experience of the mundane energies. They assume that the person to whom they are speaking has already achieved all those things. They assume that the person is a healthy fully developed human being.

But if the people who come to you are not healthy fully developed human beings you have to stress that whole side of things.

Mangala: Do you think that actually was the case in the Buddha's time?

S: I certainly get that impression reading the Pali scriptures. Indeed.

Suvajra: When you said yesterday about work, was it really different in the Buddha's day then. Were people actually more in touch with their energies?

S: It's not only the Buddha's day. I think Indians of today are more in touch with their energies and their emotions than people are in this country.

Suvajra: What about the Theravada monks needing work then. This is what I was confused about. If the Theravada monks especially need work to get them moving what's different today from the time of the Buddha's day when they weren't actually engaged in work?

S: Well you mustn't forget that when one speaks about Theravada monks today one is speaking about Ceylon and Thailand and Burma. One is not speaking about India.

Mangala: What was the need then, assuming people were happy, healthy humans what was the need then for the Vajrayana to develop in this way and to make all this more explicit.

S: Well don't forget the Vajrayana developed say a thousand years after the Buddha's own time and it does seem that the social and cultural situation in India had changed in the meantime. You had both in Buddhism and in Hinduism a very intellectual sort of movement. There was a strong development of Buddhist and Hindu, especially Vedantic intellectualism and you could even say that religion, to use that term, both in its Hindu and in its Buddhist forms became over intellectualised, over academic, and from a certain point of view at least, a certain historical point [113] of view the Vajrayana was, so to speak, a reaction against all that. You had the development of the Abhidharma, you had the development of the Madhyamika and the Yogachara though they had certain highly academic aspects. The Vajrayana tended to disregard all that and emphasize again and again the importance of

practice and experience and realization. And sometimes some forms of Vajrayana like the Sahajjyana quite explicitly rejected the whole sort of academic rather formal monastic routine and way of life. Some of them wouldn't even be ordained as Buddhist monks because it had become too safe in a way, too formal, too stereotype. They became just sort of freelance wandering yogi Buddhists. The Kagyupas themselves in Tibet were a bit like that as compared with some other schools.

Sudhana: That's the impression I get about them. They had long hair.

S: Yes indeed. This is how they are depicted in Tibetan art and iconography. Some of them followed rather unconventional occupations or mixed with low caste people and so on.

Sudhana: The thangkas of Milarepa look a lot different than the thangkas of other gurus don't they. Milarepa's always unadorned.

S: Yes. It's doubtful whether he was even a Sramanera. He certainly wasn't a bhikkhu - we are pretty certain about that - he may not have been a Sramanera even.

Sudhana: Just a yogi.

S: Just a yogi.

Vajradaka: This is just a minor point really. You made a strong difference between Sinhalese bhikkhus and Indians.

S: I won't say a strong difference but I just pointed out that when we talk about say Theravada bhikkhus today we're not talking about Indians. The situations are a little different.

Vajradaka: I just wondered whether you felt that Sinhalese weren't as much in contact with their emotions.

S: I wouldn't in fact say that. I mean I've not been much in contact with Sinhalese for a long time but I get the impression that in Ceylon there's a sort of conflict between the sort of actual culture, especially among lay people and the official Buddhist attitude and I think very often people's actual behaviour and actual experience doesn't completely conform with their official Buddhist attitude.

For instance I've mentioned that officially Sinhalese Buddhism doesn't teach the Bodhisattva Ideal. It's Theravada Buddhism, but some of the Theravada bhikkhus I've met from Ceylon have definitely got a very warm altruistic element in them which doesn't find much theoretical place in their actual teaching. And again to give another example the official Buddhist teaching is really very much down on rights and ceremonies and pujas but actually the lay people especially indulge in it to a great extent and enjoy it and get a lot out of it.

So there is some sort of almost conflict at times at least between the actual Buddhist culture especially among the lay people which has incorporated some folk elements and their [114] official rather sort of dry, narrow version of Theravada Buddhism. In some respects they are better than their official Buddhism. There is certainly, yes, a strong so to speak, pagan element among Sinhalese Buddhists, even if that is not officially recognized by the official



Ceylon Theravada Buddhism. If you ask the bhikkhus about all that they'll say that's just a concession to the lay people. That isn't really Buddhism, that's just due to their weakness. We mustn't mix that up with Buddhism. But in practice it is very much mixed up with Buddhism.

Anyway let's leave it there for this morning because the next ...

Next session...

S: We dealt with the three essentials. So we come on now to the three delights.

A partner qualified in Mudra, experience of the bliss therein and the "Elephantine Work", these are the three delights that you should remember. There's a note on the elephantine work but we'll come to that in a minute

A partner qualified in Mudra. What sort of partner do you think is meant here?

Clive: A Kalyana Mitra.

Atula: A teacher.

S: A Kalyana Mitra, a teacher. Well I think one can say that by a partner qualified in mudra it means a spiritual companion let's say. It's probably not quite a teacher because it is as it were more on the level. The term used is partner which suggests equality. A partner qualified in Mudra. One must remember of course that the overall Buddhist context here is that of the Vajrayana and you probably remember that in the Vajrayana there are not only exoteric but also esoteric refuges. You probably remember that. So in place of the... well one shouldn't say in place of or not even in addition to - but as a more concrete and specific form of the Buddha refuge one has the guru refuge. As a more concrete and specific form of the dharma refuge there is the refuge in the deva, that is to say the particular Buddha or bodhisattva that one visualizes in the course of one's meditation and to whom one is devoted and who has a special significance in one's spiritual life, and then as the more concrete, specific form of the sangha the sangha refuge, there is the refuge in the dakini. That is usually given so to speak in the feminine gender but that mustn't be taken too literally. The dakini here is the spiritual companion. The one with whom, the one in whose company you practise the Dharma. That doesn't just mean two people occupying caves side by side and getting on with their practice quite separately and not speaking. It suggests someone with whom you practise the dharma, with whom you have a very positive and powerful interaction and communication and who sparks you off in your practice of the dharma. They are not a teacher. They are very much on the same level as you. They are practising in the same way as you but nonetheless you find them almost inspiring one could say. There doesn't seem to be a proper term for this mutual sparking off on so to speak the same level, but you know what I mean I think. I think you get a touch of it in at [115] least the Ancient Greek conception of competition and emulation when you spark each other off. You try to do - you don't try to do better than the other man, you try to do your best. He sees you doing your best and he tries to do his best and he thinks well you're a bit further ahead than him so maybe you're making more of an effort. Maybe he should make more of an effort so he wants to get ahead of you say in the race or whatever it is not just because he wants to beat you or defeat you but because he wants to do the best that he possibly can and he uses this sort of pseudo competitiveness as a spur to incite himself to further efforts. Really doing his best. So it's a little bit like that you could say in a way. This

mutual sparking off of two people both engaged in the same pursuit. In this case of course the spiritual life itself.

: I think that does exist within the Order.

S: I should jolly well hope so. So a partner qualified in Mudra. Mudra is a very technical term. One could say quite a lot about this but perhaps we'll just sort of confine ourselves to the general significance.

Mudra means something like attitude, especially spiritual attitude. Attitude of one's whole being, stance of one's whole being, even position of one's whole being, hence Mudra which means a stamp or a seal or a gesture of the hands, of the fingers. So a partner qualified in Mudra. A partner qualified in attitude. That means in attitude, in right attitude towards you. You could even say someone who is able to relate to you positively, powerfully, deeply. This is what is meant by a Mudra.

Sometimes it is used in much the same way as dakini, the female companion but again this female element mustn't be taken too literally. It is the fellow practitioner of the dharma, especially the one with whom you have well this positive powerful and deep and effective spiritual relationship so that you really do spark each other off and incite each other and encourage each other in following the spiritual path. Communication - horizontal communication at least - in the highest form that we're able to experience it, and this is a very important aspect of the spiritual life.

Atula: Doesn't the dakini refer to what we're trying to spark off?

S: You could say that the dakini embodies that particular quality that you are trying to create between you.

Mangala: You said that communication with the dakini [correction guru] is on a vertical level whereas with the dakini it's on the horizontal?

S: When the dakini is spoken of as the so called esoteric refuge this is... though refuge is spoken of it is much more on the horizontal. Otherwise what is the difference between the way in which you relate to the guru and the way in which you relate to the dakini? One might say that the relationship with the guru is the ideal vertical relationship. The relationship with the dakini or the Mudra is the ideal horizontal relationship.

But in the case of the dakini or the Mudra, the partner qualified in Mudra, though broadly speaking the relationship is a horizontal relationship, you're not always exactly [116] on the same level. At one time one person may be a bit ahead, at another time the other may be a bit ahead. At one time you may be a bit dull, a bit discouraged and then your friend, your spiritual partner will encourage you and stimulate you. On another occasion the position may be reversed.

Aloka: That ties in with what you were saying about the Greek concept. If you're both say competing together you will change quite a lot as you're going forwards. If you win a race or something.

S: In fact the difference between this and real competitiveness is that your partner will encourage you to try to beat him and if you do beat him he's quite happy about that because he's been stretched to his limit, and that is all that he wants, that is the important thing for him, not actually just winning. And if you do actually sort of win, you do actually in a sense defeat him, he'll be only pleased because it means he's got a companionship of somebody who is just a bit better than himself and so he won't mind that at all. Whereas in ordinary competitiveness there's a bit of resentment very often if someone is better than you or if someone as it were defeats you.

Mangala: What's the sort of difference in what you get shall we say, from horizontal communication and from vertical communication.

S: Well one can surely ask one's own experience that question. What is the difference? What do you think it is?

Mangala: I think perhaps through horizontal communication you get a more kind of support, let's even say friendship on a more ordinary kind of way. I think just more kind of emotional support and encouragement really than anything else perhaps. I'm not even sure about that. I'm not sure if I'd limit it to that because I think you can just through your communication with someone of let's say your own level. You can... they can point out things to you which you hadn't seen before so in that sense they're helping you to grow and develop. So whereas presumably with the vertical relationship well perhaps there isn't that, quite that same sort of empathy.

S: Or the same mutuality. In the case of the horizontal relationship on one occasion you may point out something that the other person doesn't see, on another occasion he may point out something that you don't see. But in the case of the vertical relationship there may not be that kind of mutuality.

: One way that I see it is that both the vertical friend and the horizontal friend might have at any one point a wider perspective than you but the horizontal friend has a wider perspective of how you are and the vertical friend has the perspective of how you can be.

S: But the latter doesn't necessarily exclude the former. One can have as it were a higher perspective on someone as well as a wider perspective, though you could have a wide perspective without having a high one.

Clive: I think that the way the mutual friendship in a way it's a bit more practical and more intense. With the vertical relationship someone may be able to point out to you that you could make more [117] effort or you could go in this particular direction, but with the mutual friend it's actually sort of happening tit for tat as it were, bouncing back within a confined space.

S: But there can be you could say a vertical bouncing back as well as a horizontal bouncing back. Couldn't you say that or is it not quite the same?

Clive: The mutual friends - they're bouncing back and at the same time they're moving up together aren't they?

S: Yes. Ideally.

Clive: They'd both deflect off each other to a higher level and consequently go up.

S: But what about the vertical relationship. You say there isn't a sort of mutual bouncing back in the same way. It's more like bouncing a ball against a wall. Of course you could ask the question whether it is really like that. Is it in fact like that? That in the case of the vertical relationship the ball just bounces back from a wall so to speak. Do you think it really is that.

Suvajra: More like from a floor. You're bouncing higher and higher and higher from the ground.

S: Yes, that too, but what about the wall so to speak. Does the wall as it were remain static.

Clive: I think the wall deflects the ball just a little bit further each time. So you've got to run just a little bit further to get it.

S: No I don't even mean that. Does the wall itself in the process of bouncing back, the wall even vertically necessarily remain on the same point of the vertical?

Mangala: You're talking in this case about the guru.

S: Yes.

Mangala: Presumably the guru would also develop through contact with the disciples.

S: Yes, there is that way of looking at it also. So that it isn't say a completely static or one way relationship, because I have said several times in the past that you don't really start to learn until you start to teach. And that can apply at many different levels. Do you see what I mean? So you could say, and that's why I said it, that there's not only this horizontal bouncing back and forth which is certainly the case but there is in a way also in a different way, a sort of vertical bouncing back and forth and that bouncing back and forth is not so to speak just like bouncing a ball against a wall or a ceiling let us say, which remains in the same place all the time and does not itself move. This is brought out here very strongly by Plato in connection with the educational process, that for the teacher, in Plato's maybe somewhat more mundane context or maybe not, the educational process itself is so to speak an education for the teacher too in a different kind of way.

So perhaps one should think of the vertical relationship as well as the horizontal ones or the horizontal relationship in dynamic terms and in mutual terms. Not that in the vertical relationship [118] there is so to speak activity on the one side or development on the one side but not on the other. You see what I mean? Because sometimes if you have a pupil who is very demanding in any subject it brings out the inner resources of the teacher all the more. Resources that perhaps to begin with he wasn't aware that he possessed.

So even though there is a difference between the two relationships, the horizontal and the vertical, it is not a difference in respect of mutuality or even what I might call dynamic mutuality, even though yes, definitely there is a difference between the two relationships.

Suvajra: Is there a difference in terms of equality? Like with the vertical there's much more that can be given by one to the other.

S: Yes but on the horizontal there is much more equality.

Anyway ... end of tape ...

Tape seven

Perhaps we should recall the overall situation. What is happening. Rechungpa has more or less disregarded Milarepa's advice. He's insisting on going to India even though that means apparently giving up his regular meditation and in the end Milarepa has agreed to his going to India. He's not really agreed to his going to India to study logic and science, he's only agreed to his going to India at all for the sake of obtaining those formless dakini dharmas which Milarepa himself was not able to obtain. But nonetheless he's not at all happy about him going and he seems to think that it represents a departure from the spiritual path and this is why he says in an earlier song 'this uninformed son of mine, the loser of debate and full of doubts has stopped his meditation and is about to wander far away to study. This is the very thing a yogi should avoid.'

So it seems as though Rechungpa has become very much out of touch with the spiritual life, spiritual experience, meditation. So Milarepa seems to be asking him to remember these three delights, because the fact that he asks him to remember them suggests that Rechungpa on some previous occasion must have had some experience of them. So perhaps if he can remember them, if he can recall them, recall these three delights then that will put him back into touch with a more positive or more spiritual mental state.

So he says these are the three delights you should remember. The first is a partner qualified in Mudra, a true spiritual companion, one with whom you can truly communicate, one who spurs you on just as you spur him on. The recollection of such a partner is a source of delight. When you remember the experience you had together, the way that you helped each other.

And then experience of the Bliss therein. This is also quite important. That the communication which you enjoy with a spiritual companion is an intensely blissful one. That doesn't mean to say it's easy. It doesn't mean to say it's soft. It doesn't mean to say it's comfortable, it doesn't mean to say that it's sentimental. It can be quite tough, it can be quite rigorous, quite demanding. The last newsletter was called Fierce Friendship so it can be a bit like that. But that sort of interaction that horizontal interaction between you and your spiritual partner, your spiritual companion, can be an intensely blissful thing. In the first place a lot of energy is thereby aroused. The same applies to the vertical communication too. That can be intensely blissful. A lot of energy can be aroused in that context as well.

So a partner qualified in Mudra, experience of the bliss therein and he goes on to say, the "Elephantine Work", and the note [119] says, the advanced yogi acts fearlessly with great inspiration for his own need in various unusual acts. The common people may judge him as crazy or immoral. Why do you think acting in this sort of way is called the elephantine work?

Clive: Because it's a work that has got cosmic significance therefore it's great as an elephant.

S: Yes. It's great, it's big.

: The elephant is sometimes seen as being fearless when it walks through the village with the

dogs just barking around its feet.

S: Yes. The elephant is the biggest of the creatures. He has no reason to be afraid of anything or anybody. So the yogi is like that. He's not only big, spiritually big, but because he's big he's spiritually fearless. He can do whatever it comes into his mind to do. He doesn't care what people think, just as the elephant doesn't mind the barking of the dogs as he goes through the village. That's the usual comparison.

So what is the relationship do you think between this fearless sort of elephantine state and having a spiritual companion and experiencing the bliss of communication with that spiritual companion? Is there a connection or is the association quite fortuitous?

: I would have thought not. Especially from the Mahayana point of view (upwards) to your communication with your peers is an aspect of the Bodhisattva Ideal. you're working together to create the Bodhicitta.

S: Right yes, but it is especially stressed in the note that the advanced yogi acts fearlessly with great inspiration for his own need in various unusual acts. The common people may judge him as crazy or immoral. What connection has that got especially with communication with one's peers if any?

Atula: They're the only ones who would presumably understand.

S: But do you need anyone to understand? That is the point.

Pete S: You (can only ) be fearless when it comes to upsetting your friends, people close to you.

S: No I don't think it's that. Of course you do have to be fearless but your close spiritual companions are not going to be upset if you behave in an unusual or fearless way. They will understand what it's all about. So what is the connection? Well it seems to me that the connection is that the communication that you have with your spiritual peers as you say is so radical, so no holds barred, so dangerous that if you can survive that you can survive anything. Because it isn't a sweet sentimental sort of friendship. They are not going to let you get away with anything. They're going to challenge you. They are going to maybe demand things of you. They're going to give you a very difficult and tough time perhaps. So that will really free you up and make you fearless and bold and inspired in maybe a way that nothing else would. So you've gone through that fierce friendship and you're ready to face the world as it were. There is nothing... the world can't give you nearly such a tough time as [120] your spiritual friends have given you. Perhaps the connection is more of that sort.

Vajradaka: It's interesting. Recently I've found that after the very sort of robust and open communication well, with my peers and friends generally when I then went into sort of ordinary everyday situations quite inadvertently I would communicate in that way - the way that I had with my peers and it was quite shocking. I almost got myself into some little scrapes.

S: I have a sort of image in my mind of a certain Order member I won't mention any names - at the LBC almost literally, well yes literally pinning some unfortunate newcomer right up

against the wall and sort of getting him almost by the throat and really letting him have it, what it was really all about. Probably that's the sort of thing that you have in mind, that you just have to sort of moderate your energy and your exuberance in dealing with completely unfamiliar people. It may all be just too much for them.

Vajradaka: I was thinking of something a little bit more refined than that! (Laughter)

S: This wasn't especially refined. It was anyway quite amusing to watch. The person sort of backed away, backed up against the wall and the Order member followed him and got him almost well, I'm not quite sure whether he was actually holding him by the throat or not but metaphorically he certainly was. Almost by his waistcoat and tie. I don't know whether he survived or not. I couldn't tell you But perhaps we could just say a bit more about this fact that the advanced yogi acts fearlessly with great inspiration for his own need in various unusual acts. The fearlessness and unconventionality of the yogi is emphasized. I think one point of connection is that with your spiritual friends, especially with your spiritual companion if you just have one special spiritual companion, you're accustomed to being completely open. You're not accustomed to disguising anything. You're not afraid to say anything. So you get into that sort of habit. You're not afraid to say anything to the world. Maybe sometimes you have to consider their reaction but not because you're afraid of their reaction but just because you don't want to scare them away. So because you have been accustomed to this completely open free fearless communication with your spiritual companion you can be like that also when you go out into the world. If in fact you see it as a skilful thing to do, a skilful way in which to behave.

You've exposed yourself to your spiritual companion. You've not hidden anything so you're not afraid of anything being found out as it were. So you've got an attitude of fearlessness and openness and inspiration and you carry that with you when you try to communicate with a wider audience, when you go out into the world so to speak. You're not timid, you're not restrained, you're not apologetic. You're bold and forceful and confident. Aren't you? If you go to America you've got no choice.

So a partner qualified in Mudra, experience of the bliss therein and the elephantine work - these are the three delights you should remember.

All right then Milarepa goes on, 'To instruct an idler brings misfortune, to speak of one's experience leads to loss, In towns to wander damages one's yoga. These are three dangers [121] to remember.' So to instruct an idler brings misfortune. What so? One can imagine instructing an idler being a waste of time but how could it be a misfortune?

Clive: It's like using gold to make a nut and bolt out of. It's never going to be seen. We are wasting valuable material by giving it to someone who's not going to...

S: The waste is itself or in itself a misfortune? Does that quite cover it?

Asvajit: It's an unfortunate error of judgement to say the least. Why would you be giving such a person attention?

S: Yes. It suggests a mistake on your part. That might well be misfortune. What do you think is meant by an idler exactly?

Clive: Someone who isn't going to practise the dharma.

S: Yes. He might be very busy in other ways.

So what might be the motive for someone instructing an idler, someone who wasn't going to practise the dharma.

Vajradaka: He might be looking for a rich patron.

S: Yes, yes, yes or a powerful protector.

Mangala: Also an idler could be a... sometimes he could be a quite pleasant person to be with or to talk to and might even seem quite interested.

S: So this could be a misfortune because it would suggest in that case that you are instructing someone in the Dharma, you are teaching the Dharma, with a wrong motive and that would certainly bring about misfortune sooner or later.

Vajradaka: They might even get resentful.

S: They might even get resentful. It certainly couldn't be a very happy relationship between you if you were trying to instruct them and they weren't actually practising the Dharma. There's sure to be some unpleasantness sooner or later and that would surely bring about misfortune. So to instruct an idler brings misfortune. It's not just a waste of time, it's almost positively dangerous. Because he says these are the three dangers to remember.

To speak of one's experience leads to loss. What sort of experience do you think Milarepa is referring to?

Atula: Spiritual experience.

S: Spiritual experience or more specifically...

: Meditative...

S: Meditative experience, yes. It's mainly in this sort of area.

Clive: You do feel that if you have experienced something and you talk about it it's gone. Maybe you didn't experience it very strongly but what you did experience seems to have gone just out of the window when you talk about it with someone. Why do you think that happens?

[122]

S: So perhaps one should ask does that necessarily happen and if so why?

: I don't think it necessarily happens.

S: So when does it not happen?

Asvajit: When you've talked about it with someone who has no comparable experience



himself. If you talk about it with someone who is practising at your own level or at a similar level well then he can affirm or clarify that experience.

Mangala: It also depends if there's some kind of empathy between the people and a communication of feeling and not just of fact, of incident, well then the person can actually get hold of that. You're actually sharing that experience to some extent.

S: If you try to communicate your experience to someone to whom in fact you cannot communicate it for one reason or another then the communication doesn't take place and you're left just with words. So to the extent that you're just left with words you're put out of touch with your own experience. So in that sense you lose it. If the other person is able to understand what you are saying and perhaps he has a comparable experience. You are talking of or communicating your experience to him. It can even be an enhancement of your experience because in the course of communication since it is real communication you do not lose touch with your experience. But if you try to communicate your experience to someone who is incapable of appreciating it then you if you are not careful at least, you lose contact with your own experience. You seem even to lose the experience itself.

So this is why it is sometimes said within the Vajrayana context that if you've received a certain initiation and you're practising a particular kind of meditation or reciting a particular mantra, you may speak of it only to fellow disciples of the same guru who have that same initiation and are performing the same practice.

Atula: Is that necessarily true because in a sense poetry is trying to speak to you but you have no experience of that perhaps but there is an actual, there is something that actually...

S: But you have to be open and receptive and able to experience something of what is being communicated to you.

Mangala: Isn't it important also that one shouldn't be high and be just sort of chattering about one's meditation experience just to all and sundry. Obviously you use a certain amount of discretion.

S: If you do that you place yourself on the level of those people. If you are just chattering you are in fact not communicating your meditation experience - you are talking about it which is quite another matter and if you talk about it or to the extent that you talk about it as distinct from communicating it you lose it. You put yourself out of touch with it As in the little illustration in the latest Mitrata, I don't know if you've seen it. You should all be provided with your copies of course. Or was it the Newsletter, perhaps it was the Newsletter. People at the class were talking about their meditation experience. Maybe it was the Newsletter. Has anyone seen that?

[123]

Clive: People at a party talking about their meditation. It might have been on inspiration, that Mitrata.

: I think it was in the Newsletter.

S: It must have been this. Yes. Here we are. It says, 'so there I was sitting on my cushion

twelve hours a day, knees feeling like they were about to fall off when suddenly I started to feel this amazing feeling on the top of my head.' He's showing them all his meditator 1980 certificates. So that's the way you mustn't talk about meditation experience even if you have had a meditation experience because if you start talking about it in that way you're sort of externalizing it. You can only talk about it in that sort of way by separating yourself from it, by alienating yourself from it and to that extent you no longer experience it hence you lose it or have lost it.

And people can be very insensitive in this sort of way especially if they ask you about Buddhism, about your experience of meditation. They expect you to be able to chat about maybe your deepest experiences and convictions in a casual sort of cocktail party sort of style, which is quite impossible. One should just refuse to do this. Just say well if you really want to talk about this I'm quite willing to but let's get together on some other occasion quietly and do it. But just over the cocktail so to speak, Asking what is this meditation all about. What can you say under those sort of conditions?

I mean in the early days of the FWBO when we used to have all sorts of strange things like mixed retreats at Keffolds and have a lot of very new people one of the things that used to annoy me most I think was when over lunch when I had my mouth full someone would suddenly bend about and say and what is the Buddhist idea about Nirvana, as though under those sort of conditions you can just give them a complete and comprehensive idea of what Nirvana is just like that. So it means no sensitivity even one could say. No sort of feeling for the subject in the remotest way.

Adrian: It's quite possible if you've had a quite deep experience that you may not just have the vocabulary to be able to do it justice.

S: That's true. You may not even have the ideas. You may not even have the conceptual framework. Then you would just have to give them an enigmatic smile.

Vajradaka: Last year Vajradipa and I were at a party of a friend of his, one of the Liverpool poets. I was talking to this woman who asked me not actually in a casual way but quite desperately about meditation, and I said this is a party I don't want to talk about it now, drinking a bit of wine. I said if Vajradipa comes in then maybe he'd take you away and he'll actually teach you meditation. So Vajradipa came in and I told him. He said right he just took her by the arm, he just took her off to another flat and she started meditating. Just like that.

S: Good. Is she still meditating?

Vajradaka: I don't know.

S: You mean to say that you and Vajradipa don't have a follow up service?

[124]

Vajradaka: I think he does! (Laughter)

S: So to speak of one's experience leads to loss. That does not mean that one should never under any circumstances speak of one's experience. Obviously if the Buddha followed that principle there would have been no such thing as Buddhism. So yes one can certainly

communicate one's experience if it seems a skilful thing to do, with the emphasis on communicate, not just talk about. But as I've said if you've really experienced something and you really think in terms of communication you can't just talk about your experience in a casual way because if you're to talk about it you are really to communicate it, and communication is possible only under certain conditions. And those conditions have to be respected. Otherwise you don't communicate anything of your experience. In fact you talk about something quite different. Or maybe you don't talk about anything at all in fact.

In towns to wander damages one's yoga. It's not Hatha Yoga that Milarepa is talking about. So do we take that quite literally. In towns to wander. To wander in towns damages one's yoga. Yoga is here used in the sense of meditation and spiritual practice generally. In towns to wander.

Mangala: I suppose this means just sort of wandering, it's not that you actually go into town to buy something and to perhaps eat and come out again. It's this kind of idling around just picking up all the kind of, well let's say insensitive influence etc. around that is just going to damage your, perhaps more sensitive state of mind.

S: But what do you think damage here means or suggests? What is the damage that is done?

Pete S: Distraction.

S: It's distraction of course, yes, that certainly.

Atula: It sort of implies you need a fixed base.

Mangala: Also I think it would destroy your let's say tranquillity, your samatha.

S: And there is of course the actual interruption to your practice itself, the time actually wasted.

Adrian: Wandering seems to suggest you're actually waiting for something to happen or just looking for something to happen rather than actually trying to sort of embody something.

S: Yes. It suggests a passive attitude. I mean the rather uncomplimentary comparison that is usually given in India by teachers is that you roam around the town just like a stray dog. A dog without a master and that is sometimes how it is. This is the sort of thing that Rechung apparently wanted to do. Was it in this chapter or was it in the other one? Wanted to stay and spend the evening with the lay supporters.

But this raises the whole question of one's immersion in worldly life. Does it mean that if one can avoid it one should never go into the town?

Clive: I think for some people they might feel like that.

[125]

S: For some people I think it might be a very good idea.

Vajradaka: This whole question of one's communication, the bodhisattva aspirations.

S: I think perhaps one could say - this is something that occurs to me on the spur of the moment - that what is so dangerous perhaps above all when one say goes into the town to use that as the paradigmatic situation, is that one becomes passive instead of being active. So long as one is active, active in the positive skilful sense you're in much less danger. You're in more danger when you are in a purely passive pseudo-receptive state. I say pseudo-receptive because it isn't genuine spiritual receptivity. Do you see what I mean?

Clive: You mean you're at the mercy to all sorts of vibes.

S: Yes. Whereas if you have a strong vibe of your own which you are positively projecting and that especially happens when you take the initiative, that is probably a different sort of situation. So it is your passivity in the town situation that probably constitutes the greater danger or the greater part of the danger.

Mangala: I think that is often the distraction of towns. Because I think maybe if your own initiating active kind of mind is active well then towns don't seem so attractive unless you actually have to get something but if you're just at a bit of a loose end they can seem like rather alluring.

S: Well if for instance you go into the town to get something well that is something active, something decisive. So in a way it protects you slightly. If you sort of just wander into town and drift around and lounge here and loiter there it will probably have a very much more deleterious effect on you.

Vajradaka: Travelling generally can be a bit like that if you're going big distances and you've got nothing particular to do in a particular place except wait for a train.

S: For instance if you go to - I've had this experience myself many a time - a particular town, there's a train journey, someone meets you at the station, takes you in his car to the meeting place. After ten minutes there you are giving your lecture you answer questions, you have a quick cup of tea and back you come, that is a quite different sort of experience, even though you've gone to the town, you've passed through so much traffic, perhaps you've met so many people but you are on the... taking the initiative all the time. You are active in a highly positive and skilful manner. That's a quite different sort of experience.

In some ways the quicker the visit the better. I've had many a time when I used to go down to Brighton in the old days before there was any Brighton FWBO and it was the Brighton Buddhist Society, that was my experience, catching the 6.20 train, arriving in Brighton at 7.20, being whipped along to the centre and taking the class at 7.30. It used to go on until I think ten o'clock, have a quick cup of tea and be whipped along back to the station, catch the 10.20 and back in London at 11.20. By twelve o'clock if one was lucky in bed. I used to in a way quite enjoy those trips. Because you were taking the initiative, you had a definite purpose. It was a quite intense experience. [126] There everybody was waiting, ready, you led the class, you took the meditation or you gave the talk, you answered questions, you had a short chat with people afterwards, swallowed a cup of tea and then you were back on the train going back to London. That is quite a different situation, and the factor that makes the difference is that you are all the time taking the initiative.

So that if you can take the initiative sufficiently and remain positive and active and outward

going, it almost doesn't matter where you go. It's the passivity that is the weakness and the danger. If you are just passive and you are allowing things to happen to you all the time, allowing influences to pour in upon you. Allowing all sorts of unskilful and unpleasant vibes to reach you.

Mangala: I suppose in a way this active state of mind. That's something a lot of us have still to cultivate and work on and isn't it not true that at times a city is a more conducive environment to do that than say...

S: To do what?

Mangala: To develop a more positive active initiative taking attitude.

S: I'm not so sure about that. I'm almost thinking in terms of well you sort of stay in the country, you stay in at least a quiet secluded spot and you have forays into the town as it were and that can apply even with regard to your centre in the town. Your centre or your community is the quiet spot where you really get on with it, really get into your practice and from there you have your forays out, your raids as it were, your smash and grab raids, and then you retreat back into your air.

Pete S: I live in a town and I think if one's being quite in a passive state like that it's much better to stay indoors or go to Aryatara. If you just sort of wander out.

S: Or else otherwise if you're in a dull passive state and it's the weekend especially, there's nothing particular to do and you don't particularly want to do anything. If you drift out that's about the worst sort of thing you can do.

Clive: If you do want, if you do have nothing to do and you want to go out then you try and sort of think if it's going to happen that you should make something of it. Go to a concert or something like that.

S: Do something, yes. At least the getting there is active even you when you get there just sit down in the seat and take it all in.

Adrian: Could you say that having a sort of passive attitude in a town would be a situation in which your conceptions, your old conceptions, were actually being bolstered up. You've got all these influences coming in on you, all the old influences.

S: Yes I suppose indirectly yes, though I was thinking more in terms of the emotional effect. If you are at all sensitive and you just go into town say or into a busy shopping centre, the vibes for want of a better term are of a very definite and almost peculiar nature. They are heavy. They are sort of loaded [127] with greed, they're sort of clogged. They're certainly not free or clear or sparkling or anything like that. I've given descriptions in the past of my experience in Plymouth where Vajrakumara and I used to go in on our weekly or fortnightly or in the end we tried to make it monthly, shopping expedition from our cliff top chalet, and sometimes the experience, the atmosphere in the supermarkets was really dreadful and I had quite sort of as it were negative visions of a sort of going around one of these enormous supermarkets especially the food department and you see these elderly women with their big wire baskets on their arms. They just stand almost transfixed in front of a food counter with

their mouth hanging half open and their eyes sort of glazed over and just staring at a lump of cheese or piece of pork, and you slowly see this hand come out with what I used to describe as an expression of reptilian greed! They'd clutch it and draw it back into the shopping bag. It was really quite awful to see. It was such a heavy clogged, dull sort of atmosphere and we seemed to be at that time very sensitive to such things so we used to get back to the cliff top as quickly as we could and on some occasions it took us several hours to recover. It was such an unpleasant experience.

I don't know why, especially Plymouth, but this is what we used to experience. At one time we didn't even dare to go further than the outskirts of Plymouth and just do a bit of shopping in a store that we discovered there. Just to go into the town centre and go to one of the supermarkets even though it was cheaper was just a bit too much.

Clive: I think that people should watch hitchhiking in the same respect. It can be really upsetting. When I went to Tyn-y-Ddol a couple of months ago I was really upset by the hitch hiking. By the people that I got in with after the end of the day I had such different effects, and none of them particularly positive and I was really upset by it.

S: So in towns to wander damages one's yoga, especially if one is in a passive pseudo-receptive state, exposed rather than open. Rather than positive and outward going and taking the initiative. Perhaps one should also make it clear that taking the initiative and being active and positive doesn't necessarily mean just doing something spectacular. It is essentially a mental attitude. The great point is made in Buddhism, especially in the Abhidharma, that meditation is an active state. It is not a passive state. Because in meditation you are constantly, you are continually producing, even creating skilful mental states. So meditation is a very active process. It is an uninterrupted flow of skilful volitions of tremendous karmic significance.

So if you can go into town maintaining a highly meditative state of mind by whatsoever means whether by repeating a mantra or in some other way, you are in fact active rather than passive and therefore can wander or move about in the town with less possibility of damaging your yoga.

Asvajit: I remember when I was staying at Queens Road in Norwich, even going into Norwich which seemed a quite harmless little town compared with London, I would always keep my mantra out, and the moment I dropped it I very soon got out of...

S: Well Mara will get you.

Asvajit: It was quite an important practice as far as I was concerned.

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Atula: I must admit I really like wandering around in towns. I really like wandering around the Thames and different parts of London.

Mangala: You can sometimes just wander and just be receptive and you're just really taking things in. I don't mean in a negative way but you're really appreciating things. You're actually aware of what you see. You're not just dead but there's an actual appreciation there.

S: But one is usually then a bit selective. You wander into Victoria Park or you wander along by the Thames or you wander in some little secluded square. You don't wander around the supermarket.

Clive: Or Piccadilly or places like that.

Atula: Oh no. Special places.

S: So in a way you're roaming in the least town like bits of the town.

Aloka: If you are feeling a bit sort of dead on energy you can sort of re-establish your own initiative just by not going out. Just making the decision that you are feeling a bit dull, not to do anything.

S: When you're feeling dull and bored that's the time I think you shouldn't go out. Because in your dullness and boredom you're just looking for distraction.

Mangala: What about going to see a concert or something like that.

S: Well one doesn't presumably go to see a concert because one is feeling dull and bored.

Mangala: You might sort of think well this will pick me up. You might decide oh yeah well I need a change or something a bit stimulating or something like that.

S: Well yes sometimes one can do that but if one is suffering in any radical way from dullness or boredom well a concert is not going to help you. But if you are basically a positive healthy person and you just feel the need of a bit of enhancement of that state or maybe you've had rather a tiring day and you're a little out of contact with your feelings even though maybe normally you are very much in contact with them, well under those circumstances going to a concert can be a very positive thing to do.

But I think it's even better if you go to a concert because a concert will give you enjoyment. That you already go along in a highly positive state and the experience of the concert heightens that even, gives you something more.

Clive: Your dullness or your negativity could be quite superficial just to get in your way and the concert can sort of just bring you out of it.

S: Right yes.

Aloka: If you're really dull... you don't enjoy.

S: You won't even enjoy the concert, no.

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Aloka: It's just a horrible sort of guilty.

S: It might even irritate you.

Atula: Or you won't be satisfied with it.

Asvajit: Just one more thing that occurred to me. I sometimes felt actually that going into towns has had a stimulating effect on me. Just the contact with people, ordinary people, human beings especially after being by yourself for quite a while. There are some people one can find who are quite positive. You see the occasional face that is really genuinely positive, and that can have quite a stimulating effect. You see people who are enjoying themselves in a quite innocent way.

S: Too often in the town people are moving past so quickly you won't even have a chance to see their faces. But yes one mustn't over generalize. Yes, sometimes, if one is very careful and of course repeating one's mantra all the time, yes it can be mildly stimulating just to spend a few minutes in the town.

Asvajit: I think travelling on a bus for instance you see people talking and chatting.

S: Yes, you are of course very much then the spectator. You're not really very involved.

Adrian: One of my overall impressions of travelling up here from Tyn-y-Ddol was one of sort of suffering and sickness. I've never really seen it like that before. Just sitting on the Underground smoking with lines on their faces.

S: I don't know why one seems to notice it especially on the Underground. Maybe because people travel to and ... end of side

Side two

Mangala: It's not really a social situation. It's almost like a sort of private situation. People... you see in a way where people are actually at. In a sense people are more actually in touch with themselves perhaps in the train than they are in the office.

S: In a sense yes. They can't bother to pretend, they're too tired to pretend and they've got no one to pretend to so they slump there, just being the way that they feel which is tired and drained and bored and fed up or whatever. They don't try to keep up any pretences.

Clive: I felt that about the tube especially. You're cut off from nature quite... there's not even any light, natural light. I think that has an effect.

S: There's not even proper air, especially if you travel in the smoking compartment. You really notice it when you come from the underground to the overground at Hammersmith or wherever it is and you come up in the sunlight. Even that is quite a positive experience isn't it, when the train suddenly emerges from the tunnel.

Adrian: It seems quite right for some reason. You're sort of under the ground and all of a sudden you emerge and think this is [130] not ( ) something's wrong!

Mangala: It's not the underground! (Laughter)

S: All right then Milarepa goes on to say, 'to join the assembly of the Brethren, to attend the



meeting of Dakinis, and be present at the secret feasts, are the three occasions not to miss.' To join the assembly of brethren. This seems to refer to joining the bhikkhu sangha, to becoming a monk, and one gets the impression that Milarepa is speaking of the experience of spiritual community in increasing degrees of intensity. To attend the meeting of the Dakinis, these are the meetings which are held in burning grounds, in cremation grounds, where there is a very heightened experience in every way and the dakinis, well one can take them literally, one can take them symbolically. Symbolically they are the upsurging spiritual energies, the energies of inspiration, and then the secret feasts. These are the Tantric feasts. A feast, an occasion on which you all eat together especially if you are people united by a definite spiritual bond, this is a very special occasion, there's a special feeling of intimacy and spiritual harmony and communication. So it does seem as though Milarepa is speaking in terms of a progressively deeper and more intense and more vibrant experience of spiritual community. He regards the experience of spiritual community within the monastic order as comparatively tame so to speak. That which occurs at the meeting of the dakinis as quite, somewhat more, intense and then that which occurs on the occasion of the secret feast, well presumably is most intense of all, that is when the wine, literal or symbolical, circulates and people really enter into communication with one another.

So he says, are the three occasions not to miss. Perhaps he's suggesting to Rechung that the way he goes to India even when he is busy as Milarepa hopes he will be obtaining the formless dakini dharmas, he doesn't miss any opportunities of spiritual companionship, spiritual community, from the most superficial to the most profound.

But for instance you might be say travelling around America, you don't miss any opportunity of spiritual community, any opportunity of enjoying spiritual community. At the most superficial level other people who also call themselves Buddhists with varying degrees of justification, you can have some experience of spiritual community with them, but then you might meet people who've had some contact with the FWBO. They may not even be Friends but they've had some contact with the FWBO. So with them you can have a deeper experience of spiritual community. But suppose over there you happen to run into travelling Order members, well there's a possibility of even deeper experience of spiritual community. It's like that. So Milarepa is saying to Rechungpa don't miss any opportunity of spiritual community whether it's joining an assembly of the brethren, attending a meeting of the dakinis, or being present at the secret feasts. You take every opportunity that you can get. These are three occasions not to miss. No opportunity of spiritual community should be missed by you on your journey to India.

Mangala: Why is the female dakini used rather than say daka for example to...

S: I think it was because the teachings were addressed for the most part originally to men, to male practitioners of the dharma. So if one wanted to refer to a symbol which was especially [131] evocative and had a more emotional connotation, one refers to a symbol in female rather than in male form. I think it relates to that.

Mangala: I wonder if that's actually true.

S: Well that depends!

Mangala: Like I think probably a lot of men are very inspired by certain male heroes etc., etc.

S: I think it's a different kind of inspiration that is meant. I'm not saying that that kind of inspiration cannot possibly be embodied in any male form. For the Ancient Greeks it certainly could be. But not apparently for the Ancient Indians. Because there is a sort of analogy suggested. One is concerned with inspiration and what is the great analogue for inspiration and let's say emotional excitation, it is the sexual. So if one is trying to give or trying to form or to create a symbol for that which is spiritually exciting, spiritually stimulating and inspiring and if one is addressing a male practitioner of the dharma, well one will tend to speak more in terms of a young and attractive female, because the ordinary man finds the young and attractive female stimulating on the biological and psychological level.

So if you want a human symbol for an analogous process on the spiritual level that symbol will tend for most men to take a female form. I think it is simply that. But unfortunately there is room for misunderstanding and the misunderstanding is that if you want spiritual inspiration get an attractive young woman to live with you. But that is not the point at all because a male spiritual companion, if anything, can have that dakini quality more powerfully usually than a female. Certainly than an ordinary female.

Mangala: Why should the Ancient Greeks have been different then in that respect?

S: It's very difficult to say. There must be historical reasons but it is quite strange that the Ancient Greeks developed those attitudes whereas the Ancient Indians apparently did not at all .

Atula: Something to do with the heroic.

S: Well there is a strong heroic element in say the Indian epic literature, but it seems not to have taken this form. Or it may be that the Ancient Indians, which means the Hindus like the ancient Jews, as depicted in the Old Testament were so tied so to speak to the group and to the continuation of the group through biological means that for them the most important relationship was that between man and woman and the Greeks were able to detach themselves from that to some extent, to as it were, dissociate beauty from the purely biological reproductive process, and the Buddhists were to an even greater extent. But the Hindus as such, certainly the ancient Hindus, the Ancient Indians, were not really able to do that.

Clive: So the dakini is an Indian symbol, not Tibetan?

S: Yes. Originally it belonged to Indian Buddhism though the [132] Tibetans have taken over the Sanskrit word and they use it quite a lot. They also use the word (Kadoma) which is a Tibetan - that is equivalent to (Kachari) which means sky walker or sky traveller. The dakini supposed to move about in the sky, fly through the air.

Dakini means a lady of space so to speak, it's (drik ) which means a direction of space.

Clive: Is there a direct relation to the kind of energies or passions aroused in attraction to a young female and the kind of spiritual energies symbolized by the dakini.

S: There doesn't seem to be a direct connection in the sense that the one sort of flows into the other. There doesn't seem to be. So that is why the young female is a symbol in this respect but nothing more than a symbol. So that you don't come any closer to that ideal by keeping a

young female literally with you. It's the quality symbolized by the young female that you are concerned with.

Mangala: So what role did the daka then play?

S: Well the daka presumably would be the same for a woman but the daka occupied a less prominent place just because female practitioners of the dharma were less numerous and less prominent. But perhaps I think in the West we should drop the gender so to speak and not speak so much in terms of dakini literally but speak in terms of the inspiring spiritual companion, which it seems more often would be of the same sex rather than the opposite sex. But the important thing is that that spiritual companion must inspire so to speak in that dakini like way. I really wonder whether any man ever gets real spiritual inspiration from a spiritual companion who is a woman. I mean theoretically it is not impossible but it doesn't seem to happen very much or very often if at all. A real sparking off.

Vajradaka: You mean in literature and history.

S: No I'm thinking within the context of the Friends.

Mangala: Actually I went to see a concert a few months back. A pop concert. I was more or less coaxed into going by somebody. This woman singer called Joan Armatrading who is by all accounts meant to be pretty good actually and I said that I didn't fancy it to start with but I went along anyway and she appeared and she had this sort of band with her with four or five guys playing guitars and drums and stuff. And first of all when she came on I thought this is going to be good. But after a while I just got sort of very sort of bored by the whole thing. And I realized what it was. She was clearly the star of the show and the men were just completely like weak emasculated sort of throwbacks from the early seventies or late sixties. Still basically hippies with velvet jackets and long hair and stuff. And she had a lot of sparkle and oomph but... and people were sort of applauding and raving etc., etc., but I just couldn't see anything there to inspire me. There wasn't anything there to sort of inspire me or turn me on. And I remember sort of thinking that in fact I don't think I can think of any woman perhaps who has ever really had that kind of effect on me.

S: Of course within the present context one is speaking or thinking of an inspiration and stimulation of a much higher degree, [133] a much higher level. Not even that, well much more than that which one would get even from a very good male singer at any pop concert.

Though one can get a sort of pleasant friendly glow perhaps from a woman and maybe some warm companionship but a real spiritual spark, and almost a jolt which you sometimes need that one seems never to get.

Pete S: I think you can get that in an intellectual sort of way. They can obviously say things that are inspiring in a sort of intellectual...

S: Well a better educated or better informed woman may well be able to do that, but it's a question of the impact of someone's total being. That impact is galvanizing and stimulating and inspiring. That one seems not to get.

Suvajra: What about traditionally? Have there been cases of female Buddhists?

S: Well in the Buddha's day yes there are records of female Arhants and so on.

Suvajra: But did they have disciples?

S: Nonetheless for what the tradition is worth there are traditions of female Arhants and some seem to have been good teachers. But this particular quality one doesn't see any evidence of.

Pete S: Surely there must be a potential there even so for them to develop that ability.

S: Well traditional Buddhism would say yes, that there is that potential but as that potential develops over the years and over one's series of lives what would happen was that the female organism would be transformed into a male organism and the woman would be reborn as a man. That will be the traditional view. Because the context is not just one life but a whole series of lives. But with the existing female organism apparently it is very difficult to generate or to develop that kind of energy. This sort of way of looking at things goes very much against current modes of thought but one must nonetheless remain open minded with regards to it and be quite honest about one's actual experience. Has one ever felt really inspired and stimulated and galvanized by a woman, spiritually speaking. Even though on the biological level yes. A woman's presence is capable of stimulating one very much as one knows.

Mangala: Would you like to say that perhaps a woman's more... she maybe can't inspire and galvanize in that sort of way. Maybe she can supply receptivity, gentleness, tenderness and those certain qualities.

S: Well those are the traditionally feminine qualities. I certainly don't think women are more receptive than men. I've discussed this on several occasions. Because here one is sort of arguing from a purely literal physical receptivity to a mental and spiritual receptivity. But it just doesn't follow. Does one really find that say women are more receptive to new [134] ideas than men are?

: No.

S: No one certainly doesn't. The more conservative section of the population is always made up of the women. Socially and culturally conservative. In India women always without exception wear traditional dress. It's the men that change into jeans and pants and shirts and things.

Mangala: What about the qualities of just kindness, gentleness...

S: A woman is biologically equipped to be a mother and therefore to nurture and therefore all those qualities associated with the nurturing function are found more in women than in men. But whether a woman is really kinder than a man is another matter.

Mangala: How important do you think it is to be in contact with these nurturing sort of qualities for one's spiritual development.

S: I think it's quite important to be in touch with as it were the psychological and spiritual

counterparts of those nurturing qualities. For instance if you have a pupil or disciple, someone you are teaching, yes you need to have almost a sort of mother like attitude on the appropriate level. Not that you're literally mothering that particular disciple. That would be disastrous, that's the last thing that he wants. That would be really bad for him. But you care for his spiritual growth in much the same way that a mother in the literal sense cares for the physical growth of the child.

Mangala: Would you say that let's say the average woman would be unable to supply the real sort of nurturing qualities needed for someone's spiritual development?

S: Yes I think they would be quite unable. And might go on mothering in the literal sense which would in fact be a hindrance rather than a help.

Clive: Do you think that traditionally what happens is that women have those certain nurturing qualities like you said kindness. But that's kindness in a physical way, kindness which is associated with bringing up children; but then the spiritual quality sort of gets projected on to that because in a sense it does have some sort of ...

S: Well it's analogous without being... well it has a sort of symbolical value only. Just as you say well women are biologically stimulating. That is agreed, so therefore you use the female form as a symbol but only a symbol of what stimulates spiritually. But you cannot argue from that that women therefore are spiritually stimulating.

Vajradaka: Looking back I think I've been inspired twice by women. One in the very early days when I met Irmgard Schloegel, when I'd never met a real practising Buddhist which she had been for eleven years. It's because of her that I started meditating, her positivity and even her courage inspired me I think. And I think sometimes, well once, recently I got inspired [135] just by the efforts of a young woman friend who was just trying to overcome the limitations of being a woman in a way.

S: I think you are using the word inspired a little loosely here. Do you see what I mean? Because yes certainly one can see in many women admirable qualities which will make you feel really glad that such qualities exist, but real dynamic spiritual inspiration of the sort that we are speaking of well would you say that you really felt that?

Vajradaka: No not that.

S: One can feel in the broader sense of the term quite inspired by the way in which a woman brings up her children. It can be very positive and very admirable and one can be well impressed by that, but that is a different kind of thing I would say.

Vajradaka: So you're really kind of putting a capital I on inspired. From a higher point of view.

S: Perhaps I am, yes.

Atula: I was going to say most of my first contact with the Friends, the most encouragement was from Dhammadinna who went out of her way to sort of push but there again not that type of thinking of inspiration but certainly help and encouragement and all that sort of thing.

S: Those are nearer to sort of the nurturant level as it were.

Pete S: Going back to spiritually feminine qualities, are you saying that feminine spiritual qualities are stronger in men than in women?

S: I'm almost saying that. I'm not completely sure in the case of all the qualities, all the so-called feminine qualities traditionally associated more with women than with men. I'm sure as regards receptivity. I'm quite certain that men are more receptive than women and that therefore one cannot really describe receptivity as a feminine quality, if one associates feminine qualities more with women and masculine qualities more with men. About say tenderness I'm not so sure but maybe. I think the likelihood is that the so called feminine qualities are to be found more in men than in women, as distinct from the female characteristics. For instance I have read somewhere more than once in fact, that patients in hospital remark that male nurses are more gentle and sensitive than female nurses. One of my friends told me that when he was in hospital and he was having to have surgical dressings every day that the nurses, the female nurses were without exception quite rough and didn't bother much about causing him pain. They just sort of tore off the bandages each day almost. But he said the male nurses were very gentle and very sensitive and were concerned not to cause him any pain and he was quite surprised because he would have thought it would be the other way round.

Pete S: This suggests that on an ordinary level, that men are perhaps more tender. This is not exactly the same as ( )

Clive: It's the other way round actually. In a very ordinary level [136] and limited situation a woman can sort of expand the natural nurturing qualities to a certain degree but when that situation becomes too great for that, like say working in a hospital, then genuine compassion takes over, a more spiritual sort of awareness.

Mangala: I suppose in as much as... following what you said about men being more developed as a species, therefore they're bound to manifest all spiritual qualities more than women and perhaps the mistake is that we're confusing say... we're still seeing feminine in terms of the female whereas if we see it in terms of being spiritual qualities well then men will have developed all spiritual qualities wherever they are more than women.

S: This is the direction in which the argument seems to tend. Even though one is maybe because of current ways of thinking a little reluctant to press it very strongly but it seems that that is the trend of the argument. One doesn't want to be dogmatic about it or to over generalize.

Mangala: So whether one's talking about masculine or feminine qualities men will manifest them more than women inasmuch...

S: It would seem so. This is the conclusion to which I have been gradually coming.

Asvajit: Supposing one puts this sort of argument to a group of women what sort of response do you get?

S: Well it depends what group of women. I mean within the FWBO now the majority of

women have got a very sensible and non reactive attitude and quite a few of them would agree that it is more difficult for a woman to follow the spiritual path. Some of them, well many of them, will now admit that quite freely. If you were to put this to a group of women in India they would probably say, whether Hindu or Muslim women or Buddhist women, say yes of course men are more spiritually minded than women or men are more suited to the spiritual life. They take it for granted or they say women are more worldly than men, women are more earthly than men. This is what they usually say.

Atula: I think the trouble has been that when you start using that sort of thing to actually getting a woman's way of actually growing. Like a lot of times I hear people more or less telling them they just can't grow, that there's no way and that men are much better and that's it. You're just sort of stopping. If you can't help someone then just don't get in their way.

S: Right. Sometimes one is asked and if one is asked well people ask you at their own risk, at their own peril. If they ask you well do you think it is as easy for a woman to develop spiritually as a man well one has to say other factors being equal it would seem that it is more difficult. One doesn't want to go out of one's way to say to women it's more difficult for you because that is only to discourage them. But on the other hand one must be realistic. If someone comes to you who is deaf and blind and says well is it going to be more difficult for me to evolve well you can only say well probably [137] yes. Or if someone comes along who is seventy five and says is it going to be more difficult for me to evolve than someone of eighteen or nineteen you can say well probably yes. You can't be completely certain. You have to be realistic. If you can't say to the seventy five year old person oh no it's just as easy for you to evolve as the eighteen or nineteen year old person. If they ask you you've just got to be honest. Because also you aren't going to be able to evolve if you don't really see where you are and where your difficulties lie and what your handicaps are. So it's just the same with women. If you sort of say in a sort of pseudo complimentary way oh no it's easy for you to evolve, it doesn't matter that you are a woman, it's not going to make any difference. Well then you're not really being honest with them and that is not going to help them. So you just have to follow a middle way.

Mangala: I suppose too you have to be careful about generalization and like I suppose in some cases certain women might look like they're actually going to develop more than some men.

S: Right because the question also arises what is a woman and what is a man. It isn't that you are either definitely one hundred percent a man or definitely one hundred percent a woman. There are some say women who are women say physiologically who have got many qualities of an individual, both the masculine and the feminine and who may do better than some men, some who are physiologically men, but broadly speaking it does seem to be true that for the majority of women it's more difficult to lead a spiritual life than the majority of men. It seems to borne out in our experience.

Mangala: Presumably like the women order members are much better off than probably most men in our society.

S: Oh yes, I don't think there's much doubt about that.

Clive: I suppose the difference between any Order member and any other non Order member

is quite significant but the difference between women Order members and women outside is incredible!

S: Probably even greater yes.

Anyway I think we'd better stop for a moment and have a cup of tea.

... to Tantric gatherings from which people not initiated into that particular mandala were excluded. I think this raises this whole question of so to speak the naturally esoteric. You can't make something really esoteric by just literally excluding other people. Do you see what I mean? What makes something really esoteric, what makes something really secret is the fact that all the people present, all the people participating, are on a common wavelength or share a common experience that others are not on or that others do not share. I think within the context of the movement sometimes people get a bit uneasy about their being excluded. They think they are excluded say from an Order meeting etc., etc. But it is not in a sense anybody is excluded, it is that in a sense they exclude themselves because you can't be included by being physically present. You can be included only by being committed, so far as an Order meeting is concerned. So even if [138] you were allowed to be physically present you wouldn't be actually there because you wouldn't be on the same wavelength. If it of course so happens in an exceptional case that you were then of course you ought to be ordained on the spot.

Pete S: I think that's quite an organic thing isn't it.

S: Yes. So these are the three occasions not to miss. Obviously one really needs to underline the fact that one really shouldn't miss these sort of opportunities, these sort of occasions. For all the experience of spiritual community, to whatsoever degree, whether more or less intense. If you're an Order member don't miss the Order meeting.

Mangala: The secret feast.

S: Don't miss the meeting of the dakinis whatever that may mean.

Mangala: He does actually use words like secret feasts and yet you were saying this means an Order meeting presumably. That would be our understanding of it but I mean he hasn't said like meetings, he has actually said secret feasts.

S: Well this does refer to those occasions when initiates into a particular Tantric tradition or Tantric practice or mandala as it is said, met together for the purpose of perhaps ritual worship and that on such occasions food would be offered, food would be dedicated to whoever was the Buddha or Bodhisattva or guardian deity or dakini worshipped, and then distributed among everybody present and so to speak sacramentally partaken of as a symbol of the spiritual bond between them. So Milarepa is saying as it were well don't miss any opportunity of getting yourself initiated into particular Tantric teachings and traditions and joining in the mandala in that way and sharing the secret feasts, well secret, it doesn't say secret but it is secret inasmuch as only those who have been initiated would be admitted. These sort of feasts were quite common in India among Tantric yogins but often degenerated. There are many stories of them just degenerating into orgies especially if female initiates happened to be present and if there was drinking which might originally have been the purely sacramental drinking of a few drops of wine but eventually became a drinking party. So some



of these feasts started getting a bad name.

Mangala: It sounds very sort of pagan. I don't mean in a bad sense.

Pete S: It seems to relate to things like pujas and dedication ceremonies. There is a certain amount of something esoteric there isn't there. The experience that you have by virtue of your state of mind.

S: Your understanding, your meaningful participation.

Mangala: If you were actually having a sort of sacred feast perhaps with the Order in a shrine room and some kind of elaborate ritual feast.

S: We might have secret feasts for all you know. (Laughter) If people had heard about them they wouldn't be secret! (Laughter)

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Clive: Couldn't you say that it's just sort of a spiritual feast, that is a feast of people who are in communication.

S: Yes. I think the fact that you eat together, you being members of a spiritual community, does add something. I think you have to be careful that it doesn't also cause you to lose something. I think the fact that you are eating and even drinking together shouldn't mean that you become unmindful. Maybe it should be slightly formalized as with the Japanese tea ceremony but I think it can give an additional dimension. It can make the whole thing, the whole experience, the common relationship that you have, very very concrete. That you are sharing food, that you are eating together. It is a very basic thing after all.

Mangala: I remember on some of the sesshins I've been on years ago we used to actually have meals in the shrine room and it would be brought in by a few people and we would also sit around in a circle perhaps and food would be sort of handed to you and you'd all eat in silence together and it would all be taken away again.

S: I'm not altogether happy about doing it very casually. First of all the way that many people eat is so unmindful it would seem to be quite out of place in the shrine, and also eating is a quite gross physical activity and that therefore you need quite a high degree of mindfulness or of strong spiritual experience to assimilate the grossness of the eating experience to the spiritual life and the spiritual experience. Do you see what I mean?

Clive: I'm not quite sure.

S: Well the activity of eating is associated with hunger, appetite, even greed, associated with the nourishing of the physical body, associated with the processes of digestion, assimilation, excretion and so on. So eating is a pretty earthy activity and associated not with very refined mental states. So when you are meditating or you've been doing a puja your mental states are comparatively refined so there is the danger I think that if you join eating and drinking to say the puja and meditation or have them in the shrine there will be a displacement of the comparatively refined atmosphere created by puja and meditation by the comparatively gross atmosphere created by eating and drinking. So you have to be careful that the atmosphere

created by puja and meditation can transform the atmosphere created by eating and drinking and not the other way around.

It's not that just you are eating and drinking in the shrine. It must be far more than that. It's not just a question of turning the shrine into a temporary dining room, but this is what would more often than not happen I'm sure. You want to sort of include the eating and drinking within as it were the whole ritual process so that you're eating and drinking in the same way and in the same spirit as you're making offerings on the - I was going to say altar but I don't really like to use that word - the offering table in front of the Buddha.

Clive : Are there sort of intermediate I won't say Bodhisattvas but deities or something which are associated with grosser [140] activities like eating, physical excesses?

S: Oh yes there's one in particular even who is associated with the toilet. (O Chus Ma) In monasteries they have his painting in the toilets because he is especially associated with the flushing out of all impurities from the mind as well as from the body. Oh yes. The sort of fiery upward blazing one, it means something like that.. He looks very fierce also.

He's also meant to deal with all the pretas and evil spirits that haunt the toilet.

So also you feel that in the shrine you're trying to create a refined atmosphere, a spiritual atmosphere for want of a better term and you do that with the help of flowers and lights and incense. And then you bring in cooked food which has got a very gross sort of smell. It seems completely inappropriate. I've experienced this sometimes in India, especially in Hindu temples, but even Buddhist temples. Sometimes the Bengali Buddhists, they bring in great loads of rice and curry and offer it in front of the shrine and the smell of it all just doesn't go with the smell of the incense and that is a bit typical perhaps.

So I think if you do eat and drink so to speak sacramentally it should be a little bit - things are a bit refined and not with heavy gross smells which are quite incompatible with the odours of the shrine room.

Aloka: Presumably you wouldn't be eating in that sort of way just to satisfy hunger. You wouldn't go in starving hungry. It would be more symbolic.

S: Well yes and no. You shouldn't go in starving hungry but it should be the actual activity of eating which... end of tape

tape eight...

... you must actually eat and drink and enjoy the eating and drinking.

Mangala: I think it could be useful to experiment with that in the shrine.

S: I think one has to do it very carefully and mindfully because one doesn't want crumbs all over the place and things like that. It isn't a question of as I said turning the shrine room into a temporary dining room. You also need enough space. It needs to be done quite gracefully and with mindfulness.

Clive: Wouldn't it be better to turn the dining room into a temporary shrine room? In that sense just have a sort of image or something.

Asvajit: It's rather strange that we feel it necessary to sort of consecrate the activity by having it in a shrine room.

S: Yes. There's that too, but perhaps we do need to do that psychologically. Perhaps it's difficult for us to really feel that kind of atmosphere unless we do have some strong symbols around. Otherwise yes as you say that is in fact the Theravada approach. They do no more than eat mindfully but the Tibetans do it differently. They all actually sit in the shrine room [141] or in the temple with all the images there and having just chanted and they are served with their food on the spot and they have a special food offering prayer and tea drinking prayer to recite. It's all done within the context of the shrine room. But the Theravadins seem to think that it's enough if you simply eat mindfully in the fullest sense. And that probably is enough if you can do that but perhaps that is very difficult.

Pete S: I think it's quite a good way of meeting someone if you eat with them. Maybe invite somebody to dinner or go out even and eat with somebody.

S: That's true, because eating together has its own psychological significance. But I think what you should be careful of is that you shouldn't have a situation in which say in the community you eat in the shrine room or you have a shrine room in the dining room or a shrine in the dining room and maybe you have chants and all that before you sat and into that situation you bring a complete newcomer, a guest who knows nothing of Buddhism. Do you see what I mean? That must be the sort of situation that you create just for the spiritual community itself. Otherwise if you were to bring a person from the outside well that would just be a block, he would find it all very strange and he was being conscripted into something under pretence of an invitation to a meal.

Vajradaka: I had that experience in Boston when I went to the Cambridge Zen Centre. They ate their meal formally and they had to explain to me exactly how to eat the meal and I had to watch the person sitting next to me and had to do everything meticulously to a certain form and I went along with it but I could imagine that if I had no contact at all, if I wasn't actually taken over by the exoticness of it I could have actually have been quite repelled by it.

S: I must say the Indians are very good in this respect. They are usually quite free and easy about these sort of things. They don't have any sort of rigid social frameworks or socio-religious frameworks into which they try to fit you in this sort of way. The only thing is among orthodox Hindus you have to be very careful not to touch food with the left hand. That's the only thing you really need to bother about. And also that you should eat enough and make loud noises of satisfaction at frequent intervals (Laughter).

Anyway how did all this question of food...?

: Feasts.

S: Oh the feasts, yes. It's as though the food in a way represents if not symbolizes all the material energies. After all the body and the bodily energies are kept going with the material food. So if your spiritual communion let's say includes the taking of food together it

represents that incorporation of the gross energies into the whole process of the spiritual life, and this is something that you're trying to do anyway isn't it. You don't lead the spiritual life with some rarefied part of your personality. You lead it with your whole life, your whole being, body, speech and mind. So in a way it is natural that you should not only meditate together as a spiritual activity, but eat and drink together as a spiritual activity.

Mangala: And work.

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S: And work, yes. Mustn't forget work. Sacramental work. That's I think much more difficult. But I think there is a difficulty if not to say a danger in this sacramental approach. You don't sort of sanctify everything. You don't spiritualize it by superimposing upon it the symbols of religion. I think that is a very important point. Do you see what I mean?

Pete S: Not exactly.

S: First of all what does one mean by a sort of, to use this word, a word I'm not very happy with though I did use it in my earlier days, a sort of sacramental approach. It means the endowing of quite ordinary activities with a spiritual significance. Or even trying to see or to appreciate, to realize the spiritual significance of those activities so that once those activities are brought within the preview of the spiritual life, the spiritual realm and also that those activities may remind you by being imbued with that religious or spiritual significance those activities may remind you of the spiritual life, the spiritual world and of spiritual things. Do you see what I mean? But that must be a genuine process. You don't sort of sacramentalize say eating and drinking by just rapidly and unmindfully chanting a few prayers before you eat and drink.

You must genuinely eat and drink mindfully. You must genuinely feel that the energy that you are getting from the food is going into your system and that this energy is being used to follow the spiritual path. You must actually feel this. It isn't enough just to chant a few mantras. So you don't make a meal say sacramental by just holding it in the shrine. By just having the symbols of religion present. The essence of the sacramental approach is a profound mental and spiritual attitude.

It's just the same with the so called sacrament of marriage. You don't sort of spiritualize a sexual coupling just by getting a priest to pronounce some holy words over that particular matter. Do you see what I mean?

So the sacramental cannot be mechanically made so. This is what Luther was protesting about as against the Roman Catholic Church. The whole sacramental system had become mechanical and even commercialized.

Pete S: Sort of alienated from it.

S: Yes. In fact for instance with regard to the sacrament as it was called of confession and absolution. Well instead of your going to the priest and confessing your sins and being absolved from them being a real meaningful process you went along and said I've done this and I've done this, paid a bit of money and he muttered a few words over you and you went away with a certificate saying you were clear of the sin. That isn't really a sacrament any

more.

Vajradaka: It's more like a convention.

S: Yes it's more like a convention. So you don't sacramentalize something. You don't imbue something with for you a deeply spiritual significance by simply sticking on to the exterior of that thing or that activity the symbols of religion. But this is what happens. So often. What we have to be so careful about even within Buddhism.

Vajradaka: Do you think that it often happens that people have a kind of sense of sanctity from alienation?

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S: What do you mean?

Vajradaka: Well I was thinking of a particular thing actually where a person saw his whole life as being a way of ridding himself of his ego. He had this false view that spiritual life was ridding himself of his ego and finally he got himself into a psychotic state which was pure alienation where he actually drove a knife into his heart as part of a process of purification of himself. Amazingly enough he didn't kill himself although it went in six inches, but that - I was thinking of that and I wondered if it had any other...

S: That seemed to be a sort of literal acting out of a metaphor doesn't it? Stabbing your ego to death. You don't stab it to death with a knife but with insight. Do you see what I mean. You don't necessarily have a sacramental meal just by keeping an image of the Buddha on the table. And in the same way you can have a sacramental meal, a genuinely sacramental meal without any Buddha image or candles or flowers or incense or anything of that sort just because you are all genuinely eating and drinking together and are all on the same wavelength.

Mangala: I suppose also just because you do a sevenfold puja either doesn't necessarily mean it's a spiritual practice or a sacrament if your mental state is not in keeping with that.

Suvajra: That's the area of attachment to rights isn't it?

S: Yes indeed. You could say that. Thinking that they have significance on their own account. That is in a way I believe the Catholic doctrine, that the sacraments are automatically efficacious regardless of the mental state or the degree of sanctity of the person operating them. That is why sin in the priest does not impair the efficacy of the sacraments. This is official catholic doctrine. Those who are ex Catholics must have been taught this at some stage or other. Even if your priest is in mortal sin it does not impair the efficacy of the sacraments he administers. He is still a priest. He is none the less a priest as regards the efficacy of his administration of the sacraments by being in a state himself of mortal sin. Even if he is in a state of mortal sin he can absolve you from sin.

Vajradaka: It sounds like a con trick.

S: Well that's what Luther said and that was the origin in a way of Protestantism. The Protestants said it's a con trick. We just don't want anything more to do with it. The whole

show is rotten. They threw out all the sacraments except two. They threw out five out of the seven sacraments and they left only two - baptism and the Lord's supper as they called it.

Aloka: There seem to be quite a few examples of what you're talking about at the Festival of Mind and Body this year. Some of the groups there whose approach seemed to be trying to give some sort of spiritual significance to quite mundane activities.

S: That's right. I overheard something a bit like that wandering round. Someone would say here's this sort of scent or perfume. Just let me put a few drops on your hand or on your hankie - it's really powerful. It's been blessed. So many mantras have been [144] recited over it, there are very strong vibrations attached to it. One overheard people say those sort of things.

Suvajra: What about these Tibetan pills that the lamas chant and imbibe with...

S: Well what about them?! (Laughter) I'm not saying that there's an absolute gulf between so called matter and so called mind and I'm not saying that so to speak physical influences may not attach themselves to material objects. I'm not saying that you cannot even be effected mentally by things that you ingest which have had perhaps mantras or prayers recited over them. But what I'm saying is that the difference made is only marginal and certainly not decisive, and that you cannot really attain to any degree of actual mental purification by such means.

Clive: The difference between something like that and let's say you have a communication with a guru and then you're going to go away from him and he gives you a rupa. I should imagine that that kind of material object really does have some significance.

S: Yes, but it's a significance. It's not that literally a sort of vibe attaches to it. Again yes wandering around the same festival. I forget whether it was on that occasion, this year or the previous year, but looking at a little image a woman who ran the stall saw me pick up a little image and sort of look at it. It was quite nice but it was very expensive, and she said oh yes it's really great and aren't there a lot of lovely vibes all around it and saying something like that. It just seemed so false. I won't say that the woman was deliberately lying. She was just deluded and she perhaps if she thought about it at all thought that she felt vibes or she thought that vibes were there so of course she must be feeling them or experiencing them. So that's the sort of patter that she was giving. You're almost sort of buying the vibes, the vibes justified their unreasonably high price. It was a sort of commercialization of vibes, a commercialization of sanctity, commercialized sacramentalism one might even say or sacramentalized commercialism - I'm not quite sure which.

One must be so careful of humbug in the spiritual life. One doesn't want to exclude the element of the non rational, the transnormal let us say, the magical. One doesn't want to adopt a dry rational approach but one must be really on one's guard against humbug. Here are hundreds of people say flocking to the Friends Hall in Euston Road to see the Karmapa put on his black cap and what they are told is that if ... well the Karma Kargyupa tradition is that if you see a Karmapa wearing his black hat you are assured of salvation. How is one to take that? Is one to take it quite literally or is one to say well it has a symbolical significance or if it has a symbolical significance what is that significance as distinct from the literal enactment of the ceremony? One is told that that black hat is woven out of the hair of dakinis quite

literally so how is one to take all that.

So it seems as though if you're not careful there is no end to what you're just asked to swallow and before you know what is happening you're just being exploited in the name of religion or in the name of Buddhism even, in the name of the Vajrayana. So I really think one must be so careful and hence this what I call pseudo sacramental approach, one must be so careful of.

Atula: These are all... (unclear)

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S: For instance say you take food together, you offer the food on the altar, you offer it to the Buddha so the Buddha has sort of accepted it and it comes back to you blessed. It's sacramental food, you eat it, there's a special kind of effect on your mind. Does that really happen? Does one really believe this? This is of course what Hindus believe and some Buddhists. If you offer say food on the altar to the Buddha is there any sense in which the Buddha accepts this? What happens? Because this is the essence of the sacramental meal. It's not that you simply eat it together. It is that that food is offered to whatever it is that you worship or revere and is accepted and thereby becomes blessed and charged with some kind of a special spiritual potency and comes back to you, you eat it and you share in that special spiritual potency. You have this in many different forms both in primitive cults and in more sophisticated religions. You have it in the mass. In which the elements of bread and wine are changed by the magic words spoken by the priest into literally the flesh and blood of Christ and you ingest those and to the extent that you take them in you become assimilated to the body of Christ you share in the body of Christ. If you really believe that clearly it has a profound psychological effect to say the least. But what is really happening and - for instance as a Buddhist do you actually believe that if you place food on the altar let's say in front of the Buddha, that somehow the Buddha accepts that and blesses it and it becomes imbued with some sort of magical force which is then communicated to you by the fact of your eating that particular food? Or is it just a sort of vague feeling of uplift and magic that you've got and you just stay content with all that.

Atula: It's like when you're doing the Avalokitesvara mantra and the offerings especially in festivals and that, when you have quite a strong feeling of that mantra and people actually are feeling that and there is something that definitely gets generated. You are experiencing that when you bow to the Buddha. It's experienced more.

S: Well it's understandable you should experience something which you yourself do but when you say offer food to the Buddha on the altar you are as it were thinking of the Buddha as a sort of actual spiritual presence and as actually accepting the food and blessing the food and that blessing changing the quality of the food, the nature of the food, so that when you eat it you are no longer eating just food, you are eating sacramental food. It is having a special mental effect on you, even a spiritual effect.

Atula: But if you don't generate the experience of that at the start you're starting something off aren't you.

S: But if of course you adopt the Catholic approach there's no need for a particular attitude on your part except of course that you should be free from sin, unconfessed and unabsolved sin.

Vajradaka: But you need faith too.

S: Well faith is there by definition in this case inasmuch as you are a Catholic at all. It may not be a very active or lively faith but you are a catholic and you are baptized, you are not in a state of sin and you receive the bread - you don't receive the wine any more in the catholic church - you receive the wafer.

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Mangala: What about the case of just making food offering which sometimes happens.

S: Well why is it done? Why do people make food offerings?

Vajradaka: It's very symbolic.

S: Yes if it is just symbolic in the sense of commemorative or to remind you of a certain spiritual truth. It is not sacramental in the strict sense. Do you see what I mean? If you say for instance well that is the image of the Buddha and that image reminds us of the Buddha well that is sort of commemorative and an aid to recollection. If you say that the Buddha come into the world just like a stranger, just like a stranger appearing at the gate, and just as in the Indian tradition a stranger is made welcome so you make the Buddha welcome in the world by offering the things that are offered to an honoured guest. So you lay out your seven offerings. All this is commemorative and as it were suggestive of certain meanings. But if you say well the Image of the Buddha is filled with a certain magic force, the Buddha is in a sense actually present in the image, and if you say that the food which is offered to the Buddha is actually consumed by the Buddha and you are eating the leavings of that food and by being brought into contact with the Buddha in that way the food is actually transformed so that when you eat it you're not just eating food, material food, you're taking in some sort of magic force. If you believe that then that is sacramental in the strict sense. You see the difference?

So it's more a question of knowing what it is that you are doing. Usually we're very vague and confused and just do things without really understanding very much about it. Maybe people aren't always clear why you keep an image at all. They've got accustomed to the fact that in the FWBO you have shrines and you have images and they just sort of accept it. Perhaps they've not thought about it very much. I've sometimes said well don't forget that originally in India a couple of hundred years after the Buddha there were no images of the Buddha and if supposing we were to start up the FWBO in a Muslim country we would probably be well advised not to have any images because that would invite immediate opposition, the fact that idols were being worshipped in Muslim country. If orthodox Muslims heard about they'd probably come and just break up the whole thing because they consider idol worship so outrageous and such an insult to god. But there's nothing in Buddhism that requires us on principle to keep images of the Buddha, so why do we do it? Well presumably because it reminds us of the ideal of enlightenment and gives us an opportunity of developing our devotional feelings towards that ideal by making offerings to the image which, well I won't say symbolizes that ideal, but tries to depict that ideal in artistic form. Presumably this is why we do it. So if that is so we need to be reasonably clear about it. Not just go along with it because it happens to be the Buddhist and the FWBO custom.

Time is marching on. Anyway all this is originally out of the feasts, secret or otherwise.



So the concluding lines of the song. Milarepa says,

"Think of the meanings of this song and put them into practice."

Putting into practice is of course very important.

All right would someone like to read the whole of that prose conclusion and then we'll discuss any points that need discussing.

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: "Rechungpa made many obeisances to the Jetsun and then set out for India. Accompanying them were fifteen monks, their leader being a Ningmapa lama called Jidun. In Nepal both Rechungpa and Jidun had some success (in spreading the Dharma). They also met Dipupa's disciple, Bharima.

(When they asked the King of Ko-Kom in Nepal) for a 'Travel-permit', the King said, 'It is wonderful that you, the heart disciple of the great Yogi who refused my invitation before, have now come to me.' He was delighted and granted all Rechungpa's requests. Arriving in India Rechung met Dipupa and obtained all the teachings he wanted. Dipupa also had great faith in Milarepa. He entrusted Rechungpa with his gift - an aloewood staff - to present to the Jetsun upon his return to Tibet.

On this journey Rechungpa also met the accomplished Yogini Magi, and he received from her the teaching of the Buddha of Long Life. He also learned much black magic and many deadly spells from pagan Indians.

On his way home Rechungpa again met Bharima in Nepal. As to the story of Bharima correcting the jealous translator-scholars, and Rechungpa's other adventures in Nepal and India, the reader may refer to Rechungpa's Biography, in which all is told in full.

In his illuminating (Samadhi) Milarepa foresaw Rechungpa's return. He then went to Balkhu to welcome him. Thus the father and the son met again.

This is the story of Rechungpa and Dipupa."

S: Actually the heading is Rechungpa's Third Journey to India because there's not much about Rechungpa and Dipupa.

Any point that arises there that needs any discussion or comments?

Clive: It doesn't say anything about him learning the art of debate.

S: Logic and science. It doesn't do it. Perhaps he'd forgotten all about that or perhaps as Milarepa didn't agree to him going to India to learn that perhaps it just isn't mentioned.

: He did learn some black magic and many deadly spells though.

S: Yes. Perhaps he decided that would be a better way of dealing with the magicians. The attitude seems to be much the same.

Adrian: He learns black magic and spells but he only obtains the teachings that he wants. It suggests that he just...

S: Obtained, yes obtained the books, has copies of the texts.

Mangala: Another interesting point is the way prior to this you get the impression Rechungpa's gone off on his own then you realize he's got fifteen other monks.

S: Yes right. I remember when I was in Kalimpong I was taught some spells by a pagan Indian. I just remembered it. He taught me love magic, that is to say - I don't know why he appeared and he became very friendly with me. He was a Bihari and he taught me all sorts of mantras and methods of charming women. I don't know why he thought I might be interested or needed these but he taught me and so I knew how to do it. I've never actually employed these spells, and I think I've forgotten most of them now. One began [148] Om ... (Bhante chants part of the spell)... I've forgotten it!

Mangala: Just as well! (Laughter)

S: And also how to do it and under what circumstances etc., etc. So there are still these sort of people around. He was a low caste Bihari and they are the repositories of quite a lot of this black or grey magic but he turned up, I remember when I was staying at the hermitage in Kalimpong about three years after my arrival there and I forget how we became friendly but we did and he taught me all these spells and things. I had them written down at one time on I think Ola leaves but I lost them or something. I couldn't have thought very much of them.

Mangala: Did you think they might be useful to you at some time?

S: I can't remember actually. No, I don't think I did, no, no. But I was always willing to learn anything! (Laughter) I had that sort of attitude. So maybe Rechungpa did this sort of thing on an even grander scale.

You notice that he meets a Yogini, a female yogi and received from her the teaching of the Buddha of Long Life. So that shows quite clearly that at that time women did function as gurus, as Tantric gurus. This yogini Magi is in fact quite well known because it was she who, not exactly was responsible for starting but who sort of systematized the churd teaching, the cutting off teaching, the teaching of cutting off the ego. She is very prominent in that connection. So one does get the occasional gifted woman Buddhist or even gifted woman teacher.

: You might even attract a few or make a few.

S: (I) might even have one or two already who knows.

Any further point? Anything that we've done in this chapter because we've finished with it now. Tomorrow we'll get on to another chapter.

Adrian: Is there any significance in the fact that the King of Ko Kom has issued Rechungpa with an invitation before and he's obviously just refused it and now he's gone to India to get something.

Clive: I think it was that he'd given Milarepa the invitation and Milarepa had refused it.

S: So he's happy to be able to entertain the disciple even if he hasn't been able to entertain the guru.

Vajradaka: It seems things aren't very much different with regard to visas and travel permits then as they are now!

S: Indeed! Rechungpa was asked if his travel documents were in order.

Anyway what's one's general impression of the whole chapter, of Rechungpa especially in this chapter.

Asvajit: He's a bit stuck up.

S: A bit stuck up.

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Atula: I feel I know him very well.

S: We're gradually doing all these chapters in which Rechungpa is mentioned. We've done some in our monthly community study here at Padmaloka and I think we did one on some occasion once before and we're doing most of the rest in the course of these two, that is to say four study seminars this month. So it will be that we have quite a lot of material on Milarepa and Rechungpa and if it's all transcribed and edited it should make a very useful volume. Because it illustrates the guru/disciple relationship in a very interesting and humorous kind of way and Rechungpa is certainly no model disciple and that might make him all the more appealing to people.

Asvajit: It's quite easy to identify with Rechungpa.

S: I remember some time ago when I studied some of the songs of Milarepa with the women on a women's study retreat, we did those particular chapters which dealt with Milarepa's relations with different women disciples. Some of the women identified quite strongly with one particular woman disciple and others identified quite strongly with another woman disciple and this was quite remarkable, quite noticeable.

So no doubt quite a few people, not only men, maybe women too, will be able to identify with Rechungpa.

Asvajit: One suspects that the author actually, whoever he was, wondering whether it was actually, whether these songs actually were Milarepa's own or whether they were a later biographers, were written with a very clear awareness of sort of archetypal significance of these characters.

S: But it seems very real at the same time doesn't it as though it could have well have all happened substantially as reported. Maybe they didn't exactly sing those songs in those very words but they certainly probably took up those sort of attitudes and expressed those sort of ideas.

Aloka: Something I was wondering about if it's not just done from the point of view of making a character accessible to you from a teaching point of view is Rechungpa was one of Milarepa's main disciples.

S: Oh yes one of the two.

Aloka: But he seems to have had an incredible amount of trouble with him because in other songs you get people turning up, Milarepa says a few things to them and then there's a few lines at the end saying they went off and meditated for thirty years, got enlightened and...

S: Well perhaps one isn't told their story in full. But along with Gampopa, the author of the Jewel Ornament, Rechungpa is in fact one of the two chief disciples. You'll be interested to learn perhaps that the - I forget if it was the tenth or the twelfth - Rechung Rimpoche was a good friend of mine in Kalimpong and used to come to me for English lessons and I came to know him very well.

Vajradaka: Is that incarnate?

S: Yes. But I don't know. He wasn't really like this Rechungpa. We certainly didn't press [profess?] to be of any high degree of spiritual [150] attainment. In fact he came to a not exactly unfortunate end, but he came to England and he got involved with a young lady, not in England in Gangtok, that's right, the daughter of a friend of mine - and in the end he got married and he came to me to confess all this and was very upset about it. That was that.

Aloka: That doesn't sound too dissimilar to Rechungpa! (Laughter)

S: Ah except that in the book Rechungpa does gain enlightenment.

Atula: Perhaps that's why Rechungpa is so important, although he is sort of up to his tricks...

S: He did get there in the end, so hope and encouragement therefore is offered to all. That shouldn't be taken as an encouragement to backslide.

Atula: No. Sort of that wherever you are you have got some possibility

Aloka: Something that interests me to do with the same things is the fact that he's one of Milarepa's two chief disciples and that link doesn't seem to be anything to do with someone's sort of ease of spiritual progress or anything like that or how good they are at it.

S: The good disciple is not necessarily the best disciple or the closest disciple.

Aloka: He seems to go through the most incredible...

S: Nonetheless there seems to be a very definite link between him and Milarepa even though he's at times so rebellious.

Anyway let's leave it there and tomorrow we'll have a new chapter.

End of seminar

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