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 Mitras. 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 Adhisthana Dharma Team

The Shepherd's Search for Mind Seminar

held at Broomhouse Farm, Norfolk, on 12th and 13th June 1976. Present: Sangharakshita (S), Asvajit, Lokamitra, Padmaraja, Padmapani, Sagaramati, Vessantara, Gary Hennessey, Richard Hutton, Alan Angel, Mark Barrett, Roy Campbell, Graham Stephen, and John Rooney.

Text: "The Shepherd's Search for Mind", from The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa, translated by Garma C.C. Chang.

tape one (B)

S: All right, let's go round the circle reading a paragraph at a time and then discuss any points that need to be discussed in that particular paragraph. It's "The Shepherd's Search for Mind". If anyone has the volume it's page 38 of the Select(?) edition. So maybe Lokamitra will start.

Before we begin I take it everybody's got some idea who Milarepa was? I take it everybody's heard of Milarepa at least? Has got some idea that Milarepa was a great Tibetan yogi - some say the greatest of all Tibetan yogis - and that he sang songs, and that he was a somewhat unconventional but deeply spiritual character, as no doubt we shall see in the course of this particular chapter.

"One day, Jetsun Milarepa descended from the Great Light Cave to the Happy Village of Mang Yul for food and alms. Seeing many people in the centre of the village, he said to them, 'Dear patrons, please give me some food this morning.' They asked, 'Are you the much-talked-about yogi who formerly resided at Ragma?' He replied, 'Yes, I am.' Then a great respect for him arose within them and they cried, 'Oh, here comes the wonderful yogi.'"

S: So you get an impression of the actual scene, yes, that Milarepa is living in a cave up on the mountainside. He's staying there meditating in Great Light Cave and every now and then he comes down, apparently, to the little village, which presumably is situated at the foot of the mountain. It might have been a market day because there were many people about, gathered, apparently, in the centre of the village. So he approached them and said, "Dear patrons, please give me some food this morning." This in a way is a bit unconventional. If you're a monk you're not supposed to ask for alms, you conventionally just stand there with your begging-bowl. But Milarepa wasn't a conventional monk. [2] In fact, actually, he wasn't a monk at all. I raised this question with a Kagyupa incarnate lama and he said as far as he knew, according to the Kagyupa tradition, Milarepa might have been a sramanera, he might have received a sramanera's ordination, but they weren't sure. But certainly he had never become a monk in the technical sense. He had never become a bhikkhu or gelong, he was just - oh, 'just' isn't really the word - but in the technical or ecclesiastical sense he was just a yogi; perhaps an upasaka, but certainly no more than a sramanera. So he didn't bother about the formalities of monastic life apparently; he didn't even have a begging-bowl. So when he saw all these people gathered in the centre of the village he just approached them and said, "Please give me some food." He was a very simple, direct and almost childlike sort of person: "some food". So he just went up to them and said, "Please give me some food." So they must have seen he was rather unusual and rather odd. He was probably virtually naked; he probably just had some piece of cloth on him somewhere or other, but not very much. He apparently never wore any monastic robes or red robes or anything of that sort - at the most just a bit of cotton

cloth. That's why he was called Milarepa, repa meaning one who wears a piece of cotton cloth. And he just went up to them in this very sort of unconventional and very simple and direct way and asked for food, asked for alms. And apparently they'd heard about him. He was quite well known in that part of Tibet. They'd heard there was this mad sort of crazy yogi who was just living up in various caves, often above the snow line, with no clothes virtually, and just singing songs when people come to see him. So they'd heard about this, so they suspected when he approached them - when they saw this wild, crazy, bizarre-looking figure - they suspected that it might be the much-talked-about yogi. In Tibet, in the old days, there wasn't much to talk about. Nothing much happened. If you had a yogi living in your neighbourhood - well that was something to talk about, especially if he was someone rather [3] eccentric and strange like Milarepa. So they asked, "Are you the much-talked-about yogi who formerly resided at Ragma?" He replied, "Yes I am." No false modesty; he said, "Yes I am." Then a great respect arose within them and they cried, 'Oh, here comes the wonderful yogi.'" So what do you infer from all this, especially from what they say? What can you infer? And from the fact that he addresses them as dear patrons? Patrons means lay supporters, more like (?), those who give alms to the monks and the meditating people. So what can we infer from that? They seem to be quite familiar with the idea that there should be a yogi around, and they seem to have some idea of what yogis do, or what they are like. It's natural that he should address them as dear patrons, dear lay supporters - yes? So what do you infer from that?

Voice: He seems to be their spiritual father.

S: No, I wasn't thinking of that.

Richard: Does it mean that there's a lot around, a lot of yogis around, or rather that maybe that they've got a lot of respect for yogis?

S: The argument ... how does that arise? After all, this is Tibet. The Dharma hasn't been established there for very long. It suggests that Buddhism is as it were established among these people, otherwise what significance would a yogi have? Just be some mad naked fellow living in a cave. Well they knew it's a yogi and they've an innate respect for yogis, and he addresses them as "dear patrons". So it suggests that in that part of Tibet the Dharma was fairly well established and people knew what a yogi was. They therefore knew, presumably, what meditation was, and they've been sufficiently interested in this whole idea of yogihood to be talking about this yogi. Maybe the word had spread in the area that there is this fellow Milarepa who moves around from cave to cave, mountain-peak to mountain-peak, meditating and singing songs. So the ground has been prepared: they were Buddhists, they [4] knew about yogis, they'd heard about this particular one. So when he when he turned up and asked for alms they were quite prepared as it were and they said, "Oh, here comes the wonderful yogi." You can't imagine that sort of thing happening nowadays; even in India it might not always happen. They'd think you were wasting your time, or you ought to be doing some work, engaging at least in social work, something of that sort. So we do get indirectly a glimpse of the actual situation. There might even have been a little gompa. There might have been a Nyingmapa-type priest or performer of ceremonies in the village. We are not told, but it may be so. But, anyway, they are Buddhists, they are familiar with the idea of yoga, and they're quite prepared to welcome Milarepa, they're glad to see him.

Alan: That suggests that the Bon tradition didn't have ascetica.

S: They didn't have yogis ... they certainly had ascetics, in a sense. They had shamans, who used to go into trances and maybe levitate and project their bodies or project their soul into other worlds - but that was a different kind of thing. In some of the songs there are competitions between Milarepa and the representatives of the Bon magic. But it seems they had a definite idea about yogis, about meditation, in the Buddhistic sense. So then, "a great respect arose within them." This is significant: the spontaneous reaction of their response. They don't say, 'Well, what a crazy looking fellow,' or 'How stupid to pass your time like that.' So they must have had some appreciation or idea of what meditation is all about, or what yoga is all about - yoga in the sense of meditation - for it to be possible for them to feel that spontaneous respect and reverence for him when he actually appeared. So the ground is prepared. Any other queries on that paragraph?

Mark: Through reading the book about his life it seems that Milarepa didn't go begging for alms very much. It seems he would stay in his cave and refuse to go begging, wasting time.

[5]
S: Yes. So this is a sort of special occasion, as it were. Maybe he felt drawn to that village; maybe he felt (we are not told, but it is possible) that there are people in that village who are ready to hear more of the Dharma. So down he went. Perhaps the going for alms, the asking for food, was only a sort of, as it were, pretext. In another of the chapters, the one called 'The Meeting at Silver Spring', Milarepa meets a young man on a horse and asks the young man to give him a lift across the river. Actually, he is able to cross the river as it later transpires, by his magic power, but he asks the young man to give him a lift just to get onto conversation with him. Then he can start talking about the Dharma. So something of that sort might have happened here. All right, let's carry on.

"Among them was a married couple who had no children. Inviting Milarepa to their house, they served him and said, 'Dear lama, where are your home and rleatives?' Milarepa replied, 'I am a poor beggar who has disavowed his relatives and native land and has also been forsaken by them.' Then the couple cried, 'In that case we would like to adopt you into our family! We have a good strip of land which we can give you; you can then marry an attractive woman, and soon you will have relatives.' Milarepa replied, 'I have no need of these things, and will tell you why."

S: So "among them" - that is to say among the people he met and who called out 'Oh, here comes the wonderful yogi' - "there was a married couple who had no children." This is not very unusual in Tibet, that a married couple should have no children. So they invited Milarepa to their house. Maybe they felt a sort of paternal, a maternal, a sort of parental interest in Milarepa. Maybe they felt sorry for him, perhaps wrongly, because he probably looked very poor; perhaps in their eyes he looked very miserable - no proper clothes, and he came begging for food - so maybe their sort of paternal instincts were aroused. So they invited him to their house and they served him - presumably they offered him food - then they said, "Dear lama, where are your home and relatives?" Why do you think they put that question? What do you think it signifies?

Richard: It shows sort of, um, their standard ...

S: Their standard, yes, yes?

Richard: I suppose their standard of happiness is a sort of family one.

S: Yes. I find this quite interesting. This is the experience [6] I had repeatedly in my own wandering days. People used to ask me - Indian householders, Hindu householders used to ask me, 'Where are your mother and father?' They always asked this. 'Where are your family? Where are your mother and father?' And I'd say 'Oh, they're thousands of miles away.' And they'd always say, 'Oh, how can you bear to be to leave them? How can you bear to be separated from them? They must be weeping for you. How can you bear to leave them?' They'd always say that. 'They must be weeping for you. How can you bear to leave them?' So the family feeling is very strong, and it really puzzled people to see you living apparently happily in a non-family sort of situation. People find it really difficult to understand. This seems to be a universal human sort of thing. This Tibetan couple, who really felt presumably something for Milarepa, they felt nonetheless that he has no family, a man just on his own, so they asked, "Dear lama, where are your home and relatives?" Milarepa replied, "I am a poor beggar who has disavowed his relatives and native land and has also been forsaken by them." I mean he's not even living in his own part of Tibet. Tibet in the old days was divided into what were virtually not exactly independent kingdoms, but certainly independent areas. There was not always much contact between them, and you were loyal to your particular area. So he says he's not only disavowed his relatives and native land; he's also been forsaken by them. In other words the separation is complete: he's left them and they have left him. Well he's just a beggar without family, without native land. Then the couple cried, "In that case we would like to adopt you into our family." Well first of all they've no children; maybe they would like to have children.

Milarepa, perhaps, is rather younger than they are - we don't know, he took up the spiritual life rather late, apparently when he was about forty, but they might be fifty or sixty; they might feel a sort of parental interest; they might start saying, 'Maybe we've got a son. Maybe the gods, the Buddha, has sent us a son. We can adopt him into our family.' Then they go [7] on, "We've have a good strip of land" - they're really pleased, they're quite happy to offer this - "which we can give you; you can then marry an attractive woman and soon you'll have relatives." Well, you'll have all of heirs and then you'll be producing children and then you'll have a family, you'll have a home, everything will be complete, you won't be on your own any more. How wonderful that will be.' So, you see, they've got this initial respect for him, they do feel devoted towards him, they do think he's a wonderful yogi, but they haven't really grasped anything about the spiritual life at all. And their first sort of thought, their instinct almost, is to incorporate him into their way of life. You see this? They do it naively and straightforwardly in a way, with a good heart. There's no idea of undermining his spiritual life or spiritual commitment. They certainly don't want to do that. But they just don't know, they can't see, that the two things are incompatible. But of course Milarepa does. He says, "I have no need of these things and will tell you why." So you see the contrast between the two attitudes? So as soon as the spiritual person, as soon as the yogi, as soon as the committed person, as soon as the individual, comes into contact with the group, as it were, this is what the group tries to do. It tries to incorporate you - in this case - into the family. They're only a couple, they haven't got any children, there's no son. They see Milarepa, they like him, they admire him. What is their first thought? Make him as it were their son, incorporate him into their family. It is not that they want to do him any harm, it's not that they want him to be untrue to Buddhism - they just don't know, they don't see that the two things are incompatible. So this is the sort of thing that one always has to be on one's guard against: that if one is trying to be an individual that the group doesn't try to incorporate you totally into the group.

Of course you've got to keep up some sort of relationship with the group, you can't just break off from the group entirely - that's shown by the fact that Milarepa came down from the mountain, from the cave. He asked for food. There's that sort of [8] connection even in the case of the ascetic. One has to be very careful that that doesn't develop into something else.

That reminds me of a story. I haven't told this for years. I expect only Padmaraja has heard it and he'd better keep quiet about it.... Maybe Asvajit? There is a story about a guru who had a number of disciples. It's said that they are young disciples and the guru used to meditate every evening and ... Just a minute, I might be mixing it up with some other story. Let me get my story straight. Yes, I'll go on and risk it. Yes. There was a ... Hmm, I think I have got two stories mixed up. Never mind, they'll sort out as I go along. Yes, the guru used to meditate in the evening and there was one disciple - that's right, not a number of disciples, that's another story - there was one disciple who noticed the guru used to meditate every evening and meditate in a particular way. Now it happened that one day ... No sorry, I have got the story mixed up (laughter). I'll just have to tell my stories more frequently, you see, otherwise I forget them. Just a minute, I'll sort it out, just scribble your notes while I sort it out.

Richard: Tell both of them.

S: No, I've got it. Yes, there was a guru who left his disciple meditating under a tree and he said to the disciple: 'You just stay there and you meditate. This is all that you are to do. Just stay and meditate under this tree. You are not to do anything else at all. I'll come hack and see how you are getting along later on. So the disciple had absolutely nothing. All he had was a kaupin. You know what a kaupin is? A kaupin is a small strip of cloth, which is all that some of the yogis in India use. So he had simply this small strip of cloth; absolutely nothing else. People would come and give him food apparently. So, anyway, he meditated for some days, got on quite all right, then he felt the need of washing his kaupin. So there was a stream nearby and he didn't have a change of kaupin, so he had just to wash that particular kaupin very quickly and hang it up on a tree to dry. So he remained [9] naked all the while sitting under the tree while his kaupin was drying.

So while the kaupin was hanging there and while he was meditating, a rat just crawled up the trunk of the tree and nibbled a bit out of his kaupin. So when he opened his eyes after meditating he saw quite a large lump had been nibbled out of his kaupin - the kaupin was small enough to begin with anyway - he was rather displeased. So he thought, 'Well we can't have that. If this rat goes on nibbling my kaupin every time I wash it, then this just won't be very decent.' So the next time some of the people came from the village with a little food, he said, 'Look, I've got a problem. There's a rat that comes and gnaws my kaupin when I wash it and hang it on the tree, so could you please get me a cat which would keep an eye on the rat and then my kaupin will be safe.' So they said, 'Very good.' They brought him a cat the next day, so he kept the cat nearby, and the rat never came back. But after a couple of days the cat started getting hungry and it was mewing very piteously, so next time the people came with food, 'Please, could you bring some milk for my cat.' So what happened was every day a villager had to come with milk for his cat. So one day the villager who was bringing the milk said, 'Look, we come every day with milk for your cat. We don't mind bringing it at all, we're happy to do it but sometimes it's a bit troublesome. Would you mind if we gave you a cow. Then you can milk the cow and give the milk to the cat.' So the disciple said, 'That's a very sensible idea.' So anyway a cow was brought and it was tied to this tree, which he used to hang his kaupin to dry. So then what happened was he had to spend his time cutting grass for

the cow. In India there is no grazing; you go and cut the grass, dry grass usually, for the cow and put it in front of the cow. So he found he was spending two, three, four hours a day cutting grass for the cow - he couldn't get on with his meditation. So he thought, 'This is no good. My guru asked me to meditate. So the next time somebody came along he explained the problem. So the man said, 'OK, I'll arrange for [10] someone to come and cut grass for you, there will be no problem then.' So a man was sent along to do the grass cutting, sent from the village. So this went on all right for two or three days. After two or three days the man who was cutting the grass said to the yogi, 'Look, I'm quite happy to do the grass cutting every day for you but I have a wife and children at home and I really do need some money.' The disciple said, 'Well look, I'm spending all my time meditating, I just haven't got any money.' So then the grass-cutter said, 'Well look, you can make money, you can sell some of the milk - after all, the cat doesn't need all the milk from the cow. You can sell some of the milk and out of the proceeds you can pay me for cutting the grass for the cow. So the disciple thought that was rather a good idea. So he let it be known - or the grass-cutter let it be known - that there was milk for sale. So he was selling the milk from the cow, getting some money, paying the grass-cutter, looking after the cat and carrying-on with his meditation. So in the end so many people were coming for milk that it really started becoming troublesome and then of course the cow produced a calf. So he had a talk again with the village-folk about this. So they said, 'Look, you just need someone to take the whole responsibility off your hands so that you can get on with your meditation. Now there's a very nice girl in the village, you just marry her, she'll take care of everything. She's a very good well trained girl, she'll manage the business - because of course the business was developing by that time - 'you can just get on with your meditation.' So to cut a long story short, and it just goes on and on, he married the girl, she came to live there, there were more and more cows, she built-up a big business. In the end there was so much that he had to do to help: they had to build a house, and it developed into a farm. Three years later his guru came back to see how he was getting on with his meditation. So instead of just a tree he found a quite long establishment, a great sort of dairy farm with several dozen cows and calves, and a woman moving around - that was the wife - and several servants and grass-cutters and helpers, and one or [11] two children also by that time, and lots and lots of cats. So he just didn't know what to think. So then he saw the disciple and he said, 'What on earth happened?' So the disciples eyes were opened and he sort of fell at his guru's feet, 'Oh, guru-ji,' he said, 'It was all for the sake of a kaupin!' So this is the sort of thing that happens if you aren't very careful. So Milarepa says, "I have no need of these things," he was a different sort of disciple, "and I will tell you why". Anyway, that was the right story. Anyway, let's carry on, let's hear the songs.

"Home and land at first seem pleasant;
But they are like a rasp filing away one's body, word, and mind!
How toilsome digging and ploughing can become!
And when the seeds you planted never sprout, you have worked for nought!
In the end it becomes a land of misery - desolate and unprotected -
A place of hungry spirits, and of haunting ghosts!
When I think of the warehouse
For storing sinful deeds,
It gnaws at my heart;
In such a prison of transiency I will not stay,
I have no wish to join your family!"

S: "Home and land at first seem pleasant; But they are like a rasp filing away one's body,

word, and mind!" Do you think Milarepa's being unduly negative?

Ashvajit: No.

S: Do you think he's absolutely right? Don't hesitate to disagree - even with Milarepa. Do you really think that home and land, though they first seem pleasant, that they are a rasp filing away body, word, and mind - body, speech, and mind? What does that mean, this filing away?

Ashvajit: It seems sort of - I don't know - eating away one's integrity.

S: Eating away, yes. You know how a rasp works? You rasp a piece of wood, yes, and little by little the sawdust just drops away, as it were. So, home and land are like that, they are having a certain kind of effect on you all the time. What is that effect and why are they having it?

Ashvajit: Oh, the feeling that one's life's one's own and that one's the master of it.

Richard: Just like so much - It seems like so much you've got to keep at it all the time, you've got to spend time worrying about it, as well as the work. [12]

S: But what about when you're organizing retreats and things like that - what's the difference?

Alan: One's for the Dharma, one's not.

S: Yes, right. One's for the Dharma and who is the other for?

Alan: Oneself.

S: Oneself, yes. It's that that seems to make the difference. (pause) But this phrase, this metaphor, this rasping away, it's really expressive, eh? - that you're being worn away, worn down, because in any kind of life, in any kind of way of life, well in a sense you're being worn away, in a sense. You're getting older all the time but you're sort of being, as it were, is not being rasped away. So, any other point apart from responsibility - the fact that you're only living for yourself?

Sagaramati: The type of work that's involved is usually quite repetitive and boring and things like that; it's not creative.

S: I really notice this sometimes when I come to London and just travel on the tube. You can just look at the people's faces and, in a way, you can feel, well, they're being rasped away. They've spent the day at the office or in a factory, and it's had a sort of wearing effect on them. They're tired, not in the way you feel tired when you've done a good positive days work, no, they're just sort of exhausted. It's been very dull, it's been very boring, and their body, speech, and mind have been sort of rasped away by it. It's just like that.

Alan: I see both ploughing and digging can be ...

S: Well, we'll come on to that, yes. There, of course, there: "How toilsome ploughing and

digging can become!" Well, has anyone actually ploughed and dug as a full time occupation?

Richard: Yes.

S: How did you feel about it? [13]

Richard: Horrible!

S: Horrible, yes.

Richard: I really hated it, especially when I got into meditation. It was such a drag, so boring. It's okay, I think, once in a while. It can be really good if you've got, if you're feeling pent up, you want to do that sort of thing. It's very good sort of therapeutic, but day in day out.

S: Yes, but it's all right to go and spend a weekend in the country to help with a bit of milking, or go and just pick a few flowers, anyway a couple of cabbages - but that's not a farmer's life, is it?

Richard: No, not at all.

S: And people have got, often, quite idyllic and pseudo-romantic ideas about life in the country. Farming is really grinding, hard work, even in modern mechanized farming. Perhaps it's even harder work in a sense. It's not physically so laborious, but it is mechanized, it's factory farming very often, and you can see it in India. I mean Tibet is probably even worse. You can see in India how hard people work to win a living out of the land, and Tibet is not a fertile country - it's rocky, stoney country. There's a lot of snow. You have to work really hard. (pause)

Yes, so presumably Milarepa had had some experience of that. Every Tibetan has, practically, except those who were in monasteries. Everybody ploughed and sowed and dug. "How toilsome ploughing and digging can become!" You see, it's not a question of just doing it when you feel like it, or when the weather is fine. To have to do it out of sheer physical necessity every day, every day to plough, or to dig, or to hoe, to tidy up, or to look after animals. Every single day you're never really free from it, never relieved from it, whatever the weather is like. And you're life depends upon it, you're livelihood depends upon it. If you don't do it you'll starve. It's as simple as that. And even if you do it you [14] sometimes starve - that too. You may sometimes lose your crop. I don't think we always realize what a difficult life many people in the world still have, and what a difficult life most of the people in the world have had throughout history until this recent time. "And when the seeds you've planted never sprout, you've worked for nought!" A farmer has that sort of experience, he sort of sweats his guts out ploughing, digging, cultivating, looking after his crops, and then he loses the whole lot. There can be a hailstorm, there can be a flood, it doesn't get enough water, too much sun, - he just loses the lot. This can happen very easily.

Graham: Surely, though it's bad in many ways, it's a more healthy way of living than what we were talking about before in the city. At least it would tie people together in times that weren't good. They're all sharing the same thing.

S: I wonder about this. You see I went around in India, especially south-western and western

India, from village to village. What is the predominant impression that you get? Stagnation! Yes, people are healthy in a way, more healthy maybe than people living in towns. They are healthy in an animal sort of way. It's quite good, they're well built, they usually get enough to eat, they work hard - but life is so stagnant, so dead, and so little intellectual interest or any real spiritual life. This is why Dr Ambedkar used to say (the leader of the ex-untouchables), 'Don't idealize the villages. They're just sort of sinks of superstition and backwardness.' I mean, yes, under certain sorts of conditions, in a particular kind of country with a good climate, yes, you could have a very good, attractive sort of farming life. But that's not the traditional sort of farming life, certainly not in India. I think even in this country, life in the villages, amongst farming people, it's solid and it's sort of safe very often, but it can be very dull and very stagnant - a great lack of life. This is one of the things that Trevor Ling points out in his book, [15] "The Buddha", that Buddhism made its greatest appeal - I mean in the Buddha's lifetime - in the urban areas. And that was where the Buddha went. He was operating mainly in and near the great cities. And you find still in India today it's very difficult to stir things up in the villages. There is a sort of togetherness, yes - but it's very - well, it's not even tribal as it were, it's very, well, group orientated, huh? It's very restricting, very limiting. You can't do what the group doesn't approve of. You can't go against the group even in very small matters. And then of course you've got the caste system, which is very divisive. There's not just one village community; there's a number of separate castes that have very little to do with one another in certain respects. So it's true that if there are fewer people perhaps there are greater possibilities of individual contact and recognition such as you don't get in the cities, but in the city you usually get a greater freedom of choice and action than you get in the village. I'm not even sure that people in villages are always healthier than people in cities despite the undoubted disadvantages and discomforts of living in the city. I think we have to be very careful not to idealize life in the villages.

Alan: Do you see that village life - farming and cultivating - within the spiritual group is possible?

S: I don't know. I think it would depend so much upon other factors. I'm very doubtful whether a sort of farming life, a full time farming life, would be compatible with the spiritual life. I'm very, very doubtful about that, huh? Farming as a full time occupation is very demanding and very difficult. You probably wouldn't have time to do your meditation, eh? You might even not feel like meditating. I think there could be a spiritual community with farming activity, but it could not be full time, yes? In other words they couldn't be real farmers. There would have to be enough of them to be able to distribute the work so that nobody was full time into farming. What was your experience Richard?

Richard: Where I worked was a nursery growing tomatoes, and ...

S: That's a comparatively sort of refined form of farming work.

Richard: Yes, but there was also other things to do as well; a big garden, digging. I just used to feel so tired. You know, I'd come home after an eight-hour day and all I wanted to do was watch television and go to sleep. You know, it was as simple as that, and it was very difficult to meditate.

S: Yes, sometimes of course people at Sukhavati even feel that they've worked, in some cases, so hard during the day physically that they can't meditate in the evening. They just feel

just like sitting round and then going to bed. So there is this aspect, eh? So therefore Milarepa says, "Home and land at first seem pleasant, [16] but they're like a rasp filing away one's body, word, and mind. How toilsome ploughing and digging can become. And when the seeds you have planted never sprout, you have worked for nought. In the end it becomes a land of misery - desolate and unprotected - a place of hungry spirits and of haunting ghosts!" Do you think that Milarepa means that literally? If he doesn't, what does he mean by it?

Mark: Well, could it be that he means that that's very much what other people sort of become, just sort of ghost-like.

S: Yes, right, like pretas almost.

Richard: In the biography he had a patch of land. Didn't that become haunted or something, when he went and saw it again?

S: Ah, no, not haunted, but he found his old family house tumbled down and he found a heap of bones which he intuitively knew were those of his mother, yes? Everything was in ruins and his sister had strayed away begging.

Mark: All the people believed it to be haunted before he came back.

S: I don't remember.

Richard: I think there was a little bit ...

S: Ah, perhaps then if his mother had died there and her bones were there, very likely they would believe it to be haunted. But also, I mean, what do ghosts represent? They represent the past, yes? So when you're at home it's as if you can't get away from the past, you know, somebody's always saying, 'When you were a little boy you did this or you did that.' You know, there's all these ghosts around and you're not allowed to get away from these ghosts, and in fact people think that you still are that particular ghost. I remember I went to see someone not so very long ago whom I've known for a number of years, and, I forget what it was, it was something quite simple.... She asked me if I liked some particular jam and I said, 'No thank you.' So she said in quite an injured tone, 'Oh, you used to like that, you always used to like that kind of jam,' as if to say, well, you haven't got the right to change. If you liked it twenty years ago you just have to go on liking it, yes, you're confronted by these ghosts, as it were, huh?

So there is perhaps that suggestion too, that when you're at home you're among ghosts because people are thinking about the past, how things used to be, and how you used to be. They're not in the present so much. I mean do you ever notice that? Maybe you're not old enough most of you, but if you go home very often, if you get talking with your relations, sooner or later they'll be talking about the past - and what happened ten years ago, fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty years ago. You're in the midst of ghosts as it were. You've had that [17] recently have you?

Ashvajit: Yes, fairly recently, yes. I went home to visit my parents and then went on back to Wales where I spent the very early part of my life and it was all, even in my (?) 'When you were six, (laughter) I just remember you sitting under that (?)'

S: Not stupa, no? (laughter) Well, I remember when I came home after twenty years. The first time I met my sister, my youngest sister, after twenty years, within a matter of minutes she was recalling an incident when she alleges that as a small child I pushed her down the stairs. (laughter) She still seemed to have a grievance about it. So this is a ghost as it were. So home is the haunt of ghosts where ... Home is the place where you are not allowed to get away from the past, yes? This is one of the reasons why it is good to leave home, yes? You know to move about with people, to encounter people who see you and know you and experience you as you are now, you know, not as you were fifteen, twenty, thirty years ago. This is one of the great advantages of leaving home. It's leaving a place of ghosts. "In the end it becomes a land of misery - desolate and unprotected - a place of hungry spirits and of haunting ghosts!" So you have to get away from the past, you know, we drag along enough of the past just as it is in the form of our own conditioning. We don't want that to be continually stimulated and reinforced by other people referring to us as we were in the past twenty or thirty years ago, or even five years ago, even last year, even yesterday. Today is today yes? So getting away from home means getting away from the past. You could say home is the past congealed, and it congeals around you and you're stuck.

Ashvajit: I returned from Wales after being there with my parents for two or three days and went back to their house and was there by myself for a few hours, and I felt as if I were being suffocated. I just had to wrench myself away. It was so powerful.

Richard: Well, it's like an act of violence, you know, they try to force you into this role, ten twenty years ago.

S: It's not so much that they have the deliberate intention. It's not that they wish to do you any harm. You know, in their own way they're quite fond of you. They'd like to see you. But they just can't help functioning in that sort of way and having that sort of effect, hmm?

[18]
John Rooney: They really want to cling to you.

S: Yes.

Mark: Surely that would be accentuated if you have left home and go back to visit your people because I mean they don't even know you as you are in the present.

S: So that also makes you feel like a ghost, doesn't it, yourself? If the person that you are now they're not even seeing. It's like being a ghost and going back to the old haunts and no one even sees you. You're just moving around. So they don't see you. So it's a bit like that if with your new personality, your new being - you go back to see the old folks and the old friends, they just don't see you as you are now, you're just not there for them.

Roy: I mean you're living in one environment all the time, you're not aware of the passage of time in the same way as when you're changing around ...

S: That's true.

Roy: ... and to the people living at home very little time has passed. They don't expect you to have changed.

S: Especially if you are younger than them, if you're the next generation. Well the younger you are the more quickly time passes in the sense of the more you experience within a given period of time. The older you are, other factors being equal, the less you experience. So if you've been away from home as a young man for five years, or even a year, a lot has happened, to you. You're a very different person when you come back after five years, or even one year. But to the old folks at home not very much time has passed, it's only one year or it's only five years. It's only five years he's been away - not much has happened in five years. They've just gone on in the same routine, yes? They've had the same old annual holiday in the same old place. Just one or two very minor changes, you know, new curtains been put up (they're green now they used to be pink) yes? Changes like that, you know - nothing revolutionary. Maybe changing the curtains from green to pink is revolutionary in that context. Perhaps I should have said a different shade of green. (laughter) We've got a new pussy cat, something like that. Or I've covered that settee. Do you like it? These are the sorts of things that have taken place in the course of the five years that you've been away. But you could have revolutionized your whole life but they don't know it. They seem quite oblivious. They see the same old person, huh?

[19]
Graham: Do they always see the same old person? You know, I mean, I've experienced like in a way that I was the ghost going back in that they were quite in a way concerned about certain changes, you know, although they're very sort of trivial.

S: Well there are two things. First of all, the degree of perceptiveness of the people at home - obviously this varies. You know, some will be more perceptive than others. And also the kind of change taking place in you and the extent to which that manifests in your behaviour or conduct, huh? Because if you go home and say, 'Well I'm a vegetarian, please don't give me meat or fish,' well that's a change, that's something they can recognize and either agree or disagree with, yes? But if it's a sort of subtle inner change that is of such a nature that they'd have to really see you to appreciate it - there's no way which you can show it externally in your behaviour - the chances are they just won't suspect anything at all, especially if you just sort of go along with their way of life.

Richard: Do you think that parents deliberately don't see any changes or they just don't, you know, they just can't see it?

S: Well it isn't only parents, it's everybody. You don't like change, huh? You like things as you're used to them. After all, we accept in principle this idea of change and development, but supposing within the Friends, supposing within the Order, someone whom you had known in a certain way, on certain terms, suddenly developed, to such an extent, so rapidly, that he went right out of your ken as it were - you might not be very happy with that, yes? It's the same principle isn't it? (?) he's not the same nice old person he used to be. 'We used to have such jolly times together, taking classes and organizing retreats but he's not into those things any more. All he wants to do now is go and meditate.' You might feel like that. I'm not suggesting that (?) revolutionary change necessarily takes that particular form, but you might feel that, well, he was out of your reach now and you might not feel very happy about it. Not that you begrudged him his progress but you would prefer the person that you used to know. I mean this can happen within the context of the next stage on as it were. So it's not just parents. It's a sort of general principle. Parents no doubt usually manage to provide [20] a rather conspicuous example of that kind of thing one might say - but it's everybody including

ourselves perhaps. We just have to be on the lookout. I mean it's quite easy to criticize parents and point our their shortcomings but we just have to be careful that we don't do the same sort of thing in other contexts. I mean we always do like to settle down in what is familiar.

Padmapani: Would you say that also sort of applies in the context of the Friends and people outside? Because I've noticed recently I've come up against a lot of old acquaintances - not parents - whom I used to know before. I just can't relate to them at all and the only people I can get on well with, relatively, are people who are working inside the Movement or the Order or Friends connected with that.

S: Well this is what most people I think find initially.

Padmapani: But it's sometimes a bit sort of disconcerting in a way because like you're slowly cutting yourself off from everything except the Dharma in that sense, and the Friends, and it feels like you can't have worldly contacts any more, or they don't mean anything. They don't sort of, you know, there's no stimulation. It just seems sort of dead.

S: I was quite amused when I was at Sukhavati during the retreat - not the retreat, sorry - convention. Some of the mitras there went home for a few days, and I overheard two or three of them after their return discussing their experiences at home, huh? - and these weren't Order members, they were just Mitras, yes? I think one or two of them weren't even Mitras perhaps. But one was saying, 'I was really bored,' and another was saying, 'I was very glad to get back this time.' And evidently they felt this sort of thing. So it always happens, yes? You leave behind your old friends and relations. And you do find that those that you can really relate to are those that as it were are keeping pace with you. There can't be any real relating unless there's an equal degree of awareness ... or more or less equal.

Padmapani: Yes it seems to be that. There seems to be a trend that as one gets more into the spiritual life the fewer people you can relate to in that sense.

S: There's a wonderful story I read the other day - I was telling Lokamitra this - a Sufi story, yes, again about a guru and his disciple, huh? And the disciple had spent some time [21] with the guru and they used to have very deep spiritual discussions. But the disciple had to go away to rejoin his tribe, his parents who were living in some tribe, miles and miles away. So the disciple was very unhappy, thinking he won't have any more of the spiritual discussion that he used to with his teacher. So he spoke to the teacher about this and said how unhappy he felt. So the teacher said, 'Beget the man you need.' Yes? He didn't mean physically beget, but produce a pupil, produce a disciple, to whom you can relate, someone of the same degree of awareness as yourself. And so he sent his disciple off and he said, 'Beget him!' Yes? So this is what you have to do, you know, supposing you as an Order member and you go off somewhere and find yourself on your own, well you just have to get into contact with someone and cultivate him and develop him until he comes up to the level where you can communicate with him on your own terms. You just have to do it in your own interests as it were, you know, blow him! (laughter) You need someone to communicate with.

Padmapani: Well I wouldn't like to think that I was stagnant.

S: So supposing you're left only with your family or only with your old friends, supposing it so happened that you were cut off from the Friends and the Order. Suppose there was some

great national or international catastrophe - well you just have to work on whatever people are available, even on your mother and father, on your grandmother, to continue to communicate with someone, to work really hard to get them up to that sort of level where they were sufficiently aware, where you could communicate with them. You'd be forced to do it - or else just to die, you know, unless you were really enlightened, just die of inanimation and boredom. So sometimes one feels this, well I've just got to force people to communicate, force them to be aware, otherwise what is there in life for me, as it were. You've got to beget what you need, or beget the man you need, the person with whom you can communicate, someone as aware as you are.

Ashvajit: I found with my own family that one can do that apparently while you're there - they seem to become more alive, more aware, and even break through to something - but the moment you go away again, back they slip. And when you go back a few months or a few years later, they're just the same. [22]

S: I find that you can do it if you get them one at a time. If it's just two of them together it's impossible. One at a time you can do something - but not more than one. So you can understand why Milarepa is being a bit hard on home. He certainly didn't think in terms of home sweet home. "When I think of the warehouse for storing sinful deeds, it gnaws my heart." Oh dear; he calls home a warehouse for storing sinful deeds. That's pretty strong, isn't it? What do you think he means by that?

Graham: Is it through boredom that one's mind starts coming up with unwholesome thoughts. You are not in a healthy environment.

S: Right. And you're storing them up, you see. A warehouse is somewhere where you just keep things. You store them up. So you're accumulating, huh? Whatever there is unhealthy, whatever there is unskilful, you just go on multiplying it, you're just going round and round in circles. You don't get anywhere. Just like these so-called relationships - you don't get anywhere, you just go round and round in circles. So you've stored up sinful, or maybe it would be more correct to say unskilful, deeds. "It gnaws my heart." Just to think of this. "In such a prison of transiency I will not stay. I have no wish to join your family." Well, I've given up one, huh? I've left my own family, why should I join yours? It's just like a prison, a sort of upholstered cell. Right, any sort of general comment or query on this particular song? Anybody feel Milarepa's being a bit hard on home, or maybe a bit one-sided?

Ashvajit: I don't think he's being one-sided, he is being hard and I think it required a tremendous amount of courage to actually say that. I don't think I could say it.

Voice: He used to sing it. (laughter)

S: Well, a sort of chanting, you know. It's very strong and very hard.

Richard: Yes, but as Ashvajit was saying it seems that you have to have something hard because it's like I really feel it when I go home, it's just like you're walking into a boulder and ...

S: A bolster? [23]

Richard: A bolster - and you just kind of walk against it you know, it's just ... (coughing drowns speech)

Alan: But does he mean home in that specific sense of family?

S: Well it's what they've offered him he's referring to. "We have a good strip of land which we can give you; you can then marry an attractive woman and soon you will have relatives." Milarepa replied "I have no need of these things and I will tell you why." This is how I see that sort of situation. To you it's very attractive. You'd like to see me in that situation but I don't see it like that. This is how I see it, yes? Do you think there's any danger of a sort of cynical attitude here that should be guarded against?

Ashvajit: Yes, well they are human, potential human beings.

S: Yes, right. (laughter and chuckling) All right let's go on - mustn't linger at home too long even in this context. Right, who's next?

Mark: "The married couple said, 'Please do not talk like that! We will find you a fine girl from a prominent family, who is fit to be your bride and who will suit your taste. Please consider this.'"

S: They think he's just holding out. They think he's just shy. (laughter) We will find you a fine girl - not just an ordinary one - a fine girl from a prominent family. If you marry her you'll become also a prominent person in the village. "Who is fit to be your bride and who will suit your taste." Yes? If you like a fat woman, we'll find you a fat woman, if you like a thin girl we'll find a thin girl. We'll suit your taste. "Please consider this," you know, don't reject it our of hand. So Milarepa sang:

Mark: "At first, the lady is like a heavenly angel;
The more you look at her, the more you want to gaze.
Middle-aged, she becomes a demon with a corpse's eyes;
You say one word to her and she shouts back two.
She pulls your hair and hits your knee,
You strike her with your staff, but back she throws a ladle.
At life's end, she becomes an old cow with no teeth.
Her angry eyes burn with a devilish fire
Penetrating deep into your heart!
I keep away from women to avoid fights and quarrels.
For the young bride you mentioned, I have no appetite."

[24]
S: Well, do you think this is too strong?

Mark: Well he's making his point, isn't he?

S: But the first two lines are interesting. I'll just ... there is another translation actually ... where is that little book that ... consult the other translation I think. Ah yes. "At first a wife is a goddess wreathed in smiles. Her husband never tires of gazing at her face." Or as this translator says, "At first the lady is like a heavenly angel (devi). The more you look at her the

more you want to gaze." And that second line is very significant, huh? What do you think that represents, not only in this context but in others as well? The more you look at her the more you want to gaze. The more you look the more you want to look.

Richard: You can never be satisfied.

S: You can never be satisfied. But why can't you ever be satisfied?

Padmapani: Because you can't obtain her.

Richard: Because it's conditioned.

S: Well that's a good Buddhist answer.

Ashvajit: It's a bit like short-circuiting of craving.

S: What do you mean exactly by that?

Ashvajit: When one looks at a woman one becomes aroused quite easily. And so you reach after that you want more.

S: But what do you want?

Graham: An ideal.

Ashvajit: Er, satisfaction and ...

S: But what sort of satisfaction, and should you get some satisfaction, well, why do you want more? I mean when you eat, you know, you're hungry, you eat, you're satisfied, so that you don't want to eat for a while.

Lokamitra(?): It's a neurotic craving where you want something which that can't give you.

S: Which that can't give you - yes, that's the thing.

[25]
Sagaramati: What does the craving mean, I mean, this thing, it's related to beauty and things like that.

S: Um?

Sagaramati: It's related to beauty this, in some way, and the thing which seems to attract you, fascinate you, is some sort of beauty, and the only way I see you can get around it is by being aware of your experience of yourself at that moment, and it sort of becomes ... you dissociate from the actual person that you are normally projecting upon.

S: I think there's also ... I mean in connection with beauty, I think there also is a question of distinguishing what is beautiful in an, as it were, truly aesthetic sensel, and what is, as it were, just biologically attractive. I think these two are very often confused in our minds. Yes?

Ashvajit: I'm not sure that it is for ... that they are confused. But once the difference has been pointed out to you, you can't be fooled again, you know, that what is really attractive is the communication inherent in the situation and not what lies or may lie beyond the communication.

Sagaramati: But isn't one more, as it were, sensual and one sexual?

S: There is that distinction too, which is another one - which introduces really three factors, an aesthetic, a sensual, and a sensuous, you could say.

Lokamitra: Almost corresponding to metta, pema, and sneha.

S: Um, yes, yes.

Sagaramati: Sneha being the lowest.

S: Sneha being the lowest. So you're insatiable because what you really want, that particular object, is never going to be able to give you, you want say, something that doesn't change - for instance a happiness that is always the same. But no worldly object and no conditioned object can give you that. But it also means - leaving aside that - that is a sort of or in a way healthy situation in a sense, that first of all, in a way mistakenly, you blunder into a certain situation and you realize after a while that that situation, or that experience, can't give you really what you want or really need. So if you're healthy you just withdraw [26] from that. You go and look elsewhere. You go and look in the right direction. But supposing nonetheless you don't get what you want but go on trying more and more to get it. This is really neurotic. And why do we do that? And sometimes we do it even after it's pointed out to us. Now why do we do that?

Sagaramati: It must just be the sheer force of sort of habit.

S: It's just force of the neurotic habit as it were.

Alan: Is that the same as like stubbornness?

S: Stubbornness is more a sort of willed thing, but it's like stubbornness, in a sense that you just persist, you just go on regardless, you know it's bad for you, you're not even enjoying it, it's the worst possible thing that you could do, but you still go on. I mean it seems that here the kalyana mitrata, the spiritual friendship, is very, very important, just to get you into another mood, onto a different wavelength, in a different environment, thinking different thoughts. But it would seem to be the nature of every unskilful thought to be self-perpetuating, yes? And this introduces something which is quite interesting, which we're going to go into in detail when we study 'Mind in Buddhist Psychology' in one of the study retreats. I'll just mention it briefly.

According to the Abhidharma a distinction is made between what is called citta and what are called caittas. Citta is mind. Caitta can be translated as mental function, yes? There are various mental functions associated with mind itself, huh? Mind attends to the object in a very general way. The different mental functions associated with mind attend to the object in various specific ways, and become involved with the object in various specific ways. And

these mental functions, these caittas, are classified. There are caittas which are present in all mental sates; there are caittas which are present only in mental states of a certain kind. For instance there are certain caittas - usually eleven are listed, there are various lists - eleven caittas which are present in all kusala states of mind, in all kusala states of consciousness. So that if you are in a kusala state of consciousness those eleven factors must be present. If they're not present you're not in a kusala state of consciousness, yes? You get the idea, huh? So the different schools - Abhidharma, Theravada, Sarvastivada, Yogacara - they give different lists of these caittas, these mental functions, which are found in all skilful states of consciousness. And first on the list comes?

Sagaramati: Faith.

S: Faith, yes. Now that's very important, that first on the list comes faith, yes, sraddha. There is no state, there is no skilful mental stage, in which sraddha does not form an element. Now what is sraddha?

Ashvajit: Well it's the first positive nidana after duhkha.

S: Yes, but what is the nature of sraddha?

Richard: Faith in the Three Jewels.

S: Faith in the Three Jewels - that's one aspect, and probably the most important.

Sagaramati: Is it the emotional response to something higher?

Lokamitra: So it shows the direction one's ...

S: It's a direction, yes. So faith means the consciousness of something higher, the awareness that it is higher, that it has a higher value and the attraction towards it, yes? So what does that mean? So if you've got sraddha in every skilful mental state, then if sraddha is of that nature that means that every skilful mental state is essentially self-transcending or essentially progressive. Yes? Doesn't it? Right leave that for the time being - what about the opposite? I mean suppose you've got an unskilful mental state. Well, instead of sraddha you've got absence of sraddha, absence of a faith. So just as the skilful mental state has got an, as it were, inbuilt tendency to transcend itself or to be progressive, the unskilful mental state has an inbuilt tendency to?

Ashvajit: Degenerate.

S: Degenerate - it gets worse and worse, yes? So if you are in an unskilful mental state you never remain in that same skilful mental state. It just gets more and more unskilful, by its very nature. So therefore, "At first the lady is like a heavenly angel. The more you look at her," you know, this is obviously neurotically, "the more you want to gaze," the more neurotic you become about it. It just gets worse and worse until or unless you actually do something about it, yes? Left to itself it must become worse and worse. Very often of course it's the force of circumstances that really wrests you away from the situation. Somebody else carries off the beautiful lady, or she leaves us, or she changes in such a way that you can't [28] mistake the change, as Milarepa goes on to say, "Middle-aged, she becomes a demon with a corpse's

eyes." Well this wasn't the girl I married. I didn't marry a corpse with demon's eyes ... oh sorry, a demon with corpse's eyes. (laughter)

This reminds me. There was a very well known essay or article by George Orwell on seaside picture-postcards. Do you know the article or essay that I mean? It's on the so-called (I don't know whether you call it, should call it) dirty postcard or naughty seaside postcard, you know that sort of a postcard I mean? You know, ladies with great fat behinds and things of that sort (laughter). George Orwell has done a sort of psychological, or socio-psychological. analysis of the seaside postcard and what it really means, what it conveys. Have you ever read this essay anyone? It's very, very interesting. Anyway the point I want to make is this, one of the things he says is that according to the ethos of the picture-postcard of this kind, people, especially women, are either young or they're middle-aged. You're either young in the sense of being on the point of marriage or honeymoon or you are just married, or you're way into middle age. There's nothing in between. It's just as though this is how the working classes - that is the people who buy these picture-postcards and whom they portray - see life; that once you're married you're finished. There's nothing in between that and middle age, huh? You see young people and then middle-aged people - the young couple, the middle-aged couple - nothing in between. So you see the same thing here, which is very interesting. "At first the lady is like an heavenly angel; the more you look at her, the more you want to gaze. Middle-aged, she becomes a demon with a corpse's eyes". So what about the period in between? A sudden jump, but just the same jump that, according to Orwell, you see in the case of the picture-postcard. Now why is this? He has his own explanation of course, but why do you think it is?

Alan: Entranced in it, sort of ...

S: Yes, entranced in it, yes. And then you sort of open your eyes, it's only when the change has become really tangible and it really hits you. Anyway no need to go into in detail. (?) "You say one word to her, she shouts back two." - well we all know that, huh? "She pulls your hair and hits your knee. You strike her with your staff, but back she throws a ladle." Why is this? Why should husband and wife quarrel? After all they love each other. Why should they quarrel? Why does this happen? I mean this is the sort of question that people ought to ask themselves. [29] Why do we get these terrible marital battles? Why are marriages so unhappy? I mean everybody gets married, looking for happiness, believing in happiness, expecting happiness. A few days ago a young couple came to look at Albemarle [for a short time, Sangharakshita's vihara in Castle Acre, in Norfolk, tr.] because they saw the poster outside. They were so sort of happy - you could see that they'd just been married. They came sort of dancing down the path hand in hand, all happy, practically singing, yes? But will they be like that in ten years time do you think, even one year's time? So why is this? It's very strange. Why are most marriages so unhappy, or at least so dull? What happens?

Gary: Maybe it's what they want from each other they just can't get.

S: Yes the expectations of both parties are unreasonable, are inordinate. Each thinks the other is going to give them happiness. They don't realize that happiness is something - if you think in those terms at all - that you must create for yourself. You can certainly have a happy communication with another person, but you must have the capacity for communication and happiness within yourself first, yes? The other person can't give it to you. Once you've got it, well then you can enjoy it together, which does give an extra dimension admittedly, very

much so. But they can't give it to you. You can't give it to them.

Mark: And before marriage the two people obviously want happiness so much that they sort of completely push to the back of their minds that there's any chance of them quarrelling ... all the good things.

S: Yes. Yes. This is why one finds that young married couples, when they have their first quarrel, they're really horrified afterwards, yes? It's like the end of the world.

They think, how on earth did it happen? What went wrong? And sometimes it happens in the course of the honeymoon a few days after marriage. Well what went wrong? What hit us? You know. We love each other but just look at what was said, what we did. It's awful. They're quite shattered by it sometimes. It's a sort of revelation about themselves. It's like they usually gloss it over, don't really look at it. I mean an hour before you were calling her your honey, etc., etc., then later you hit her. And you don't know why; some demon got into you. But what happened, what went wrong? You expect so much of the other person. It's so selfish, so grasping. If they don't give you what you want, then all hell is let loose, I mean, this is what love mostly is for most people. And this is why there [30] is so much violence in that sort of situation. Why wives get battered, why even husbands get battered. It's not without significance that, at least until very recently (I'm not sure what the latest situation is) most murders took place within the family circle ... before terrorism and all that. Most murders took place within the family circle - husband murdering wife, wife murdering mother, daughter murdering father, son murdering mother. Especially between husband and wife, especially the crime passionnel, the crime of passion - the lover murdering the mistress or vice-versa, the mistress poisoning the lover. Why so much murder within this sort of context? Obviously very, very violent passions are aroused, are involved.

Padmapani: Is it because love and hate are either side of the coin.

S: Um, the so-called love and the so-called hate. You want something. You want it very, very violently, as if your whole life depends upon that. It's an infantile need, an infantile demand, and if you don't get it, well you just become a little demon, just as you used to become when you were a child when you didn't get what you wanted. When the breast was denied to you, when mother wouldn't come. You'd scream your little head off, and that is what you do not ... except that you head is bigger and more swollen perhaps than it was then and you've got your brain to intervene and justify everything. So it's a pretty grim situation. "Though you strike her with your staff, but back she throws a ladle. At life's end she becomes an old cow with no teeth." In a way it's your fault - you've not done right by her. There's this deep resentment. Because you've not been able to be free and become an individual, neither has she. There's just mutual resentment between the two.

Graham: Do you think this mutual resentment is sometimes taken out by buying such things as TVs and hi-fi equipment, radio, records?

S: Well there are various palliatives, yes, there are palliatives. People have somehow got to live together. They don't see any alternative. They're not really getting on well. They're not positively happy, but at least they manage somehow, and things like TV sets or a new three-piece suite - they help.

Graham: They seem to be quite annoyed if it's pointed out to them.

S: Yes. I was listening on the radio the other day to an interview with a woman who's run an advice column in a daily newspaper (I think it must have been the Daily [31] Mirror or something like that) and she'd done it for twenty years and there was some programme on the radio because she'd received her millionth letter or written her millionth letter - something like that.

Mark: Marjorie Proops?

S: Um, I think it was, yes. Is it the Daily Mirror? Anyway she'd written her millionth letter and she described her early days in the interview how she took courses in psychology and got a bit of help from psychotherapists to answer the letters, and she was asked of course, naturally, what sort of things do people write about? And she said mostly about sex and personal relationships and personal problems, huh? So in a way it's really strange that this should be such a problem area, but of course we know that it is. And it's because the violent desire is involved and that very often comes into conflict with somebody else's violent desire. And each person is trying to use the other in that violent greedy sort of way. So sooner or later there must be conflict. But if there's just ... if there's a sort of genuine liking and a sort of more real affection and reasonableness, well then two people can live together reasonably happily - but not with this sort of projective neurotic sort of passion. It's quite impossible then. So most married people seem to settle down into a condition of sort of sullen truce. I mean this is one of the things that surprised me when I came back to England and all the people I met - how few happily married couples I met, and that seemed really strange. Sometimes I'd think that people were happy together, but sooner or later one of them or both of them separately would come and see me about their problems and difficulties, and then you'd find it was a very different situation. I think there are very, very few really happily married couples. Most just manage, they just get by, they just tolerate one another (?) just a practical working arrangement which doesn't break down too often, not too badly. Very often of course it does break down and then you can either get a separation or divorce or even violence.

Lokamitra: But even so I mean a couple will grow older and there's this sort of sullen truce and they'll be a lot of resentment ... (aircraft noise obscures recording)

[32]
S: Sometimes you just need the object of your hatred. A relationship of hate can be as binding as a relationship of so-called love and you can become as dependent on having that person there to hate as it were, but anyway that is becoming quite a sort of negative subject. So even to consider negative subjects in a positive way isn't very good. So maybe we just move on and take it as it were we've got the message. "For the young bride you mention I have no appetite." Milarepa sees through it all. Right let's carry on.

"The husband then said, 'Dear lama, it is true that when one grows old and close to death he has not the same capacity for enjoying life or for being pleasant as when he was young. But if I have no son my grief and disappointment will be unbearable. How about you? Don't you need a son at all? Milarepa sang in reply..."

S: This is interesting - the desire for the son. This couple doesn't have a son. In a traditional

society the desire for a son can be very strong indeed - someone to inherit your name, someone to inherit your property, someone even to make offerings to your soul after death. In India it's considered a quite terrible thing amongst Hindus not to have a son to keep up the family line and make offerings to the ancestors.

Mark: Also I suppose to do the work when you get too old to do it yourself.

S: That's true. There is that. That very practical point. That's why some of them like to have as many sons as possible: to help with the work. So, "How about you? Don't you need a son at all?" Well they've sort of accepted that he doesn't really want a wife. What about a son? Surely you'd like a son? So what does Milarepa say about the son?

"In youth, the son is like the Prince of Heaven;
You love him so much that the passion is hard to bear."

S: I think this is true - presumably Milarepa is speaking, or singing, from the father's point of view - when you have a son you really are pleased and happy, because there are all sorts of factors involved and you feel that you're a real man, you've produced a son, and all that sort of thing. And then you're happy that the son will carry on your name, follow in your footsteps, maybe learn your trade, do the sort of work that [33] you're doing, help you in it, grow up; you'll have a sort of companion too, eventually. So at first you really sort of idolize your son. You can see this with many fathers: they really sort of think the world of their son, in some cases think more of their son than the son's mother, more of the son than of their own wife, and the son really monopolizes their attention. But

"In middle-age he becomes a ruthless creditor ..."

S: Yes? So I mean a creditor is someone who thinks that you owe him. So the son, when he becomes middle-aged, he doesn't think that he owes his parents. He thinks his parents owe them, owe him, or his father owes him, huh?

"... to whom you give all, but he still wants more."

S: Children sometimes can be so selfish, so greedy. They just go on taking and taking from the parents. And the father perhaps has got into the way of giving. After all, when a child the father has to give, has to give everything. So even when the boy starts growing up the father isn't wise. He just goes on giving, in a foolish sort of way. Whatever the son wants, he just gives it. He wants money - he gives it. He wants clothes - gives. Never sort of gives the boy proper advice. Never suggests, 'Look, why don't you work for yourself? Why don't you get things together for yourself?' He just gives him everything. In traditional societies you find quite a bit of this sort of thing, especially a very young son, especially if the father's quite old. He really dotes on his son. He just gives him everything, huh? I've seen this quite a lot in India among the Nepalese - an old father with a very young son, maybe the last of his sons, his fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth. I knew an old Nepalese once who had forty-five children, and more than twenty sons. But he really used to dote on the young ones. He was about sixty-five, and he was still having babies coming along. He had just married his seventh wife (laughter) and he used to really dote on these young sons, and sort of give them everything that they wanted. So you get into this sort of habit. Even when he's grown up, he still wants to take from father. Even when he's middle-aged and the father's a very old man.

That's still the attitude, to take from father, to get from father. So

"to whom you give all, but he still wants more.
Driven from the house are his own parents."

S: Yes, in some primitive societies you even get this, huh? That the son goes on living in the parental home, but in the end he doesn't want his parents any more. They're just driven out, they're just driven out as beggars, they're to go begging from [34] door to door, they just drive them out as if they were complete strangers.

"Invited in is his beloved, charming lady."

S: Your parents have done so much for you, your parents have brought you up, they've given you everything, but the first time you fall in love you forget all about your parents. You sacrifice your parents maybe to your girlfriend or your wife. And only so very often we see the wife turning her husband against the parents, yes? Despite all that the parents have done for the child he forgets. He's so completely influenced by his wife, by the new love as it were. You see? So what's the use of having a son like that? You bring him up. You do everything for him. In the end he turns against you, turns you out. He's so totally absorbed in his mistress or wife he just forgets about his old parents.

"His father calls, but he will not answer;
His mother cries out, but he will not listen.
Then the neighbors take advantage ..."

S: Well even in Tibet you have neighbours.

"... spreading lies and rumours.
Thus I learned that one's child oft becomes one enemy.
Bearing this in mind, I renounce the fetters of samsara.
For sons and nephews I have no appetite."

S: And this sort of thing happened much more in the old primitive more enclosed sort of communities. In modern times and especially in the city you can leave home much more easily. You can get away from your parents. So you're more likely to remain on good terms with them. But suppose you had to stay in the same village. Suppose you have to go on living in the same house, even after marriage. So you want your own place, but you can't have it. Your old parents are there. It's their place in a sense, it's the family place. You might try to turn them out in the end if you're strong enough or shameless enough. So this is the way things go on. So this is what the father has to suffer. So why have a son? You're so fond of him at the beginning, you treat him just like a prince, like a 'Prince of Heaven', but in the end he turns against you. This is of course drawing a rather dark and dramatic picture. It doesn't always happen like that, obviously, But quite often.

John: I was reading Ulysses last week and there's a bit in there where they're talking about Shakespeare and it's precisely this sort of emotional situation. It came out in Hamlet.

S: Well yes, it was with Shakespeare's ... you know, example is not so much Hamlet even but King Lear - the three daughters, two daughters rather, how they turned [35] against their

father. The father divided his kingdom or wanted to divide. Cordelia of course didn't give the right sort of answer but she was the one that really loved her father. The other two said what they thought father would like to hear, just to gain the property. But as soon as they got their hands on it, as soon as the kingdom was divided between them and their husbands, then they turned against their own father, and this almost drove him mad. So one gets on a less grand, more commonplace scale this sort of thing, especially after a man married and goes away from home. You often see a sort of misunderstanding or something of that sort developing between him and his parents. It's quite odd. Anyone ever notice this? Maybe not enough of you have been married ... well, not that I have, but I have certainly observed people.

Asvajit: Could you say a bit more about that, I didn't ...

S: Well one notices quite often that when a son gets married and sets up his own home, it's as though he's not on the same wavelength as his old parents. He doesn't like to go home, for instance, he'd rather be in his own place. He's not very keen on going to see them. They want to see him but he doesn't like to say, 'No I just don't want to see you.' He just makes excuses and a certain estrangement develops in a way.

Alan: And it becomes, sometimes, like a duty to go back.

S: Yes, a duty. They don't really want to go, but they don't say that they don't want to go. Anyway, that's another rather black picture. Let's see if we have any better luck with daughters. I think that after that we'll need a cup of tea, so just carry on.

"Both husband and wife agreed with him, replying, 'What you have said is indeed true. Sometimes one's own son becomes an enemy. Perhaps it would be better to have a daughter.'"

S: See. They don't stop trying, eh? (laughter)

"`What do you think?' In answer Milarepa sang..."

S: Well a son may be a young brute. He may beat his old parents, he may treat them rather badly, but surely a daughter would be better. A daughter, after all, is a woman, she's much softer and gentler, so surely a daughter would be nice to have? So, all right, what is a daughter like?

[36]
"In youth, a daughter is like a smiling, heavenly angel;
She is more attractive and precious than are jewels.
In middle age, she is good for nothing.
Before her father, she openly carries things away;
She pilfers secretly behind her mother's back.
If her parents do not praise her and satisfy her wants,
They will suffer from her bitterness and temper.
In the end, she becomes red-faced and weilds a sword.
At her best, she may serve and devote herself to others;
At her worst, she will bring mishaps and disaster.
Woman is always a trouble-maker;
Bearing this in mind, one should avoid irretrievavle misfortunes.

For women, the primary source of suffering, I have no appetite."

S: Do you think that Milarepa is being too strong here or he's being fair? Has he overstated his case? Well perhaps he is overstating it, but just because most people don't see the situation at all, and, as it were, understate the case.

Lokamitra: I don't think he's overstating a certain side of it.

Sagaramati: You even see this in films. You often get good films and the thing that often spoils them is the woman. (laughter)

S: Oh, dear!

Sagaramati: It's almost as if it's unconsciously implied in the story, you know, you get the bank robbers or something like that and they get caught through the actions of one of the women of the bank robbers. This seems ... I noticed this quite a lot when I was young.

Richard: I always used to think women ruined it because ... you'd always miss bits of action because she'd be snogging with the star or something.

S: But you're only saying there that craving is preferable to hatred. You didn't like the craving bits because they interrupted the hating bit. (laughter)

Ashvajit: I always thought that the ... one would have a bad time with women because they wanted their own way.

S: And because, perhaps, you wanted your way. (laughter)

Ashvajit: Yes.

S: Well, it is the clash of two wills, you know, one mustn't leave oneself out of it. I mean they've got their sort of will and you've got your sort of will. It's usually these two coming together that creates the trouble, that creates the conflict. I mean, possibly if Milarepa was speaking just to a young women he'd paint the other side of the picture. How undesirable it would be to have a husband, and what brutes they are. So better to keep away from them.

Mark: The Tibetans seem from this to be used to being told things in such a direct way.

S: This is true. Tibetans are a very direct and down-to-earth people - leaving aside the aristocracy. This is very true indeed.

[37]
Mark: And they don't ... Apart from sort of resenting what he said, they seem to be gathering devotion to him.

S: He's being very realistic; he's being very hard; he's being very down-to-earth. No doubt they have had their own experience of life and seen things for themselves. After all they live in a village and you see life at very close quarters in a village. In a sense you really see it in the raw, you know, every quarrel that goes on; every time a husband beats his wife, you know

it. Every time she scratches his face, you know it. If anyone isn't on good terms with someone, you know it. If there's a little feud going on, you know it. A little plot going on, you know it. There's this very sort of small, intense, and petty life in the village. So they see the truth of what he says. It is very hard to take. It is, in a sense, even quite unpleasant, and he's certainly not pulling his punches, eh? But as you said, yes, their faith gets stronger and stronger. He's being very real, he's showing them what life is really like, he's opening their eyes. That's not to say that there aren't any positive possibilities in life. Well surely there are but, you know, you can only actualize these positive possibilities. I mean, if you are alive to the negative situations and can avoid it.

Alan: It's a bit strong there, that "Woman is always a trouble-maker." I mean, just to take it objectively, is it true or is it false or has he overstated his case? Has he exaggerated or is there an element of truth in it?

Sagaramati: I think for an immature person, yes.

S: Yes, mm.

Richard: It takes two to make trouble, I think.

S: No, I don't agree with that. Only in the sense that, I mean, that you have to be there for them to make trouble with you and you're responsible in being there, but sometimes you can just be sitting peacefully, even meditating, and someone makes trouble for you. Well, you are responsible to the extent that you are there for them to make trouble for, but maybe not beyond that. So in what sense? I mean, after all, if we take what Milarepa said seriously, well Milarepa is described as a second Buddha, and Milarepa is giving teaching in his songs, so presumably whatever he says, whether we can agree with it or not, should be taken seriously. So when he says, "Woman is [38] always a trouble-maker" well, surely it seems very unfair - it flies in the face of all current, liberal, progressive, modern thought - but why did he say it then? Was he wrong? He's addressing a couple, a man and a woman. Was he wrong? Or is there something in what he says?

Ashvajit: Well he's saying it in order to enlighten them.

S: Well, he's not just saying things that he hopes will enlighten them: presumably he's saying things which he thinks are true. So is it true? Or must one just dismiss this sort of saying as, well, you know, an outcome of Milarepa's personal limitations, etc., etc?

Ashvajit: Well it's very difficult to say. If one looks back on one's relationships with women, all the times one spent with them, away from them - what has been the source of trouble? Whether it actually emanated from the women as it were, or whether it was one's own unskilfulness or ignorance.

S: This is "trouble-maker" you know, as though she takes the active role.

Ashvajit: It's quite strong.

S: Yes, that ...

Lokamitra: Is ... woman has a biological need which ... perhaps he is referring to this ... it's sort of lower evolutionary, much more ...

S: It surely doesn't mean that woman is never under any circumstances helpful. But perhaps he's thinking in terms of specifically domestic relationships. That is the context of the discussion: woman as wife, woman as daughter, without any sort of spiritual consideration, without any sort of spiritual framework or orientation or ideal. Without that, woman must be a trouble-maker for man, yes, because you've only got conflict of one egoistic-will with another. But once the woman takes up the Dharma and is leading a truly spiritual life, well surely a woman of that kind won't be a trouble-maker. So it's woman in her raw state, as it were, within a situation in which the Dharma is not found. Perhaps you should say that. You see what I mean?

Sagaramati: You could say that a desirable object is always a source of trouble because people will, you know, con one another, fight one another, etc, to get that object.

[39]
S: But, here, of course, he says as though the object is itself taking the initiative: "Woman is always a trouble-maker." Let's see what the other translator says.

Richard: It's quite ... I mean it's quite interesting ... Sagaramati was talking about competition and such like ... I mean that seems to really cause a lot of trouble. I'm sure the woman is perfectly aware of it. She's not all sweet and innocent, kind of sitting there and all these men kind of all around her, she knows what's going on and probably enjoying it. So in that sense yes.

S: Yes.

Lokamitra: Also, Milarepa is ... in this the most desired object is a wife to a man of the world. The third most desired object is a daughter. So a woman has a very, very high value for a man.

S: Yes.

Lokamitra: So he's just really knocking that and ...

S: Yes.

Lokamitra: ... he's saying that's really not it.

S: Yes.

Lokamitra: If you place such values, woman will always be a trouble-maker.

S: Yes. Hmm. But of course, if you don't place that value very often she'll be a trouble-maker too just because she's not given that value which she's been accustomed to, and can sometimes become more of a trouble-maker than ever on that score. Then the only solution is that she herself must come into the spiritual path and herself try to develop, which is of course possible, even though it may be difficult, hm?

Sagaramati: What should ... I mean last Order Day, at the order meeting before Order Day, we were talking about marriage and the Order's attitude towards marriage and things like that. I can't remember if I'm getting it right now, but the feeling I had at the time was that the women definitely were more sympathetic towards married life than most of the men. There were some men who were sympathetic.

S: Yes.

Sagaramati: But, I don't know - I mean should one compromise in a situation [40] like that? I feel quite black and white about it - it's out.

S: What do you mean by compromise? Not state your opinion?

Sagaramati: Yes, that's probably it, yes.

S: Well why should one not state one's opinion? I mean it doesn't mean that other people have got to accept it.

Sagaramati: In the context of an order meeting, yes, one should state one's opinion, but in the sense of when people come along to the centre and they (at the order meeting) say that some people pick up feelings etc., as it were, coming out of the order, that marriage is off and things like that. People come to you and ask is that attitude prevalent in the order. Obviously you ...

S: Well, of course, there is great traditional justification in Buddhism for this because marriage seems to have been out from the very beginning, doesn't it, yes?

Alan: But in Tibet, certain sects would have been going off to the monastery and then returning to the householder's life ...

S: Technically he wouldn't be a bhikshu, but you do have people like that in Tibet. I mean there are even some married lamas. I've even known some married lamas. But my own personal feeling was that there were some married lamas that I I've known who were very, very good lamas indeed, certainly quite spiritually developed people. But even so I couldn't help feeling they'd be better without their wives. One case I knew where the wife was really troublesome and difficult. She didn't like disciples coming because they took up too much of her husband's time and she'd shoo them away if she got the chance - not at all sympathetic, and very much into social position and money and getting her husband to perform more ceremonies and that kind of thing to get more money so that she could buy herself things. So this certainly isn't very good, though I do feel that the lama was a really good lama, a highly developed person but I still used to think he'd be better off without her.

Alan: That held him back a bit?

S: I would say yes. One can't say this sort of thing very easily or be very sure but that's how it seemed to me - that she was a limitation at least on his functioning.

Vessantara: The question of how outspoken you should be is something which [40] comes up a lot in Brighton. Say out of the nine original mitras, there are only two who either

are currently married or have been married and now have children, and so I've been treading a little bit carefully with what I've said, just trying to space out the reaction a bit.

S: I think one can emphasize the principle but also make it clear that the degree of application is up to the person concerned. But the principle is that you get into your meditation, your communication, your study, your right livelihood, as deeply as you can. As regards your lifestyle, whether you're married or not married, you will work that out quite naturally if you're sincere in your commitment and spiritual practice. So we can't sort of legislate, we can't lay down hard and fast rules, that if you yourself find that marriage is incompatible with your spiritual development and if you're sincere, you'll give it up or extricate yourself from it. If you don't find that, if you find that you can evolve even though married, then you'll continue to be married and continue to evolve. Only you can decide in the last resort. I think one has to say something like that. It's not of course also that if you're not married automatically you evolve - it certainly isn't that, you have to be very careful of that. The young bachelor isn't necessarily nearer to the goal than the elderly married man, not necessarily. He may have a better chance in certain ways, but don't forget the hare and the tortoise; the bright young upasaka slapping around, he may waste a lot of time, but the old plodding upasaka, he may get there in the end. Be careful, there is that side to it too. So, you know, make the general principle which is to evolve, to develop, and these other things are largely a matter of lifestyle, and it's just up to you personally to adjust your lifestyle to your degree of evolution, according to your own judgement. I mean if you've close contact with other committed people, well surely they will tell you what they think, and if they think that you're bluffing yourself then they'll tell you that. And you've a perfect right to tell them if they're bluffing themselves with their bachelorhood and celibacy or whatever, and one hopes that in the end the truth of the situation will emerge and everybody will evolve in their own way. I don't think one can say to anybody as a hard and fast rule that, well, of course, you can't evolve much because you're married. That would be a very cruel thing to say and could be a quite untrue thing.

[42]
Lokamitra: Also it seems that we might discourage people from getting married in particular cases but people do have to accept the situation that they came along in, and may have to accept their responsibilities and in a way one has to be quite positive about this.

S: Yes, right. But not in such a way as to encourage those who haven't taken that step to think that it would be a good thing if they took it.

Ashvajit: Yes, you can't hold a carrot in front of their noses and then snatch it away again. There's that as well. If a married couple come along and you offer all kinds of prospects for development without stating the situation quite clearly as it is, I think one is being quite unfair.

S: I think the emphasis should be on evolution, on development, in a very positive way, and suggest that the other things will take care of themselves. You will know when the time comes if you have to change. We can't say that or we can't determine it for you or lay it down in a general way - that will be up to you. We just ask that you make the effort to evolve and be sincere with yourself and ask yourself what is holding you back or not holding you back.

All right, let's stop for tea after that rather terrifying glimpse of worldly existence.

Sangharatna [?sic]: One can also be married to one's job and one has to decide about that too.

Sagaramati: Some jobs are worth marrying - they don't talk back. (laughter)

S: They don't pull your hair. (pause) It certainly makes one think. Have you been married before? Only Ashvajit.

Ashvajit: Yes, twice.

S: Well we ought to be listening to you. Right, who's next?

"The husband and wife then said, 'One may not need sons and daughters, but without relatives life would be too miserable and helpless. Is that not so?"

[43]
S: Right, so they're not giving up all that easily ... yes? So they're being gradually convinced. Right carry on then.

"Milarepa again sang:
At first, when a man greets his relatives,
He is happy and joyful; with enthusiasm
He serves, entertains, and talks to them.
Later, they share his meat and wine.
He offers something to them once, they may reciprocate.
In the end, they cause anger, craving, and bitterness;
They are a fountain of regret and unhappiness.
With this in mind, I renounce pleasant and sociable friends;
For kinsmen and neighbors, I have neither appetite."

S: Huh? Do you think Milarepa is overstating his case, or do you think this also can be taken completely literally, just as he says it, or sings it?

Ratnaguna: Well, he doesn't have any contact with the sangha does he? (S: No.) So presumably he's only talking about sort of social contacts.

S: Yes, yes - he's certainly not talking about kalyana mitrata.

Ratnaguna: I think in all of these cases he's only stating one side - just to show them that side.

S: What do you think is the other side? Do you think there is another side or not?

Ratnaguna: Well relatives can be good.

S: Relatives can be good, hmm.

Alan: Like the side that the couple have, that attitude they have, you start giving the other side of it.

Padmavajra: Um, yes, it seems that's their only kind of, you know, idea of happiness - that's

their only idea of life, you know, what the enjoyable life can be - so he's saying well, you know, this is just ...

S: I think there's a bit more to it than that, he says, for instance, with regard to the relatives here,

"He offers something to them once, they may reciprocate.
In the end, the cause anger, craving, and bitterness;
They are a fountain of regret and unhappiness."

So what does that mean, huh? It means that if the Dharma element is not there, sooner or later there will be trouble with other people, huh? Because [44] the situation is such, you know, people will one day get angry or there'll be a misunderstanding. Unless you've got the Dharma underlying the relationship or the contact as a basis, as a point of reference, and as a standard, then things can go wrong, you know, human relationships can go wrong. Hmm? So if the Dharma element isn't there - if there isn't any sort of spiritual principle involved in the relationship, in your contact with your relations - well sooner or later something will happen which will estrange you. Hmm? That is if you don't just go on in a very dull stagnant sort of way.

Vessantara: I think that's much more likely because I see people who seem to just carry on year after year. It seems to me much more that you just get stuck in relating to people in the same old patterns. It seems much more common than great bust-ups and ...

S: Perhaps in the villages where life is much more confined you tend to have the great bust-ups, you know, not speaking to someone for thirty years or, you know, just sticking a knife in their back one dark night, you know, something of that sort ... but you can't get away huh, huh? - at least you think you can't, practically you can't. So

"With this in mind, I renounce pleasant and sociable friends;
For kinsmen and neighbors I have no appetite."

I think the basic point here is that without the Dharma to refer to, as it were, well human relationships of any kind always end in disaster, yes? Unless there's some higher spiritual principle, in the light of which you can conduct a relationship. Though of course there are some relationships, which, you know, in the light of that higher principle will dissolve, huh, just, as it were, completely neurotic. Anyway, perhaps we need not labour this point because we've, you know, gone into it all pretty thoroughly already, yes, in connection with the wife and the daughter and the son. All right let's carry on.

"The couple then said, 'Indeed, you may not need kinsmen. However, since we have a great deal of property, would you like to have and take care of it?' Milarepa replied, 'As sun and moon never stop to brighten one small place, so I devote myself to the welfare of all sentient beings. I cannot, therefore, become a member of your family. By merely beholding me, both of you will be benefited in this and future lives. I will also make a wish that we may meet in the Pure Land of Oujen."

[45]
S: Um, so there's quite an important point here, huh?

"As sun and moon never stop to brighten one small place, so I devote myself to the welfare of all sentient beings. I cannot therefore become a member of your family."

So what in fact is Milarepa saying?

Alan: Family life is limited.

S: Family life is limited, huh? So in a sense it isn't that you should give up family life. It's more that you should make the whole world, the whole of humanity your family, yes, you know, I mean you can look at it in a positive way, yes? It means not just dismissing the family, it means the family is included, yes? He is not giving up the family. But he includes the family in a larger whole - which includes everybody, huh? So you could say that when you give up the family, you're not giving up the family. You're only giving up the limitation between the family and everybody else, yes? When you give up your family you don't give up your father and mother and brothers and sisters and ... No, they're just where they were, except you remove the limitation, huh? You feel, or try to feel, towards everybody the same affection that usually you feel only towards your so-called nearest and dearest, as in the metta bhavana, yes? So here he gives a sort of positive ... Having really shown them the negative side of things here, without any sort of palliation, he gives a hint of a more positive approach now, yes? Do you see that? You don't ... after all when you give up your family you don't give up your family, eh? You're still relating to them; of course you are. How can you break that link? I mean your mother is still your mother; you can never undo that, eh? Father is still father. Friends are still friends. But you remove the barrier. Everybody becomes like your father and mother, and your brother and sister, yes, and your friends and kinsmen. Umm? So you don't give up anybody. You only give up the limitations. Of course it's easier said than done; you know, it may be that you have actually literally to give up the family for a while before you can afford to let yourself come into actual contact with them, treating them just like anybody else, hum? So there may have to be a break for a while, before you can come back to them in that sort of spirit just as people, just as members of the human race.

So "as sun and moon never stop to brighten one [46] small place" Huh? - the sun and moon shine on all alike, huh? They don't shine on just one small area. So in the same way "I devote myself to the welfare of all sentient beings," I've taken the Bodhisattva vow; I want to gain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings - this is what Milarepa is saying - I don't want to restrict myself to one particular group of people, just to a family, you know, just to the people living in one particular spot. I've taken the Bodhisattva vow. I would like to benefit everybody. The whole world is my family. The whole human race is my family. Those are the terms in which I'm thinking.

"I cannot therefore be a member or your family."

Hum? That's the reason, huh? That I aspire to belong to the family of humanity itself, the family of mankind, and do what I can for everybody - not just work for the sake of a few. So at once Milarepa is placing this very, as it were, negative and, as it were, very Hinayanistic and, as it were, very ascetic attitude of his with regard to, first of all, home and land, and then the wife, and then the son, and then the daughter, and then relations and kinsmen and neighbours. He's placing his negative, as it were, aspect towards all these things within the very highly positive Mahayanistic context yes? It's the limitation that he's against, not the people. It's his own attachment to the people he's against, not the people themselves, huh? He

wants to benefit everybody, and work for everybody, so that that should be the sort of spirit huh? You give up your family not because you're antisocial and hate people, you know, you give up your family because you like people, and your family keeps you away from everybody else, hum? I mean do people actually feel this? Huh?

Several (sotto voce): Yes, yes.

S: So (?) really careful of how we use this phraseology, you know, this language of giving up. You don't give up your families. It's more like that, you know, you join a bigger family in which your old family is included. You only give up your narrow attachment, hmm? your attachment to them exclusively - you like all. Another point:

"By merely beholding me, both of you will be benefited in this and future lives."

What does he mean by that? What is he saying? It reminds ...

Ratnaguna: It will be like you were saying at the last study retreat when you just look at someone and you get their presence.

S: Yes, yes, the darshan - but why is that so important? You know, what do you get?

Padmapani: Direct experience of reality.

Ratnaguna: Just the person's influence ... the way they ...

S: But I mean what do you get out of seeing anybody? I mean keeping on quite an ordinary sort of everyday level, before we leap up to reality, yes? By beholding anybody, I mean really beholding, really seeing, yes? What do you gain? What benefit do you get?

[47]
Padmavajra: Well, you know, them I suppose.

S: Well what benefit do you get from knowing them?

(?): Experience of yourself.

S: Experience of yourself, yes, experiencing others is a way of experiencing yourself. Knowing others is a way of knowing yourself. It's not knowing about others, eh? - it's direct knowledge. Yes? If you are aware of somebody else you become more aware of yourself, because that other person is also aware of you, hmm? He may be seeing something that you don't see, yes? You may be seeing in him something that he doesn't see, yes? So he is seeing you and you are seeing him. Because he sees you, you see yourself; because you see him, he sees himself. In this way it can build up, huh? In other words your own awareness is mutually enhanced. You mutually enhance each other's awareness, eh? In other words, individuality, yes?

So if it's say someone like Milarepa - you see someone like Milarepa - well, you don't see someone like Milarepa, yes? They weren't seeing Milarepa, were they? Not fully. To some extent. I mean every time he sang another song they knew Milarepa more, the saw Milarepa

more clearly, because his songs, you know, revealed himself. But if you're really perceptive and really aware you can see someone without them saying anything or having to say anything. But, you know, speech - communication in the form of speech - is a sort of bridge, huh? It's a middle way between complete knowledge and complete ignorance of somebody. Through speech people reveal something of themselves. You can get to know them, yes? But it's best in a way if, you know, them just by looking at them, just by seeing directly, without them saying anything. For in the case of someone like Milarepa they may not see the, you know, the two people may not see, in this case, all of Milarepa, but they do see something, yes? And he sees them. And the more they see him the more they see themselves. So in this way they are benefited, huh, "in this and future lives. I will also make a wish that we may meet in the Pure Land of Oujen." This must be Urgyen, I think, the pure land of Padmasambhava, yes? Probably not in any sense of geographical location but, well, the pure land of Padmasambhava, the ideal, the archetypal, realm of the copper-coloured mountain where Padmasambhava lives in the midst of, surrounded by, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and dakas and dakinis and all the rest, huh? A sort of mandala as it were - a perfect world.

[48]
Ratnaguna: Can we just go back to that "by merely beholding me"? You said that you experience yourself by really looking at somebody. Would that go with er ... if you were looking at somebody who was less developed than yourself?

S: Who was ...?

Ratnaguna: Who was less developed than yourself.

S: No, it wouldn't. But at the same time, what does one mean by less developed, yes? I mean different people have got different aspects. It's not just even a question of level or degree, but of dimension, eh? So it may be that even that, on the whole, on balance, someone is more developed than you are, yes, or you may be more developed, more aware. The less developed person may have nonetheless become aware of an aspect or dimension that he'd not experienced before, even though on balance as it were he is the more developed of the two. Or at least he will deepen his own experience, eh? It's not as though there's no gain at all because there was a gain for Milarepa, huh? I mean he's seeing his own more enlightened state just beginning to be reflected in them. What a positive experience. He must have been overjoyed, as it were, yes? After all he wants to enlighten everybody, as a Bodhisattva, and he sees that these people's initial faith, though limited, is now developing into a bit of understanding, they're beginning to sympathize with him, beginning to really see him - surely that's the gain, yes? He is experiencing other beings experiencing himself, eh? So it's like, you know, a light which was just reflected in one facet at first, but now it's being reflected in so many more facets, eh? It's not as though in a sense there's a Milarepa and other people. There are these sort of different facets. In a sense there's one person, and different aspects or different facets of that one person are being progressively illuminated, you know, one can see that's true.

It isn't as though there's a Milarepa quite separate from the husband and wife who are talking to him, huh? So it isn't as though he is a more developed person than them and therefore he has nothing to gain from communication with them, though they have to gain by communicating with him. It isn't like that at all; that's taking it much too literalistically.

Yes, he does gain, you can say. Even a Buddha gains, you can say, when others become enlightened, because he sees as it were his Buddhahood reflected in more and more people. So in that sense, you can even say - though this is not [49] traditional language - that he becomes more of a Buddha than ever (laughter). And this is also why the Bodhisattva says he will not gain enlightenment until everybody gains enlightenment. How can he be enlightened until everybody is enlightened? Because in a sense .... (tape noise obscures what is said until) ... which progressively holds for the course of all so-called individual people. So this is why, on a very much lower level, if one is say formally (?) attending classes and courses and giving lectures, if you're not getting something out of it then you shouldn't be doing it, eh? If you just have the attitude, 'well here am I sort of, you know, giving out this teaching and instruction, well of course I've already gone beyond that so I'm not getting anything out of the teaching and instruction' - well, that's a completely wrong attitude, hmm? You may know these particular points or those particular facts or have got to that particular level, but the fact that you're communicating that to others is itself an additional experience, is in itself a matter of growth and development for you, eh? The facets are multiplying. You are not just one facet - you are all the facets. So therefore Milarepa says "by merely beholding me, both of you will be benefited in this and future lives. I will also make a wish that we may meet in the Pure Land of Oujen." Yes? That we may meet. Yes? He's placing them, as it were, in a position of equality with himself. We'll all meet together in, you know, the Pure Land of Padmasambhava. "Milarepa then burst into another song." All right let's hear the other song.

"Wealth, at first, leads to self-enjoyment,
Making other people envious.
However much one has, one never feels it is enough.
Until one is bound by the miser's demon;
It is then hard to spend it on virtuous deeds.
Wealth provokes enemies and stirs up ghosts.
One works hard to gather riches which others will spend;
In the end, one struggles for life and death.
To amass wealth and money invites enemies;
So I renounce the delusions of Samsara.
To become the victim of deceitful devils,
I have no appetite."

S: So the couple have offered him their property, or at least they've suggested that he should take care of it, but he doesn't want property, he doesn't want wealth, eh? In a way he comes back to the basic issue. It's possessions, uh, yes? This applies also to the home and the native land; applies to the wife, to the son, to the daughter, the relations and kinsmen, friends [50] in the ordinary sense. There is this feeling that they are mine, eh? There is this sense of property. So this sort of sense of property becomes something very tangible and concrete when it is actual houses and land - but that's just one of the most tangible and concrete forms of property, of possession, um? I mean this is the source of all the troubles one experiences in connection with the home and native land and wife and so on. You think that they are yours, eh? You treat them as your very own, eh? This is the real sort of difficulty - this business of 'mine', which is of course bound up with this sense of 'me' or 'I', eh? So

"Wealth, at first, leads to self-enjoyment,
Making other people envious.
However much one has, one never feels it is enough."

In other words it's essentially neurotic, eh, this whole idea of possession. In this sort of way possession means that you're trying to keep for yourself. You're trying to get from outside something you should be getting from inside. Outside things can give you a certain degree of comfort, enjoyment, pleasure, satisfaction, but they can't give you any lasting pleasure or satisfaction. But that is what you are trying to get out of them.

So "wealth, at first, leads to self-enjoyment making other people envious." But "however much one has, one never feels it is enough." You can't go on all the time trying to fill the inner void with some other thing, some other person. You've got to generate it from yourself. So with regard to property, "however much one has, one never feels it is enough, until one is bound by the miser's demon;" the demon of avarice we would say, "it is then hard to spend it on virtuous deeds." You get so much into the habit of grasping and heaping up and amassing - you just don't like to give any of it away.

"Wealth provokes enemies and stirs up ghosts.
One works hard to gather riches which others will spend;
In the end, one struggles for life and death.
To amass wealth and money invites enemies;
So I renounce the delusions of samsara.
To become the victim of deceitful devils I have no appetite."

Essentially it is property. Essentially it is possession and the sense of possession that Milarepa is giving up, uh? That's why he doesn't wear any clothes, eh? That's why he goes about naked, or at best with a bit of cotton cloth. He doesn't own anything, doesn't possess anything - and it's not the non-possession of external things which is so important, but not having the feeling or sensation of 'mine', you know, with regard to anything at all.

In the Dhammapada the Buddha says, 'The fool says to himself this son is mine, [51] this wealth is mine. Thus the fool, the spiritually immature person, torments himself.' [verse 62, tr.] And then the Buddha goes on to say, 'He does not even belong to himself. How then should a son belong to him? How then should wealth?' So nothing is yours - because you can't keep it forever. If it really was yours you could go on keeping it, but you can't keep it, the whole world is not yours, nothing is yours. So it's this sense of possession that Milarepa is undermining, yes? You think of home and native land as your home, your native land, hmm? If your country is attacked you will feel hurt. If your national flag is insulted, you will feel heart-rent, yes? If your wife is carried off by another man, you will feel upset. If he carries off somebody else's wife you don't bother at all. He's done exactly the same thing - but if it's your wife you feel it, if it's somebody else's wife, you don't. Why this difference, um? ... for it's your wife. Your son dies - you get all upset. If a thousand other people lose their sons you just hardly give a thought, yes? Same with daughter, same with friends. So it's this sense of possession that Milarepa is really attacking, this sense of 'mine' and 'I' - the ego, which is not the individual. The individual is something different. I mean the ego is a sort of cancer on the individuality, you could say. The ego is neurotic individuality or individuality which has gone neurotic or gone mad. It's not individuality itself. It's an excrescence on individuality, a wart, a boil, huh? Always sort or pricking, always sensitive and sore, huh?

All right, let's go on, we're very near the end of the section for today.

"These songs gave the couple unshakeable faith in Milarepa and they gave away all their

possessions for the sake of the Dharma. They began to practise the Jetsun's teachings and were forever released from falling into the three lower realms. When they died, they entered the Path (of Bodhi) and step by step approached Buddhahood. After this the Jetsun returned to the Bodhi Cave of Ragma. His former patrons gave their services and offerings to him, and he remained there in an inspired mood."

S: "These songs gave the couple unshakeable faith in Milarepa." That's very significant. They had started off with some faith - but limited - with a very limited outlook, a very conventional attitude, but they listened to song after song, and these songs gave the couple "unshakeable faith in Milarepa". It's unshakeable faith that's very rare. Faith can so easily be disturbed, so easily shaken. And I'm not referring to belief or blind faith but [52] to genuine faith, uh? Unshakeable genuine faith is very, very rare, huh? But this couple developed unshakeable faith in Milarepa and "gave away all their possessions for the sake of the Dharma." They acted upon that faith, yes? They weren't lukewarm. It wasn't just a question for discussion. They gave away everything, eh? They realized the import of what he was saying about property and possessions. So they put it into practice, "gave away all their possessions for the sake of the Dharma." Yes? Not just gave them away but "for the sake of the Dharma." You can read that in two ways, or both ways even. They gave them away for the sake of the spiritual principle, for the sake of practising the spiritual principle of the Dharma, i.e. the principle of non-attachment, non-possession; or that they gave them away for Dharma purposes like building a monastery or making Buddha images and so on. "They began to practise the Jetsun's teachings and were forever released from falling into the three lower realms." Which are the three lower realms?

Ratnajyoti: Preta, animal, and hell realms.

S: Right, yes.

Ratnajyoti: It suggests, I mean here as in other places in Milarepa, and probably with other teachers as well, that they start off with a little bit of faith and all these ideas about families and things, and then at the end of it they're sort of stream entrants.

S: Yes. Right.

Ratnajyoti: Er ... I don't know it's just ... you just put this down to the fact that he was a such a clear teacher and had such ...

S: Also the ground, the ground was prepared, huh?

Ratnajyoti: Yes.

S: ... also their lives were uncomplicated - there were very few distractions. I think this is one of the great differences between life today and life in ancient times, uh? You dealt with one thing at a time. You took everything seriously. There was no such thing as publicity, no mass media, huh? No communication in the worldly sense. But now in a way everybody is much less serious. Then people acted upon what they taught, what they believed. They were more deeply convinced. I mean just imagine that they were, had just been living there, just had some contact with Buddhism, not very much. There were no newspapers, there were no books [53] probably - they might not ever have seen a book. No means of transport, um? There were

no wheeled carriages in Tibet until the present century.

Ratnajyoti: I suppose there's also the aspect to that that, having decided that they're going to follow the path, because of the simplicity of their life they can either follow it or not, I mean there's no sort of halfway mark.

S: Right, yes, yes. No capacity or no possibility of rationalizing it away.

Ratnajyoti: Um, yes.

Alan Angel: It's interesting that it's an unshakeable faith in Milarepa, rather than an unshakeable faith in the Dharma.

S: Ah, but this is very much within the Tantric context. In the Tantric context, in the Vajrayana context, the guru embodies the Buddhadharma itself. The guru's mind is the Buddha, his speech is the Dharma, and your contact with him is the Sangha. Yes? So it's not that you are out of contact with the Three Jewels, huh? But you're in contact with them in the form of the guru. Yes? Because what was the Dharma originally is what the Buddha taught, yes? So the Dharma for you is what the guru teaches, yes? There is a sort of comparison given by Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, in the Hindu context, huh? He says something like this: that the Vedas are the cows, the Upanishads - which are the Vedanta, the essence of the Vedas - the milk drawn from the cow, yes? And what he offers to Arjuna in the form of his teaching is like the butter, which he has churned from the milk, huh? So it's like that, you need it in the form of butter. Perhaps you can't digest it in the form of milk, or even in the form of cow.

"When they died, they entered the path of Bodhi." I wonder why it is "when they died", huh? Perhaps it's the fact that, you know, they were in a certain social situation and they didn't really belong to it any more, but it still affected them and it was only at the time of death that they became, you know, definitely entrants upon the path of Enlightenment. That seems to be the suggestion. The moment of death is of course regarded as very important in Tibetan Buddhism - I mean in Buddhism generally even: that you can actually [54] win Enlightenment or something very close to it at the moment of death, you know, when the limitations of physical existence are removed, provided of course you've practised beforehand, eh? "... and step by step approached Buddhahood." They followed the path of regular steps ... [tape noise]. "After this, the Jetsun returned to the Bodhi Cave of Ragma. His former patrons gave their services and offerings to him, and he remained there in an inspired mood." I don't know what the original Tibetan word for this "inspired mood" would be. Perhaps it's a sort of higher samadhi state, but very joyful and exuberant, as it were. So why do you think that point is made: that he stayed there in an inspired mood? Do you think it has anything to do with his meeting with those two people? Why do you think he felt in an inspired mood after that?

Padmavajra: He's been sort of successful in a way.

S: Been successful in a way, yes. Some more facets have reflected the light, you know, as I said earlier, yes?

Padmavajra: Some people took (fruition(?)).

S: Yes, yes, so he's gained something out of it, huh? In a sense there has been a gain for him. It's not just him passing on the same old teachings that, you know, he's known for ages. No, not like that at all.

Sagamarati: His mind's being very creative in that kind of situation.

S: Yes, yes, quite. Anyway, that's the first part of that chapter, so I think we should stop there. Tomorrow it's something even more - oh, much more - advanced. We'll see how we get on with that. Anyway, any points to be raised or questions in connection with that we've done today - just those four pages, um? What sort of general impression do you get?

Asvajit: Completely uncompromising.

S: Completely uncompromising. This is one of the great characteristics of Milarepa as a whole, yes? Completely uncompromising. It's good that there should be such people occasionally.

Padmavajra: He's outspoken. [55]

S: He's outspoken. He's direct. In some ways he was more uncompromising than the Buddha, yes? I mean outwardly. I mean the Buddha wore robes - or wore clothes, shouldn't say robes, eh? - wore clothes; Milarepa didn't. Milarepa stayed up in the mountains all the time; the Buddha didn't, far from it. So sometimes that sort of example is necessary. You can't say therefore that Milarepa was more Enlightened than the Buddha - I mean that would be absurd, eh? But a different kind of presentation of the ideal, a different an emphasis on that particular aspect - austerity and rigour, uncompromisingness, which is, you know, needed very much from time to time. That doesn't mean that everybody's going to be like that, or follow that particular pattern. But it's good to know that there is that pattern. (Maybe (?) it's a (?)) a very positive one.

Sagaramati: Sangharakshita two or one? [This is a reference to The Rainbow Road, p.436, tr.]

S: Ah right, yes, yes, right you can say that, yes. Writ large, um?

Sagamarati: Writ large?

S: Writ large. And also it's not possible for one person - even for a Buddha - to embody all aspects of the ideal in one human life. Yes? You can't be a Milarepa and a Padmasambhava at the same time. You can't be a Milarepa and a Vimalakirti at the same time. Vimalakirti's ideal is a great ideal. Milarepa's ideal is a great ideal, yes? But you can't have both at the same time, yes? Not on this human plane, yes? The only plane on which you can have them all at the same time as it were as different facets or aspects of one as it were Enlightened personality is on the level of the sambhogakaya - that is, you know, the full manifestation of all possible aspects of Enlightenment or Enlightened experience eh? The sambhogakaya, one can say, is a bit to be er ... a Milarepa and a Vimalakirti and a Padmasambhava, all at the same time. But not on this earthly plane, yes? Not on the nirmanakaya. (?)The nirmanakaya is of either this kind or that kind, but not of all kinds. Therefore you have enlightened teachers who are very learned, who know a lot. You have enlightened teachers who know nothing at all, who are completely ignorant of books. Some will need one kind of person, some will need another

kind of person, yes? [56]

You may have enlightened teachers who live in mountains and caves and forests. Others who live at home with wife and family, yes? They're in contact with a different kind of people, needing a different kind of path. You may have enlightened teachers who meditate all the time. You may have others who don't meditate at all, in a sense - not in the technical sense of sitting and meditating. I mean you can't have one as it were lifestyle which is the ideal for everybody. You can have, you know, the ideal, which is the same for all, i.e. Enlightenment itself, but not in any specific form which everybody has to accept and follow. That just isn't possible. So this is one of the great beauties of Buddhism - it, you know, allows for that sort of diversity. That's why, you know, there's an example, there's an instance in the Pali canon, of the Buddha praising as it were all of his chief disciples in turn, and saying what they were distinguished for, eh? They were all arahant disciples as far as we know, but one was the best preacher, the other was the best at collecting alms, eh? (laughter), another was best at exalting the nuns, eh? (laughter), another was best at supernormal displays and manifestations, another was best for wisdom, another was best for asceticism. [Etadaggavagga, Anguttara Nikaya 1.14. The Buddha also includes some of the lay devotees, tr.] But it wasn't that one was more enlightened than the other. They were all enlightened, you know, they all had the spiritual genius - but their talents were different, huh? The same genius but different talents, to put it like that. So you could have some who were ascetic, others who were not ascetic. The Buddha said on one occasion that "I have disciples who practise this, that, and the other asceticism. I have monks who do not practise those forms of asceticism." (laughter). Yes? So it doesn't mean that they were less enlightened, or they were more enlightened. A difference of lifestyle according to difference of temperament, approach, and so on. So we have to be a bit tolerant about these things, and not think that if someone isn't a strict vegetarian, for instance, that they just can't be on the spiritual path at all, huh? You have to be very careful of things like that.

Padmavajra(?): Presumably, you know, you were saying these different qualities, you know, like Milarepa or a Vimalakirti - is that ... or the enlightened man will also have his own particular quality which isn't sort of a Padmasambhava or a Milarepa, which is just very much his own? [57]

S: Yes, right, yes. And which will attract some people - very much so. But we should have a sort of healthy respect and even admiration for all these different aspects, or all these different manifestations of the ideal. We should admire Milarepa, but admire Padmasambhava too. Admire Tsongkhapa too. Admire Ashoka too, yes? I mean rejoice in all their merits - this is what it amounts to. Not saying "Oh I like Milarepa but I don't like Tsongkhapa, he's much too learned for me." Or not saying "I like Tsongkhapa, but I don't like Milarepa, you know, he just wasn't learned enough." Or don't say, "Well I like, you know, Padmasambhava but, you know, I just don't, for instance, Vasubandhu, eh, all too dry," or "I like magical displaces but I don't like the asceticism." Admire them all. You don't have to fellow them. You can admire them without following them, you know, just as if you're an artist you can admire Rembrandt, but you night not want to paint like Rembrandt. It might be the last thing that you want to do, but you can still admire Rembrandt as a great painter, a great artistic genius. You don't have to paint like that. You can paint in another style because, you know, maybe you're also an artistic genius but your talent is different, your style is different, your approach is different, personality is different. So you can admire a great ascetic without necessarily being a great ascetic yourself, or even a small one. And you can genuinely admire Padmasambhava without

being really interested in the least yourself in magic. But of course that presupposes that you are actually following some particular ideal, that you're not just having a dilettante admiration for them all without following any of them. It presupposes you are following one, and trying to actualize at least one aspect of the ideal, one particular lifestyle, you know, yourself. You're not just collecting them all like cigarette cards, oh? (laughter).

Anyway so let's leave him there, in his inspired mood, until tomorrow. [58]

[next session]

S: So we left Milarepa in the Bodhi Cave of Ragma in an inspired mood. So we proceed from there. Who's next to read? Let's start with Roy, eh?

Roy: I've read already.

S: Oh you have. All right, let's start with the man next to you. It doesn't matter. Who hasn't ... All right, come on Alan. [Roy didn't get ordained, tr.]

Alan: "One day two young shepherds came to him. The younger one asked, 'Dear lama, have you a companion?'
Milarepa replied 'Yes, I have.'
'Who is he?'
'His name is friend Bodhi-Heart.'
'Where is he now?'
'In the House of the Universal Seed Consciousness.'
'What do you mean by that?'
'My own body.'
The elder boy then said, 'Lama, we had better go, as you cannot guide us.' But the younger one said, 'Do you mean this consciousness is mind itself, and that the physical body is the house of the mind?'
'Yes, that is correct.'
The boy continued, 'We know that although a house usually belongs only to one person, many people can enter it, so we always find a number of people living in one house. In the same way, is there only one mind in the body, or are there many? If there are many, how do they live together?'
'Well, as to whether there is only one mind in the body or many, you had better find that out by yourself.'
'Revered One, I will try.'"

S: So let's go through that, huh? This is a new episode, huh? It's with this episode that the chapter is mainly concerned, because it's entitled 'The Shepherd's Search for Mind', though as we shall see a bit later on there is a definite connection, a definite relationship, between the two parts of the chapter. They form a sort of diptych we could say, yes? They contrast one with the other. But we'll go into that a bit later on. So "One day", that is presumably when Milarepa was still remaining in the cave, perhaps still in an inspired mood, that "two young shepherds came to him." Apparently they'd lost their way, uh? So they noticed that there was a cave, yes, and that this strange yogi-like figure was around, huh? So they came and asked him apparently to give then directions, which way to go, um? "The younger one asked 'Dear lama, have you a companion?" because these two were together, yes? So they were

companions - but they found him living alone, eh? It's not unlike the questions put by the husband and the wife in the previous section. They asked 'Dear lama, where are your home and relatives?' They're married people. They attach more importance to these things. So here come two young men, [59] two young shepherds, uh? They don't talk about home and family, huh? They're friends, they're companions, huh? So the younger one asks "Dear lama, have you a companion?" as if to say 'Well I've got a companion - I mean, there's my shepherd friend; we're herding the sheep together. But you seem to be living here by yourself. Don't you have a companion?' So Milarepa replied 'Yes I have.' 'Who is he?' 'His name is friend Bodhi-Heart,'" So Bodhi-Heart is the translator's rendering for bodhicitta. You notice the difference of approach - a difference of technique almost - as between the way in which Milarepa answered the husband and wife in the first section of this chapter and the way in which he answers the young shepherd. Do you notice this?

Vessantara: In the first part he says that he doesn't have any need of these things, whereas in the second he says yes, but on a different level.

S: Right, yes, yes, exactly. So why do you think he does that?

Padmavajra: Well, presumably the young shepherd is much more open to something like that.

S: Right, yes - there's much less to be broken down. There's much less conditioning.

So Milarepa can afford to make use of this sort of approach. So he says that his companion is friend Bodhi-Heart. He doesn't say, 'I've no need of a companion.' huh? He says 'Yes I do have a companion, but it's the bodhicitta.' So what do you think he means by saying that the bodhicitta is his companion?

Mark: Well, it's with him all the time.

S: It's with him all the time, yes, just like the shepherd's companion, eh? The two of them go round together. In the same way Milarepa and the bodhicitta are never separated, they're always together, huh? So the young shepherd doesn't of course actually see the companion - he doesn't see friend Bodhi-Heart or friend bodhicitta - so he a asks 'Well, where is he now?' Perhaps at this stage he doesn't realize that Milarepa is speaking about the bodhicitta in the sense of some mental/spiritual state of mind, not about an actual person. In Tibetan 'friend Bodhi-Heart' might well be somebody's name, huh? It would be Chubtsen and you have a Tibetan name like that, yes? So the young shepherd might not be quite clear at this stage who or what Milarepa is talking about - so he asks 'Where is he now?' as if to say 'Where does he live in the cave with you? Or has he gone out somewhere? [60] Where is he now?' So Milarepa says "In the House of the Universal Seed Consciousness" Yes? In other words, in the house of the alayavijnana. "What do you mean by that?" The young shepherd is quite curious. "My own body". But then the elder boy intervenes and he says "Lama, we'd better go as you cannot guide us." You know, there's a touch of irony here, yes? They asked, apparently, for directions, eh? Because I mean Milarepa and the young shepherd have got into this rather strange sort of conversation - that the elder boy is clearly not following at all. So he says 'Well, lama, we'd better go as you cannot guide us, you can't tell us where to go.' So where's the irony? The irony is that actually the man is telling them where to go. (laughter) He is giving then directions, but in a different way and on a different plane altogether. Not, you know, in which direction to go in search perhaps of their lost sheep, yes? But in which

direction to go from the spiritual point of view in search of themselves, in search of the bodhicitta. But the younger one said (he was clearly the bright boy of the two):

"'Do you mean this consciousness is mind itself, and that the physical body is the house of the mind?'
'Yes, that is correct.'
The boy continued, 'We know that although a house usually belongs only to one person, many people can enter it, so we also find a number of people living in one house. In the same way, is there only one mind in the body, or are there many? If there are many, how do they live together?'"

He's got quite an inquiring mind. He's probably quite unsophisticated, he probably doesn't know anything about Buddhism, but he's just naturally very intelligent and very perceptive, so he understands at once Milarepa's comparison, eh? As soon as he talks about the house in which the Universal Seed Consciousness lives being his own body, well, he gets the point and he can sort of start reasoning and exploring from that, huh? He says, as it were, 'All right, yes I understand what you mean. The Universal Seed Consciousness lives in the body as in a house. All right, you've compared the body to the house, but how far can we pursue that analogy? We find actually that in the case of the ordinary physical house the house can be inhabited by one person, it can be inhabited by a number of persons, uh? So does that hold good of the body itself? Is there just one mind inhabiting the [61] body, or are there a number of minds? If there are a number of minds, not just one mind, how do these different minds as it were coexist in one and the same body? What are the relationships between these different minds which inhabit or make use of one and the same body?' So we can see he's quite intelligent; he's capable of, you know, reasoning from this analogy and trying to see how far it goes, how far it can in fact be applied. This is by the way a bit interesting because according to Buddhist tradition there are different planes, different levels of existence, different worlds if you like, and the relationship between 'body' (for want of a better term) and 'mind' in these different planes, differs. This is perhaps something that isn't always realized - that the possibilities of being are infinite. It's said for instance that there are planes where there are several minds connected with one body. There are other planes where you've got a number of bodies connected with one mind. You've also got other planes, other worlds, where there's one mind connected with one body - one body connected with one mind, as in our human world - that there are these other possibilities, yes? There are worlds where you've got a multiplicity of bodies in association with a single body, and other worlds in which you've got a multiplicity of bodies associated with a single mind. Perhaps we can even think in this connection by way of an analogy of ant and bee societies. It's as though there's one mind, eh, and a multiplicity of bodies. I was reading a little while ago about the bee swarm and the beehive, and how quite literally the queen bee corresponded to the brain, huh? She held all the bees together. You kill her - everything collapses, everything disintegrates just as when you destroy the brain, when the person dies, the different constituent bits of the physical body all start falling apart, disintegrating. There's nothing as it were to held them together. To what extent the queen bee is as it were the mind for all those worker bees, drones, and so on, you know, that's a separate question but, you know, we can use that to help understand what Buddhist tradition means by this multiplicity of bodies in a single mind, on certain planes, huh? So that the your shepherd isn't asking such a foolish question [62] as you might at first think. There is that possibility envisaged in Buddhist thought, Buddhist tradition that there should be a number of different minds, a number of different consciousnesses, making use of one and the same body, eh? We seem to get some hint or inkling of that in the case of the

so-called multiple personality, or even the so-called possession as in the case of the so-called oracles of Tibet, where you've got what seems to be an entirely different personality making use of that physical body, descending into it, speaking through it, and then another and another and another, five or six, - one after the other - apparently different personalities making use of and speaking through that particular physical body. You can say of course they are all different aspects of one and the same personality, you can say that - but they function as different personalities, yes, they act like different personalities and you recognize them as different personalities.

Anyway this is somewhat by the way but you can understand the way in which this young shepherd's mind is working. He's quite unusually intelligent. He grasps the point of what Milarepa is saying - unlike his companion. I mean he's very curious to know whether there's one mind, one consciousness, inhabiting the body, as one person inhabits a house, or whether there are many consciousnesses, many minds, just as a number of people may inhabit a house, and in that case what are the relationships between them, how do they live together? But what does Milarepa say? He says, 'Well, as to whether there is only one mind in the body or many, you'd better find that out by yourself.' So what does this suggest, huh? That Milarepa's whole emphasis is on personal experience. Don't take it from me, don't take it from the books, don't take it from Buddhist tradition. You've got a mind. You've got a body. Find out for yourself. It's like people asking you; 'Bhante, is the mind the same as the body or is it different?' yes? Well, you've got a body, if you don't know whether your body's the same as your mind or the mind as your body - well, who else can tell you? I mean I've got a mind and a body and a body and a mind. So have you; you just introspect and find out. You're in exactly the same position as I am. So this is the emphasis of Buddhism, huh? Yes? You can give a bit of guidance to another person and give hints to another person, show them how to [63] do things, but you've no business, you know, doing for them things that they're quite able to do for themselves. So therefore Milarepa says you'd better find that out by yourself. That's the keynote, as it were. And what does the boy say? 'Revered one, I will try.' That's very significant. He's a very straightforward lad. He doesn't say, 'Well it would be much better if you could explain to me, I don't fully understand, could I have a little lecture on the subject please,' yes? 'Revered one, I will try.' I will try to find that out for myself, or by myself.

All right, let's carry on.

Graham: "At this point, the boys took their leave and went home. Next morning the younger boy returned and said to Milarepa 'Dear lama, last night I tried to find out what my mind is and how it works. I observed it carefully and found that I have only one mind. Even though one wants to, one cannot kill this mind. However much one wants to dismiss it, it will not go away. If one tries to catch it, it cannot be grasped; nor can it be held by pressing it. If you want it to remain, it will not stay; if you release it, it will not go. You try to gather it; it cannot be picked up. You try to see it; it cannot be seen. If you try to understand it, it cannot be known. If you think it is an existing entity and cast it off, it will not leave you. If you think that it is non-existent you feel it running on. It is something illuminating, aware, wide awake, yet incomprehensible. In short, it is hard to say what the mind really is. Please be kind enough to explain the meaning of the mind."

S: Let's look at that. "At this point, the boys took their leave and went home. Next morning the younger boy returned." Yes? Apparently he returned alone, his companion didn't come. You notice this, eh? that the two boys, the two young shepherds, they both meet Milarepa, but

the elder one drops out of the picture very quickly. He doesn't even understand what the talk is all about on that very first day. He doesn't understand what Milarepa is saying; he doesn't even understand what his companion is asking. So he doesn't come back, eh? [64]
The younger shepherd comes back alone, huh? So that's very strange in a way - that two people have got the same opportunity: one makes use of it, the other just doesn't. One understands, the other doesn't. And you can see for yourself quite a few instances of this sort of thing. So "the younger boy returned and said to Milarepa, 'Dear lama, last night I tried to find out what my mind is and how it works. I observed it carefully, and found that I have only one mind." He didn't make any assumptions. He was, as it were, quite open-minded about it, huh? - whether there was one mind, or whether there were many minds. He didn't start off with any assumptions that there must be one or there must be many, yes? So he observed it carefully and found "that I have only one mind. Even though one wants to, one cannot kill this mind." What do you think this means? Why should you want to 'kill' your mind? I'm not sure, by the way, how faithful the translation is. This is quite comparatively abstruse, you know, this particular section of the chapter, and I have a suspicion that the translator might not always quite have got the point very clearly, eh? But taking his English version quite literally what do you think the young shepherd is saying? "Even though one wants to, one cannot kill this mind."

Ratnaguna: Trying to stop the mental chatter.

S: Trying to stop the mental chatter, yes, he could very well be referring to that - after all it's your mind, it's your mental chatter. Why shouldn't you be able to stop it when you want to? It's your own mind. I mean if you want to raise your hand you can raise your hand. If you want to lower your hand you can lower it. But how is it you can't stop the mental chatter when you want to? How is it you can't kill the mind when you want to kill the mind? This is very strange, yes? After all it's your own mind. And then he says "However much one wishes to dismiss it, it will not go away. If one tries to catch it, it cannot be grasped. Nor can it be held by pressing it. If you want it to remain it will not stay." Suppose you want to keep your mind fixed on a particular object, it won't stay there just because you want it to. "If you release it, it will not go. If you try to gather it, it cannot be picked up. If you try to see it, it cannot be seen." So this mind is so active - so mysteriously active - it's doing all these things - but [65] you can't even see that mind. Why is that? You can't see the mind because what sees is the mind. So therefore what you see cannot be the mind. Therefore you cannot see the mind, because it is the mind that sees. Whatever you see is non-mind - not the mind itself. The mind is the seer. For the same reason, in the same way, you can't catch the mind, you can't pick it up. It's the mind that tries to catch the mind, eh, the mind that tries to pick up the mind. So therefore what is caught, what is picked up, is not the mind. The mind eludes you, or eludes itself, because 'you' means mind. You try to understand it, it cannot be known. How can you understand your own mind? It is the mind that is trying to understand the mind - so what you understand is not the mind. You may understand a very great deal, but inasmuch as the understander is the mind itself, the mind remains unknown. It lurks in the background. You can never see the mind, touch the mind, understand the mind, eh, because it is the mind itself which is doing these things. It sort of slips round, as it were, huh? You think you sort of caught hold of the mind as it were out there as an object, but it sort of whips round and becomes the subject. So you haven't seen it, you haven't understood it, it's eluded you, huh? "If you think it is an existing entity and cast it off, it will not leave you. If you think it is non-existent, you feel it running on." So how can it be non-existent, eh? "It is something illuminating, aware." I mean the young shepherd is trying to say something positive about it

but he's finding it very difficult, huh? It's something illuminating, aware, wide awake - yet incomprehensible. In short it's hard to say what the mind really is. "Please be kind enough to explain the meaning of the mind." So does what the young shepherd says make any sort of sense to you? Have you had this sort of experience about the mind? Do you feel that, yes, he is describing the mind? (And, of course, not describing the mind.) (laughter from Padmapani) And doesn't it remind you of a chapter of the Dhammapada, the Cittavagga, the chapter on mind or consciousness, huh? The Buddha says very much the same thing in far fewer words: "phandanam capalam cittam, durakkham dunnivarayam," huh? This mind which is always quivering and vibrating, which is moving about, which is very difficult to guard and protect. [Dhammapada 33, tr.] In this way the Buddha, in the Dhammapada, speaks [66] about the mind and in much the same way the young shepherd is speaking about the mind and at far greater length, yes? So "Please be kind enough to explain the meaning of the mind" yes? So what has really happened? What has this young shepherd's experience been? What do you think he's really discovered as it were? What is it he's begun to see, to realize, or to get a glimpse of?

Sagaramati: He's got, as it were (set out ...) on the path.

S: On the path, yes, but with regard to this question of mind, um? Don't forget the chapter is entitled 'The Shepherd's Search for Mind'.

Ashvajit: Well, that it's an inward search.

S: It's an inward search. In what sense?

Ashvajit: That the question, if it is to be answered at all, is to be answered by introspection.

S: But what does one mean by introspection? You see introspection means looking within, yes? So how does introspection come into it here?

John (?): Rather than being occupied with the mind grasping an outside object.

S: So the mind is supposed to be occupied with grasping the mind, or trying to grasp the mind?

Ratnajyoti: To realize he's not just got to find out what this thing is but to find out what he is himself.

S: What he is himself, yes, but you're faced by the same difficulty. He is to know himself.

Graham: To try and stop this mind chasing after the mind ... present this mind ...

S: Yes, yes, but how can you stop the mind chasing after the mind? He's just said that he can't control the mind, he can't kill it.

Graham: That's it, he wants to control it.

S: He wants to control it, yes, there's that, yes? This is very important from the Mahamudra point of view, because this is very much concerned with the Mahamudra teaching. Yes?

Padmavajra: What we're saying is that he's realizing that he can't know the mind.

S: You can't know the mind. But also you can't know, in a sense, that you can't know the mind. Yes? You can't know the mind. This is what he's really getting at. [67] But why can't you know the mind?

Ashvajit: The mind is unknowable.

Alan: You are the mind.

S: You are the mind in a way; you are the mind. I mean you can't know yourself. Of course one has to look into this question of what you mean by 'know'. The assumption is a dualistic knowing - a subject and an object. So if, within the framework of subject and object - taking this framework as absolute - you as subject to try to know yourself as object, or mind as subject tries to understand mind as object, it's impossible. That is what you have to stop. But how to stop it? He begins to get a bit into it, it's something "illuminating". He doesn't say that it illuminates any particular thing, though; "aware" - but he doesn't say that it's aware of anything, yes? "Wide awake" - he doesn't say that it's wide awake with regard to anything - yet "incomprehensible", because if it becomes comprehensible you make it an object. That means you're back within the subject-object framework. It is neither object nor subject, neither subject nor object, so how are you going to get at it? You can't know it, but at the same time you can't not know it. You could speak of an experience, eh, but only very, very analogically. So where does that leave you? So he says, "Please be kind enough to explain the meaning of the mind."

Alan: Isn't it like Buddhist psychology and the Abhidharma, doesn't that try to look at the mind as object?

S: It certainly is, huh, but this is from the standpoint of the Mahamudra, which would not accept the Abhidharma in that sense or on those terms, and it would maintain that the Mahamudra went beyond the Abhidhamma, beyond the Hinayana - this is after all the Vajrayana. The Mahamudra is one of the Vajrayana traditions, yes, and it would regard the Abhidharma assumptions in a philosophical sense, yes? You can take the Abhidharma approach more as a method than as a doctrine, though the Abhidharma ... Well I suppose I could say the Abhidharma itself, well many Abhidharma teachers take the Abhidharma itself more as doctrine than as method.

Alan (?): Method in the sense of sort of - I don't know - groundwork? [68]

S: Method in the sense of just a practical approach, without committing you to any particular doctrinal or philosophical position.

Anyway that is a little by the way and a little as it were astray, but you see what is happening with this young shepherd. He's trying to grapple with this subject-object problem really, yes? But in a way you can't grapple with it, huh, because if you've got a subject-object out there, well subject and object are both object and you remain as subject, so that you're still within this dualistic framework, you can't really think about it, you can't reason about it, you can't do anything about it - you can only just stop. Yes? And if you stop there's some possibility of the spontaneity, the natural spontaneity of the mind - which is neither subject or object, object nor

subject - manifesting, and that is the point of the Mahamudra.

So let's see what Milarepa says - or sings.

Ashvajit:
"Listen to me, dear shepherd, the protector (of sheep)!
By merely hearing about sugar's taste,
Sweetness cannot be experienced;
Though one's mind may understand
What sweetness is,
It cannot experience it directly;
Only the tongue can know it.
In the same way one cannot see in full the nature of mind,
Though he may have a glimpse of it
If it has been pointed out by others.
One relies not on this one glimpse,
But continues searching for the nature of mind
He will see it fully in the end.
Dear shepherd, in this way you should observe your mind."

S: Um. So what's happening here? In response Milarepa sang "Listen to me, dear shepherd, the protector of sheep. By merely hearing about sugar's taste, sweetness cannot be experienced; though one's mind may understand what sweetness is, it cannot be experienced directly. Only the tongue can know it. In the same way one cannot see in full the nature of mind, though he may have a glimpse of it, if it has been pointed out by others." Milarepa is talking about mind in a somewhat different sense, huh? though he's talking about the mind, which is neither object nor subject, huh? Usually, when we talk about the mind we talk about mind as subject, eh, though by talking about it, of course, we make it into an object and we ourselves remain, or our mind remains, as subject. But the mind that Milarepa is now talking about is the mind which is neither subject nor object. In other words the mind that cannot be [69] actually spoken about. But if you were to speak at all or sing at all you cannot help at least appearing to make that mind which, you know, is neither subject nor object into an object. But as long as you bear that in mind and are not misled by words it's all right, you know. You may get a glimpse, huh? So the young shepherd has begun to get a glimpse towards the end of his little speech, of this mind, which is neither subject nor object - but you can't see it as an object. If you even say that I've begun to get a glimpse of the mind, which is neither subject nor object, if you are not careful you at once turn it into an object and you just must not do that, huh? So therefore Milarepa says "Though one's mind may understand what sweetness is, it cannot experience directly." Mind is, as it were, functioning dualistically - that is subject as opposed to object - but it might have an intellectual understanding, a theoretical grasp, eh, of the fact that mind in its true nature is neither subject nor object. But it doesn't really experience it. Just as you can know what sweetness is but you don't experience sweetness - only the tongue can know what sweetness is - in the same way your mind in the ordinary sense (the subject) cannot experience mind in the true sense - that is mind that is neither subject nor object. You need, as it were, another faculty, a sort of spiritual tongue to, as it were, taste mind in that sense. And that is of course prajna or wisdom, which is not a faculty of course in the subjective sense. Prajna or wisdom itself is neither subjective nor objective. "In the same way one cannot see in full the nature of mind;" mind as subject cannot see in full (well, strictly speaking cannot see at all), mind as neither subject nor object, eh? At

the same time one cannot say that it cannot see it at all, eh? - because if it cannot see it at all how could you, how could your mind, you know, even your false mind, realize that true mind? Well there'd be no possibility ever of any connection. You can't realize it, but at the same time the possibility of your realizing it does exist, yes? You see the contradiction in paradoxical language, but this is the only one in which one can speak, you know, if one is going to speak at all. "He may have a glimpse of it if it has been pointed out by others," but not pointed out as an object, yes, because that is to falsify. In connection with the Mahamudra teaching [70] and tradition there is a sort of, as it were (or what has become) a pointing-out ceremony, in which the mind is pointed out to you, huh? Not your subjective mind but the mind which is neither subject nor object. In that sense it is not pointed out. It can only be pointed out, you know - to use the language of the perfection of wisdom - by a non-pointing out. For most people probably the other way in which they can get some idea - which at the same time is not an idea which they have got - is just by this sort of discussion. You begin to get a bit bewildered, you know, you begin to feel your subjectivity or your mind in the ordinary sense sort of collapsing. At the same time you don't see anything. It's just a sort of gap where an object would have been, (laughter) you know, a gap where the subject was, the mind was, yes? And it's not that you see the two coalescing, huh? Well, there's no one to see, there's nothing to see. But for want of a better expression something happens, and that can be subsequently described as your having had the mind pointed out to you. But one must be careful to take not even that language very literally. "If one relies not on this one glimpse" - thinking that you've got it - "but continues searching for the nature of mind", mind in the real sense, which of course within the framework of subject and object cannot be found, "he will see it fully in the end." - which means he won't see it. "Dear shepherd, you should observe your mind." So there must be terrific spiritual potential in this young shepherd for Milarepa to be able to speak like that. I mean, yesterday we saw, in this earlier encounter (in the first section of the chapter) with the married couple the husband and the wife, you know, he was hammering away at quite basic things, huh? He was hammering away at basic attachment and conditioning - you know, their attachment to home and native land, their attachment to the idea of a wife, to the idea of a son, of a daughter, of kinsfolk and friends. There was a hammering away at that - demolishing it; there was so much conditioning of theirs for him to remove. But this young shepherd is very receptive. He's got a very quick perceptive mind, so Milarepa is taking him straight into the depths as it were of the Mahamudra teaching - and perhaps he doesn't even know anything about Buddhism yet. Perhaps he hasn't even heard of Buddhism, except in a very vague and general sort of way. But he's got a mind, [71] he's got an enquiring mind, and that's all that you need. I mean, the mind is the raw material; the mind is the stuff, as it were, of enlightenment. So Milarepa is pushing him quite hard, huh? Let's carry on.

Ratnaguna: "The boy then said, 'In that case please give me the Pointing-out-Instruction, and this evening I will look into it. I shall return tomorrow and tell you the result.' Milarepa replied, 'Very well. When you get home, try to find out the colour of the mind. Is it white, red, or what? What is its shape? Is it oblong, round, or what? Also, try to locate where in your body it dwells."

S: This is quite interesting. So the boy is quite a self-confident sort of boy; he says, "in that case give me the Pointing-out-Instruction, and this evening I will look into it. (laughter from Ratnajyoti) I shall return tomorrow and tell you the result." He doesn't wait for Milarepa to tell him to come, or he doesn't even ask if he may come, he says, 'I shall return tomorrow and tell you the result.' He's very, well, naive and in a way childlike. Milarepa replied, 'Very well.

When you get home try to find out the colour of the mind. Is it white, red, or what? What is its shape? Is it oblong, round, or what? Also try to locate where in your body it dwells.' I mean, this is a more detailed instruction, huh? It's basically the same thing as he's said already, but he's asking the young shepherd to go into it in greater detail, to try to realize more thoroughly. If the mind isn't an object how can the mind have a colour? How can it have a shape? But Milarepa wants the young boy to see that for himself. 'Also try to locate where in your body it dwells.' I mean, Milarepa has said earlier on that the Universal Seed Consciousness dwells in its house - i.e. in the body - and the boy has understood that, but now he wants him to try to see just where it dwells. In other words he wants him to have a still more thorough grasp of the fact that the mind is not an object. So the boy says 'All right', uh? Carry on from there.

Ratnaguna: "The next morning when the sun rose, the shepherd drove the sheep before him, and came to Milarepa, who asked, 'Did you try last night to find out what the mind is like?' The boy replied, 'Yes, I did.' 'What does it look like?'"

S: Well, let's deal with that little bit first. "The next morning when the sun rose." [72] The boy didn't waste any time, he spent the whole night working on the problem, "the shepherd drove his sheep before him," I mean, he didn't neglect his work, you notice - very typically Tibetan this, he did his day's work just the same - he "came to Milarepa, who asked, 'Did you try last night to try to find out what the mind is like?' The boy replied, 'Yes, I did.' 'What does it look like?' So what does the boy say now?

Ratnaguna: "Well, it is limpid, lucid, moving, unpredictable, and ungraspable. It has no colour or shape. When it associates with the eyes, it sees; when with the ears, it hears; when with the nose, it smells; when with the tongue it tastes and talks; and when with the feet it walks. If the body is agitated, the mind, too, is stirred. Normally the mind directs the body; when the body is in good condition, the mind can command it at will. But when the body becomes old, decayed, or bereft the mind will leave it behind without a thought as one throws away a stone after cleaning oneself. The mind is very realistic and adaptable. On the other hand, the body does not remain quiet or submissive, but frequently gives trouble to the mind. It causes suffering and pain until the mind loses its self-control. At night in the state of sleep the mind goes away; it is indeed very busy and hard-working. It is clear to me that all my sufferings are caused by it."

S: So it's quite a clear, simple, straightforward sort of reply - it's got no nonsense about it. So "What does the mind look like?" Milarepa asks. "Well, it is limpid, lucid, moving, unpredictable, and ungraspable." So 'limpid' - what does one mean by saying that the mind is 'limpid'? 'Limpid' means clear, you can sort of see through it. Ultimately, of course, you can see through it in the sense of seeing that there's no real subject-object distinction, huh? 'Lucid ... moving.' This is one of the things that you notice about the mind, yes? It's always moving. 'Unpredictable' huh? You just can't tell what it's going to do next, just like the proverbial monkey. A thought will suddenly flash into your mind. You just don't know where it comes from or why you're thinking like that, why you're feeling like that - completely unpredictable and ungraspable - because, of course, it isn't an object. "It has no colour or shape," for the same reason. "When it associates [73] with the eyes, it sees" - the eye doesn't see, or perhaps it's not the mind that sees but the mind in association with the eye sees. "When with the ear, it hears; when with the nose, it smells; when with the tongue, it tastes and talks; and when with the feet it walks. If the body is agitated, the mind, too, is stirred. Normally the mind directs

the body; when the body is in good condition the mind can command it at will. When the body becomes old, decayed, or bereft the mind will leave it behind without a thought as one throws away a stone after cleaning oneself," that is, at the time of death. "The mind is very realistic and adaptable. On the other hand, the body does not remain quiet or submissive, but frequently gives trouble to the mind. It causes suffering and pain until the mind loses its self-control. At night in the state of sleep the mind goes away; it is indeed very busy and hard-working." When you think how active the mind is, yes? How much energy the mind must have. It never stops. And where is all that energy coming from? You're thinking all the time - even at night you're dreaming. The mind is going on and on - thought after thought, idea after idea, feeling after feeling - never stops year after year, day and night. So all this energy. How does the mind manage to keep it up? It's really quite wonderful - "It is indeed very busy and hard-working." Perhaps this is said a bit ironically, yes? "It is clear to me that all my sufferings are caused by it." That's a rather sudden conclusion in a way. Do you think it's a bit of a jump? It doesn't seem to follow logically from what has gone before, does it? But he sees that, huh?

Padmapani(?): This seems to be exactly the opposite actually - that the sufferings are caused by the body.

S: It does. But actually, of course, they're not. I mean this is what he sees. He's not being logical, huh - he just sees quite, as it were, inconsequentially, that all his suffering is caused by the mind. "The Jetsun then sang." All right, let's hear what he was to say.

Sagaramati: "Listen to me, young shepherd.
The body is between the conscious and unconscious state,
While the mind is the crucial and decisive factor!
He who feels sufferings in the lower Realms
Is the prisoner of samsara,
Yet it is the mind that can free you from samsara.
Surely you want to reach the other shore?
Surely you long for the City of Well-Being and Liberation?
If you desire to go, dear child, I can show [74]
The way to you and give you the instructions."

S: All right, let's study that, huh? "Listen to me, young shepherd. The body is between the conscious and unconscious state," presumably that is the living body, huh, the living physical body. You can't say that the body itself is conscious, yes? It is conscious only in association with the mind. You can't say that it's unconscious, because so long as the body is associated with the mind, well, it as it were reflects the consciousness or that consciousness works through it - there is after all a difference between a living body and a dead body. So the body is as it were between conscious and unconscious. You can't say that the body is conscious; you can't say it's unconscious. It's the mind which is the crucial and decisive factor. If the mind is there, well, the body is as it were conscious. If the mind isn't there, well, the body is not conscious. So it is the mind which is the more important factory. "He who feels suffering in the lower realms is the prisoner of samsara, yet it is the mind that can free you from samsara" because it is the mind that has made you the prisoner of samsara. "Surely you want to reach the other shore? Surely you long for the City of Well-Being and Liberation? If you desire to go, dear child, I can show you the way there and give you the instructions." He says, well, you've begun to be somewhat interested in the spiritual life. You've begun to study the

nature of your mind, huh? You've begun to understand what the mind is really like - perhaps you've even had a glimpse, by way of non-glimpse, of your true mind, your real mind. But of course that isn't enough; you have to follow systematically. Perhaps Milarepa is saying, well, so far you've been on the path of irregular steps. Here you are, a young shepherd boy, you don't know anything about Buddhism, you haven't even gone for refuge, but still you've got some insight into, well, Mahamudra virtually. But it's all by way of the path of irregular steps. Now we've got to get you onto the path of regular steps so that you can consolidate your practice and your understanding and your realization. So therefore Milarepa is as it were asking him: now do you want to take all of this seriously? You've understood a bit about the mind. You've understood that the mind causes you so much trouble. [75] In fact it causes all the trouble of the samsara. Don't you want to be free from that? Don't you want to be free from the troubles of the samsara and don't you realize that you've got to work on your mind in order to do that, to understand your mind, just as you've already started, but in a much mere thoroughgoing, systematic sort of fashion? Wouldn't you like to be liberated? Wouldn't you like to completely realize your own true mind of which you've at least had a little glimpse? This in fact is what Milarepa is asking him. The young shepherd is naturally gifted. He's had a glimpse even with very little help from Milarepa. He's very receptive, but he's got to start taking it seriously. There is the possibility, even at this stage that he will just go back to his village and forget all about it. So Milarepa's sort of putting it to him: are you prepared to fellow up the implications of what you've already seen, already understood, to the very end? Are you ready to think in terms of enlightenment, huh, of really seeing the mind fully? Wouldn't you like that? So what does the shepherd say?

Padmavajra: "The shepherd replied, 'Certainly, dear lama, I have made up my mind to seek it.' Milarepa then asked, 'What is your name?'
'Sangje Jhap.'
'How old are you?'
'Sixteen.'
'Thereupon...'

S: Yes, so what follows? The shepherd replies, 'Certainly, dear lama, I have made up my mind to seek it.' yes? He really wants to know his own true mind, huh? So Milarepa then asks, 'What is your name?' What do you think the significance of this is, in that he hasn't asked his name before, the shepherd boy hasn't asked Milarepa's name?

Ratnajyoti (?): Well, it's sort of ... sort of making a relationship.

S: Making a relationship, yes. Name is quite important, isn't it, as we've seen already this morning, yes? To ask somebody's name - it's not just asking for their label, it's asking for them, huh? So if you ask somebody's name in this sort of way, in this sort of context, yes, you're asking somebody's name because you want to know the person, because you want to establish a relationship as it were. So Milarepa asks, 'What is your name?' and he says, 'Sangje Jhap.' He's probably a Buddhist, because Sangje means Buddha, I don't know what Jhap means. [jhap means quick or quickly, tr.] He apparently has a Buddhist name. 'How old are you?' 'Sixteen.' So don't you think that's quite remarkable, you know, for a sixteen-year-old? And what is the implication of that, as it were?

Ashvajit: Well, youth is absolutely no barrier to readiness and quickness of mind.

S: Right, yes. The age of sixteen itself is perhaps not without significance because you may remember that in the Indian Buddhist texts, in the Mahayana scriptures, Bodhisattvas are always described as being like sixteen-year-old princes. Why do you think sixteen - bearing in mind of course that it's India?

Ratnaguna: That's when they leave home.

S: Yes, yes.

Sagaramati: It's the prime of youth.

S: It's the prime of youth, eh? You're at your best when you're sixteen. After that it's one long process of deterioration. (laughter) Yes, sixteen, from the aesthetic point of view, according to Indian ideas anyway, is the ideal age. You're at your best, you look your best, you're most beautiful, healthy, happy, bright, intelligent, in the bloom of youth as it were, before the world has touched you. So Bodhisattvas are said to appear in the form of sixteen-year-old youths. Do you think that quite applies in the West? Or should it not be a little later in the West, or maybe things are changing? People are said to mature much earlier nowadays, Do you think one could say sixteen even in the West, that you're at your best in a sense, at that age?

Mark: In some respects you are.

S: In some respects you are - because according to psychologists or whoever else, you know, is responsible for this particular field of knowledge - I'm not quite sure how it is in the case of young women - but in the case of young men at sixteen your intelligence is fully developed. You're not fully developed physically. You go on developing physically for quite a few more years. But at sixteen you're as intelligent as you ever will be. That doesn't mean to say that you're as experienced, or as knowledgeable - but your basic intelligence at sixteen it is what it is going to be, huh? You're fully developed as regards your intelligence and physically you've got the youthful bloom as it were. So maybe from this point of view sixteen is important. It's when the intelligence reaches its maturity, huh, just at that point, at that age. You are as intelligent as you ever will be, yes? At the same time you've got the youthful bloom, sparkle, [77] freshness, spontaneity, etc., etc. So that is in a way the ideal age, the age when you combine the best of intelligence with the best of physical appearance - the best of mind with the best of body, huh? And you may become more knowledgeable, more experienced, but you won't become more intelligent, huh? And as you get older you almost certainly won't become physically more attractive. You may become better built, stronger, more muscular - but only that. So you're at your best when you're sixteen. So sixteen represents as it were the age of human perfection. So therefore that becomes a suitable image or symbol, you know, for the Bodhisattva state. This young Tibetan, this young shepherd, is at this ideal age. His intelligence is fully developed. He still has his youthful energy and vigour. Presumably he's unmarried - that's also another important point: that in, you know, the conventional society as soon as you pass the age of sixteen well you're in danger of marriage. Marriage looms like a dark cloud on the horizon which means that your energies are that, whereas up to that time your energies are still at your own disposal, you know, you're still fresh, sparkling, as it were - the dew's still on you, metaphorically speaking. So Sangje Jhap is sixteen, you know, I think it's very important that we should realize this - that if, for instance, you give a talk to a class of fifth or sixth formers, they're as intelligent as any adults you may meet. You must never talk down to them - this is a great mistake - never talk down to them. They may not be all that

knowledgeable - though very often they may be more knowledgeable than you are, in some fields - and they may not have all that much experience, not experience of life, they may not have much power of judgement. But their basic intelligence is equal to yours, you know, this is what you must never forget in talking to young people, huh? You are no more intelligent than they are. You're only better informed and more experienced, yes? It's very important always to remember that.

Alan: How would you define basic intelligence?

S: Oh this is quite a question. Intelligence has been defined - I think this is as satisfactory definition as I've ever come across - as the creative manipulation of concepts, yes? [Spencer Kimball said that "Intelligence is the creative use of knowledge." Logic is often said to be the creative use of concepts, tr.] 'Creative' - the emphasis is on 'creative'. Mind uses concepts, yes, but they're not ends in themselves. You've got to use them [78] creatively, you've got to manipulate them creatively, use them in an imaginative sort of way. So the capacity to manipulate concepts, imaginatively, creatively - this is intelligence. It's not memory, it's not experience, it's this creative manipulation of concepts - that is intelligence.

Sagaramati: It think it's so just sort of ... manipulation of what you perceive. Actually - I suppose you could say that.

S: Intelligence is more active, more like a making use of, you know, perceiving ... well, it's just perceiving, just seeing, being aware. But intelligence goes beyond that. It's there to be used creatively (?), you know, the concepts derived from your experience, from your perception. So there's a possible ... almost imagination there.

Ashvajit (?): What you seem to be suggesting is that if you're using the mind at a very low level, it will be perfectly obvious to these younger people who are as intelligent, that you're not using ...

S: Oh yes, they can pick up on non-creativity very quickly. If you're not alive, if you're just a dry old stick who's read a lot of books about Buddhism - they'd know instantly, before you'd opened your mouth probably. (laughter) It's very important that you must be alive. If you're not alive - well, you're nowhere with them. Quite rightly, too. You may get away with it with old people - you know, with a learned spiel (loud laughter) but you won't.... You can even forgive slips and errors and mistakes - provided that you are alive. And that is very, very important. And that if you're no better than their own teachers, well, you've no business going along there. You should be more lively than that.

Padmaraja (?): Aryamitra and I recently gave a talk to a bunch of young people who must have been about sixteen. I was quite disappointed really - they seemed very bored, blase, tired ...

S: Ah, that's a shame. Yes? Well, they've just been caught already. Well, we'll just have to try the twelve-year-olds then.

Sagaramati: The sixth-formers, the ones I went to give a talk to, there were about five or six and they were really very, very bright, you know, they were just wide awake and quite alive, during all the time that I was up there talking. [79]

S: I had an experience some years ago talking to a girls' high school at Highgate. It was quite interesting to see how alive those girls were - but then to think in, well, two years time to four years time, where will they all be, where will all of that liveliness be? It will all have been channelled. They'll nearly all be married and most of them will have babies by then. They will have lost that definitely. But it's as though in the case of young men there's a greater possibility of preserving this, huh, into, well - even indefinitely.

So he was sixteen, eh? "Thereupon ... " - let's carry on.

Padmavajra: "Thereupon the Jetsun gave him the teaching of 'Taking Refuge', explaining briefly its benefits and significance. He then said, 'When you get back home this evening, do not stop reciting the Prayer; and in the meantime try to find out which takes refuge, the mind or the body. Tell me the result tomorrow."

S: "Thereupon the Jetsun gave him the teaching of 'Taking Refuge'," or going for refuge would be better, "explaining briefly its benefits and significance." What do you think is the significance of this - the fact that he gave him the teaching of going for refuge?

Alan: It's fundamental.

S: It's fundamental - it's the most fundamental thing. I mean he's put him firmly onto the path of regular steps. You get this emphasis in Tibetan Buddhism: the basic thing, the most fundamental thing, is the going for refuge, the basic spiritual commitment. You have to get that clear first, "explaining briefly its benefits and significance. He then said, 'When you get back home this evening, do not stop reciting the Prayer,' presumably, it seems to me, the word of the going for refuge, repeated like a mantra, you know, you go on saying to yourself, 'Buddham saranam gacchami, Dharmam saranam gacchami,' and so on, presumably in Tibetan, "and in the meantime try to find out which takes refuge, the mind or the body. Tell me the result tomorrow." Milarepa's doing a very interesting thing. He's combining the going for refuge, which is a basic and fundamental practice, with the search for mind - with, if you like, the Mahamudra teaching. He's making something which is basic, something with is fundamental, a basis for the understanding of something [80] which is very much more advanced. It reminds me a bit of the Zen tradition, or one of the Zen traditions, in which the Zen master asks you if, for instance, you're in the habit of reciting the Amitabha mantra (supposing you're a devotee of the Pure Land), he asks you to find out who recites the salutation to Buddha Amitabha - who is the reciter? So in much the same way Milarepa teaches the young man to go for refuge, and then he asks him, continuing the quest for mind, to just try to find out who is it that goes for refuge, "the mind or the body. Tell me the result tomorrow." You see, in a sense, Milarepa is taking more initiative. By this time, perhaps, the young shepherd is a bit out of his depth. He needs help. He needs guidance, huh? So here Milarepa himself says, 'Come back tomorrow and tell me.' So what happens? Let's go on.

Ratnajyoti: "The next morning the shepherd came and said to Milarepa, 'Dear lama, last night I tried to find out which of these two takes refuge, the body or the mind. I found that it is neither of them. (I observed the body first.) Each part, from the head down to the toes, has a name. I asked myself, 'Is it the body as a whole which takes refuge?' It cannot be so, for when the mind leaves the body, the latter no longer exists. People then call it a 'corpse', and certainly it cannot be called a 'refuge-seeker'. Furthermore, when it disintegrates, it ceases to be a corpse; therefore, it cannot be the body which takes refuge in Buddha. I then asked

myself, 'Is it the mind that takes refuge?' But the refuge-seeker cannot be the mind, as the latter is only the mind and nothing else. If one says that the present mind is the (real) mind, and the succeeding one is the one which takes refuge, there will be two minds; and names for both, such as the 'present mind' and the 'future mind', should then be given them. Besides, when the act of 'Refuge-seeking' takes place, both the present and succeeding minds have passed away! If one says both take refuge, then the mind will (become something immutable) which never (grows) or ceases to be. If that is so, then in all the lives of the past and future in the six realms of samsara, we meet nothing but this 'Refuge-seeker'. But I cannot remember anything in my past life; nor do I know what will take place in my future one. The mind of last [81] year and yesterday are gone; that of tomorrow has not yet come; the present flowing one does not stay. Pray, my teacher, please give me an explanation. I submit everything to you; you know everything, you know what I need!"

S: So what has happened here? I mean, what is the basic conclusion, huh? The body doesn't go for refuge - that's pretty obvious. The mind doesn't go for refuge either. The arguments here are a bit abstruse, yes? So if the body doesn't go for refuge, the mind doesn't go for refuge - well, who goes for refuge? Well, to simplify a little, to look at it, you know, in the light of traditional Buddhist thought - nobody goes for refuge. The mind doesn't go for refuge. Nobody goes for refuge. There is a going for refuge, yes, there is a going for refuge, but there's nobody to go for refuge - neither the body nor the mind. There's just a going for refuge. This isn't stated explicitly, but this is an implication. Do you follow the arguments why the body doesn't go for refuge and why the mind doesn't? Why the body doesn't is quite straightforward. When we say 'body' we usually mean body in association with mind, in other words the living body, yes? The body by itself is just a corpse, and clearly a corpse can't go for refuge. Therefore just the body by itself doesn't go for refuge. But what about the mind? Well, the mind isn't just one thing or entity. The mind is constantly changing. The mind is a succession of thoughts, as it were, huh - so can you carry over the act of going for refuge from one thought to another? The mind of the present starts going for refuge but he doesn't succeed in carrying that over to the subsequent mind, huh? The mind that begins to go for refuge, you know, just ceases, huh? So it doesn't last long enough and the movement of going for refuge is carried over from, you know, the present thought to the subsequent thought. Then what will that mean? It will mean that they both coexist. If they both coexist, mind doesn't change, huh? Mind is immutable, yes? So the whole series of thought is immutable. So therefore you're always going for refuge all the time, even in the past before you went for refuge. But you don't remember your past. If your thoughts made one continuous immutable chain, which was simultaneously present, well, you should remember your past - but you don't. Therefore you didn't go for refuge in the past. Therefore you don't go for refuge in the present either. Because they're all one continuous [82] immutable chain on that assumption. So mind also doesn't go for refuge, can't go for refuge. This is, we may feel, a bit of logic-chopping as it were, but the import of it is clear, isn't it? At least the conclusion of it is clear - that the mind cannot go for refuge. Body hasn't gone for refuge, body can't go for refuge. Mind can't go for refuge, presuming that the translation is faithful. (I'm a bit doubtful about that actually.) But the upshot is clear, body can't go for refuge, mind can't go for refuge. So there's no going for refuge by anybody. There's just a going for refuge. But perhaps the young shepherd hasn't come to that point yet. He's only understood that the body can't go for refuge, the mind can't go for refuge. So he's in a bit of a quandary. He's rather stuck. He hasn't, apparently, come to the point of realizing that there is only a spontaneous going for refuge, which has no subject and no object, huh? So therefore he appeals to Milarepa "'Pray, my teacher, please give me an explanation! I submit everything to you; you know everything, you know what I need.' In

answer to his request Milarepa sang..." Now he gives a very long or relatively long comprehensive teaching.

Alan: Isn't that like him going for refuge in Milarepa rather than ...

S: It is, yes indeed, yes very much so. So what does Milarepa sing?

Padmapani(?): "I sincerely pray to my guru
Who realized the truth of non-ego,
I pray with body, words, and mind;
I pray with great faith and sincerity.
Pray bless me and my disciples,
Enable us to realize the truth of non-ego!
Pity us and deliver us from the plight of ego-clinging!"

S: So from this verse it's clear that the whole thing is about the ego. You think in terms of the ego because you think in terms of object and subject. You think that if there's a going for refuge there must be someone who goes for refuge. If it isn't the body it must be the mind. If it isn't the mind it must be the body. It must be one or the other. But the young shepherd has just seen that the body cannot go for refuge, the mind cannot go for refuge, so he's puzzled because he assumed that someone must go for refuge. But here in this verse Milarepa comes straight to the point. It's a question of non-ego - not thinking in terms of subject and object, not thinking in terms of ego, but not thinking there must be an unchanging [83] subject for every action that can be identified as the ego. So therefore he says, or sings, "I sincerely pray to my guru who realized the truth of non-ego," because this is what we are getting into now. We have to realize (that it's with) non-ego, that there is a going for refuge without anyone who goes for refuge. "I pray with body, words, and mind," Body, speech, and mind, with my whole being.
"I pray with great faith and sincerity.
Pray bless me and my disciples;
Enable us to realize the truth of non-ego.
Pity us and deliver us from the plight of ego-clinging!"
Then he goes on ...

Padmapani: "Listen carefully, dear shepherd.
Clinging to the notion of ego is characteristic of this consciousness.
If one looks into this consciousness itself,
He sees no ego; of it nothing is seen!"

S: This is quite important.
"Listen carefully dear shepherd.
Clinging to the notion of ego is characteristic of this consciousness."
'This consciousness' meaning our ordinary mundane consciousness. It thinks in terms of ego, it clings to ego, yes?
"If one looks into this consciousness itself,..." that is, really looks, in a non-dualistic sort of way, not just treating it as an object, huh? "Looks" within inverted commas as it were, "looks" metaphorically. If one looks without looking then one sees consciousness but one does not see ego. It's only as it were the relative mind, the worldly mind, which is the mind associated with ego. Consciousness itself, as it were - though again one mustn't think of it as

an object out there - consciousness in its true nature is not associated with ego. In consciousness, in reality, no subject, no ego. So if one looks into this consciousness itself - but you mustn't look as a subject looking into an object, "He sees no ego; of it nothing is seen," huh? But this seeing of non-ego is a sort of non-seeing; one can only say that. Then he goes on ....

Padmapani: "If one can practise the teaching of Mahamudra
And knows how to see nothing, something will be seen."

S: Yes. In the same way as if you see something you don't see anything; similarly, if you know how to see nothing, something will be seen. If you see nothing - well, there's [84] nobody seeing. And if there's nobody seeing - there's no ego - something will be seen. The wisdom, as it were, will see the void or the voidness will be seen by the wisdom. The wisdom will be the voidness. The voidness will be the wisdom. All right. Carry on.

Padmapani: "To practise the teaching of Mahamudra
One needs great faith, humility, and zeal as the foundation."

S: Yes, it's not easy, yes.

Padmapani: "One should understand the truth of karma and causation as the path.
In order to achieve the accomplishment, one should depend upon a guru
For the initiation, instruction, and inner teaching."

S: So Milarepa has, as it were, shown him the goal; the Mahamudra. He said, "If one can practise the teaching of Mahamudra and knows how to see nothing, something will be seen." And by the way, the meaning of his word Mahamudra, just the literal meaning at least: Maha, of course, means 'great', mudra means gesture or symbol or attitude, eh? It's the great attitude, the great symbol, the great gesture. And it's the most important of the spiritual traditions of the Kagyupas. Milarepa is of course regarded as the founder of the Kagyupa tradition, and it corresponds roughly to the ati-yoga or supreme yoga teaching of the Nyingmapas. So to practise the teaching of Mahamudra, to practise this highest teaching, really to see and to know one's own mind in the true sense, not that mind which is an object and not knowing it with a mind which is a subject. "To practise the teaching of Mahamudra
One needs great faith, humility, and zeal as the foundation.
One should understand the truth of karma and causation as the path.
In order to achieve the accomplishment, one should depend upon a guru
For the initiation, instruction, and inner teaching."

So there's this triad of terms, there's the foundation, the path, and the accomplishment. This is a well-known triad and it can be applied in various ways or within different contexts. You need first of all the basis from which you start, then the course along which you go, and then the accomplishment which you achieve, the goal which you achieve, the result which you achieve. So in this case, as regards the Mahamudra, to start with you need faith, humility, and zeal. That's your foundation, eh? And your path is an understanding of the truth of karma and causation, [85] or rather conditionality: that whatever arises, arises in dependence upon conditions and if you want that particular thing, that particular state, achievement, experience to arise then you must apply, then you must create or bring into existence, the appropriate conditions. This is what you must firmly realize. It won't just come about by accident or some

happy chance or luck or even somebody's blessing. It will arise in dependence upon the conditions which you yourself bring into existence, which you yourself create. So your path here is the truth or the understanding of the truth of karma and causation. And what about the accomplishment? For this one should depend upon a guru for the initiation, instruction, and inner teaching. So that is, it's very, very difficult, though still not impossible, for you to have a sort of spontaneous awakening to the truth of the Mahamudra yourself. That is, to the truth of the real nature of your own mind you need to have it pointed out to you, at least to some extent to begin with, before you can get really working on it. So here Milarepa is emphasizing what is important if you want to practise the teaching of Mahamudra, if you want to see nothing and in that way see something, then one must have faith, humility, and zeal as the foundation. One should understand the truth of karma and conditionality as the path; and one should depend upon a guru for the initiation, instruction, and inner teaching in order to achieve the accomplishment which is the realization of the Mahamudra itself. One shouldn't take initiation, instruction, and inner teaching in too formal or as it were institutionalized a sense, I mean, here, in the course of this song, Milarepa is giving initiation as it were, giving instruction, giving the inner teaching as it were. All right, let's go on.

Roy: "It requires a disciple possessing merit to receive the teaching;
It requires a man who disregards comfort and suffering;
It requires the courage of fearlessness, the defiance of death!
Dear shepherd, can you do these things?
If so, you are well destined;
If not, it is better not to talk about the subject.
This ask yourself, and think carefully."

S: Then he says further "It requires a disciple possessing merit to receive the teaching." What is merit? Merit is punya. This is a very important conception. I've spoken about this several times lately. Punya - merit or punyakarma - meritorious action, is usually taken simply in the sense of a good deed or goodness, punya being goodness, punyakarma being good deeds, and it's very much more than that. What, after all, is a punyakarma? [86]

Mark: Is that the good conditions which are set up?

S: Well, basically it's skilful action of body, speech, and mind. But it is not just that. If you perform a skilful action, what sort of happens? What do you set up?

Mark: Other skilful things to arise.

Ratnaguna(?): Mental states.

S: Skilful mental states. But even more than that; you could say a sort of skilful atmosphere.

Alan: Self-perpetuating.

S: Yes, self-perpetuating, but not exactly self-perpetuating because you always need to keep up the effort. But if you're constantly thinking skilful thoughts, constantly speaking skilful words, performing skilful actions, then what happens? You sort of set up around yourself a skilful vibration. You create a sort of skilful field. So punya is not only the skilful action that you perform, it's also this sort of skilful atmosphere that you create around yourself,

something very positive and powerful. And the longer you go on performing skilful and meritorious needs the more there is this sort of aura of skilfulness around you and it is that really which is punya. And it is that which attracts sort of happy experiences to you as the so-called result of your skilful actions, which influences others, affects others, and even draws to yourself even some greater good, some higher things. So therefore Milarepa says "It requires a disciple possessing merit to receive the teaching." Before you can truly receive the teaching - and don't forget Milarepa's talking about the Mahamudra here which is a very advanced teaching, advanced practice - you must be in this, as it were, very highly, not only receptive but positive as it were skilfully creative or creatively skilful mood or state. Only then can you be a sort of what is called worthy vehicle of the teaching. Only then you can really receive. You've got to have reached a very high pitch of skilfulness, a very high pitch of merit, before you can truly receive teachings of this sort. So it requires a disciple possessing merit to receive the teaching. Not just someone who's done a lot of good deeds, but one who is, here and now, in a very powerfully positive state with this powerful aura as it were of [87] punya around him. "It requires a man who disregards comfort and suffering. It requires the courage of fearlessness, the defiance of death." It's relatively easy to understand that in order to receive the Mahamudra teaching one must be prepared to disregard comfort and suffering, but what about "requires the courage of fearlessness, the defiance of death"? Who do you think that is? It's because the Mahamudra teaching is concerned with the realization of non-ego, the non-egoistic nature of the mind, of the fact that in the mind there is neither subject nor object. But what is the fear of death? It's fear at loss of ego, self. So unless you're ready to give up the fear of death, unless you're a hero in that sense, there's not much point in going into the Mahamudra teaching. This is why sometimes it is said, for instance in the Zen tradition, that those who are close to death, who are used to being close to death, don't mind losing their lives, giving up their lives, even though it may be for, as it were, worldly motives; they can be quite clear and quite close to the spiritual life, quite close to the spiritual path, because they're ready to give up their lives, ready to give up their physical bodies, which means they've achieved some measure of renunciation of ego. So this is why you sometimes find military people with a great affinity to the spiritual life. I don't mean military administrators as they are nowadays, you know, just pressing buttons from a safe distance, but people who were actually, in the old days, ready to go out and fight and risk their lives. There had to be some measure of non-ego there. So it's people who've got this sort of courage, who are ready for this sort of thing, that are, you know, in a position to receive the Mahamudra teaching. It's not those who stay sort of safely at home and shun risk and shun danger. So here we find Milarepa drawing attention to what we've sometimes called the heroic ideal or the heroic aspect of Buddhism - fearlessness, being prepared to face death.

Padmavajra: Would this be like in the Bardo Thodol where apparently when you die you experience ...

S: Your non-ego,...

Padmavajra: Yes.

S: Your own non-existence, yes.

Padmavajra: So that's what it sort of means.

S: But in the case of most people it's even the dropping off of the physical body that [88]

they're afraid of. They identify themselves with the physical body. "When the body is dead, well, I'm dead, I'm no longer here," that's what they're afraid of, so it's death in this sense that is being referred to. It requires the courage of fearlessness, the defiance of death. If you're not ready to defy death you're not ready for the Mahamudra teaching.

"Dear shepherd, can you do these things?
If so, you are well destined;
If not, it is better not to talk about the subject.
This ask yourself, and think carefully."

There's so much glib talk, even in Tibet, about the Mahamudra, giving up the ego, going beyond it all, the one mind, the unconditioned, it's all just talk. You know, if you're not ready to give up your life you'd better just leave these things alone.

Once again Milarepa is very uncompromising. But nowadays, unfortunately, anyone who runs can read, anyone can pick up the sayings of the Zen masters, anyone can pick up the songs of Milarepa; that's also a good thing. But there is danger of a sort of vulgarization, of people taking these teachings too lightly and think that they've understood just because they've read a book about something, and understand the words and know the words. So if you aren't ready to die, as it were, Milarepa is saying, leave the Mahamudra alone, that's not for you, that's only for the heroes who are prepared to face death, to defy death. If you're not ready to defy death, well, you're just not within a million miles of the Mahamudra so you'd better not try to touch it.

Padmavajra: This glibness really seems prevalent in the West with all the books that are sort of pouring out.

Mark: Especially about Zen.

S: Especially nowadays about Tibetan Buddhism. But this young shepherd, apparently, never read a book. He presumably was born into a Buddhist family. He seems to have had a Buddhist name, he hadn't really gone for refuge. He was just very fresh and alive and receptive and young. And presumably he was ready to give up his life if necessary. So what does Milarepa go on to say or to sing?

John: "When you sought the 'I' (last night) you could not find it.
This is the practice of non-ego of personality.
If you want to practise the non-ego of existence,
Follow my example and for twelve years meditate.
Then you will understand the nature of mind.
Think well on this, dear boy!"

S: "When you sought the 'I' last night you could not find it." Well of course you [89] you couldn't. "This is the practice of non-ego of personality. If you want to practise the non-ego of existence, follow my example and for twelve years meditate." This is a reference to Buddhist thought, or philosophy as we have to call it, in which there is the twofold non-ego or the twofold sunyata. The absence of self from the subject, the absence of self from the object, and these are technically called pudgalanairatmya or pudgalasunyata and dharmanairatmya or dharmasunyata or sarvasunyata, the emphasis on voidness of all things both subject and object. According to the Mahayana the Hinayana teaches only the non-ego nature of the

object, the thing; in fact it teaches the non-egohood of all things whatsoever, teaches that all things are, as it were, empty. This is called the sarvadharmasunyata, the emptiness of all dharmas, in the sense of things or objects or phenomena, all things conditioned and unconditioned.

Padmavajra: These are the two obscurations.

S: The two obscurations are the obscurations which hide these two truths; the klesavarana, the obscuration or veil of passions or defilements, obscures the truth of non-ego in the self, the person and the veil of knowledge, which means, of course, the veil of no-knowledge obscures the truth of no-ego in the object. That's becoming a little technical - we won't go into that now. But Milarepa says if you want to understand the second of these, if you want to go more deeply into this question of non-ego, if you want to realize not only that there is no ego in yourself but there is no ego anywhere in the world, no ego in any object, that they're all completely empty and void in that sense, then you must do what I've done, you must meditate for twelve years. "Then you will understand the nature of mind. Think well on this, dear boy!" So think well about it before you commit yourself. And what does the shepherd say?

Padmaraja: "The shepherd said, 'I offer you my body and my head. Please make me understand my own mind definitely and clearly.' The Jetsun thought, 'I shall see whether this child can really practise,' and then he said, 'First pray to the Three Precious Ones, then visualize an image of Buddha in front of your nose.' Thus Milarepa gave the shepherd the instruction of concentration and sent him away."

S: So the shepherd said "I offer you my body and my head." I give up myself to you. I give up my life to you. I give my body, I give my head. "Please make me understand my own mind definitely and clearly." Not vaguely or in a general way - definitely and clearly. "The Jetsun thought 'I shall see whether this child can really practise,' [90] and then he said, 'First pray to the Three Precious Ones,' The three jewels, invoke the three jewels, one mustn't take this word pray too literally, 'invoke' would probably be more correct - "Then visualize an image of Buddha in front of your nose." Quite in front of it. "Thus Milarepa gave the shepherd the instruction of concentration and sent him away." He started him on the regular systematic practise of meditation, according to the path of regular steps. All right, carry on.

Padmaraja: "There was no sign of the boy for seven days. On the seventh day his father came to Milarepa, saying, 'Dear lama, my son has not come home for a week. This is very unusual. Wondering whether he was lost, I inquired of the other shepherds who had been with him. They all said that he had come to you for the Dharma, and thought he had then gone home. But where is he?' 'He was here,' replied Milarepa, 'but has not come back now for seven days.' "The father was deeply grieved and wept bitterly as he left Milarepa. Many people were than sent out to search for the boy. Finally, they found him in a clay pit sitting upright with his eyes wide open staring straight in front. They asked him, 'What are you doing here?' He replied, 'I am practising the meditation my guru taught me.' Then why have you not retirned hom for seven days?' 'I have only been meditating a little while, you must be joking!' As he said this, he looked at the sun and found that it was earlier than the time he had started to meditate."

S: Because it was another day, of course.

Padmaraja: "In his bewilderment he asked, 'What has happened?'"

S: So you can see how intensively, how sincerely, the boy practised; he went straight away and got on with the meditation and lost all sense of time. He just sort of plunged into it. Some people can do this, especially the young. Young people, generally speaking, are often more wholehearted than older people. They can give themselves more completely and more totally. So he went missing for seven days. He was just getting on with the meditation and he didn't know. It seemed just as though he'd been meditating for a little while. So when he was disturbed, when he was interrupted by the village people, when they asked him why he hadn't returned home for seven days, he said "'I've only been meditating a little while, you must be joking!' As he said this he looked at the sun." Why did he look at the sun?

Ashvajit: To tell the time.

S: To tell the time. He's a shepherd boy. He hasn't got any watch. He looked up and found that it was earlier than the time he'd started to meditate. Maybe he started to meditate, say, in the afternoon but he could see from the sun that it was morning. That's strange, he doesn't realize that it's another day seven days later. "In his bewilderment he asked, 'What has happened&?'" All right, carry on then.

Alan: "From that day on the boy's family had great difficulty with him, because he had almost completely lost the notion of time. What appeared to him to have been only one day, was the passing of four or five days to others. Many times his parents sent people out to search for him. Thus both he and his family began to feel miserable. At this juncture they asked him whether he wanted to live with Milarepa for good. He said that he would like nothing better. So they provided him with food and sent him to the teacher."

S: It's quite interesting, both he and his family began to feel miserable. Why do you think they both felt miserable? [91]

Mark: Well, they felt miserable because he was always disappearing and he felt miserable because they kept coming and stopping his meditation.

S: So what happened, eh? In the end they realized the situation. "At this juncture they asked him whether he wanted to live with Milarepa for good. He said that he would like nothing better. So they provided him with food and sent him to the teacher." Well, that seems to be a very reasonable offer, they not only sent him to the teacher but provided him with food to eat, to live on while he was there. They don't usually do that nowadays, do they? All right, carry straight on.

Alan: "Milarepa first gave him the precept of five virtues, preached the doctrine of the Dharma, and then granted him the teaching of the innate-born wisdom. Through practice, the boy gradually attained good meditation experience and Milarepa was very pleased. (In order, however, to clarify the boy's misapprehension on the nature of true Realization), he sang..."

S: So Milarepa first gave him the precepts of five virtues. He's given him the refuges, he's gone for refuge, then followed the five silas. So, once again it is very much the path of regular steps. He "preached the doctrine of the Dharma," presumably the general basic Buddhist teaching, and then "granted him the teaching of the innate-born wisdom", which is of course a

very advanced teaching cognate with the teaching of the Mahamudra. The innate-born wisdom, 'innate-born' presumably is sahaja, that is to say 'arising with' or 'born with' you, in other words non-separable from you, pertaining to your own innermost nature. Not wisdom that you gain or achieve but a wisdom that you realize has always been there, that is innate, eh? So "through practice, the boy gradually attained good meditation experience and Milarepa was very pleased." This sentence may refer to a period of several years of practice. One mustn't be misled by the brevity and simplicity of this. "In order, however, to clarify the boy's misapprehension on the nature of true realization he sang..." So here's a very important concluding song.

Vessantara: "I bow down at the feet of Marpa,
He who received grace from Naropa and Medripa.
Those who practise the Dharma with their mouths
Talk much and seem to know much teaching,
But when the time comes for the perceiver to leave the deadened body,
The mouth-bound preacher into space is thrown."

S: This reminds me of a little story or a little anecdote told in modern India about the parrot. You can teach a parrot to speak, can't you? You can teach a parrot to recite mantras, and in India they do. They don't teach parrots to swear, they teach parrots to recite mantras. So there's a story that a holy man had a parrot. So he taught the parrot to say 'Hare Ram', 'Hare Ram', 'Hare Ram', you know, which is invoking one of the Hindu gods. So what happened? One day the cat got the parrot, the cat caught hold [92] of the parrot and ran off with it. So as the cat ran off with the parrot, the parrot forgot all about 'Hare Ram, Hare Ram'; it let out its own natural squawk! So it's said that so-called religious people are very often like that. They can talk about Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, Mahamudra, self-realization, Enlightenment, Nirvana, all the rest of it. But let the cat get hold of them - in other words let death come and catch hold of them - they just let out their own natural squawk, eh? They're terrified, they forget all about the Dharma. So death is the test, as it were. What happens to you then? It's easy to go on talking while you're still alive and comfortable and happy, but when you come to the moment of death, when death seizes hold of you, well, what will you be like then? What will be your reaction? That's the test. This is what Milarepa is saying. "But when the time comes for the perceiver to leave the deadened body, the mouth-bound preacher into space is thrown." This applies of course to the mouth-Zen people as well, or any kind of mouth-Buddhist. So let's see the next verse.

Vessantara: "When the Clear Light shines, it is cloaked by blindness.
The chance to see the dharmakaya at the time of death
Is lost through fear and confusion."

S: If you practise during your life, if you've at least weakened the ego-sense, then the time of death can be a wonderful opportunity because according to the Tibetan Tantric teaching, especially the Nyingma teaching, at the moment of death when you've dissociated from the physical body and the ordinary mind isn't working, then you have a momentary experience of your own true mind, the dharmakaya sort of shining it upon you, eh? And if during your lifetime you've prepared, as it were, by your practice, a basis on which to receive this, then you can, as it were, hold that experience, you can allow yourself as it were to be dissolved into the dharmakaya, allow the ego to be dissolved into the dharmakaya, and in that way gain Enlightenment at the moment of death. But there must be a basis already prepared. And that

basis you prepared by your own spiritual practice, an effort to dissolve the ego-sense during your earlier lifetime, otherwise it's lost through fear and confusion. All right, on we go.

Vessantara: "Even though one spends his life in studying the canon,
It helps not at the moment of the mind's departure."

[93]
S: It's not only at the moment of the mind's departure but if any sort of disaster or trouble hits you. If you lose someone who's near and dear to you or maybe you lose a limb, have a long illness, or something of that sort, or lose all your money, or you become blamed by people, become very unpopular, even persecuted, that's the test, that sort of experience, that sort of happening.

All right, on we go.

Graham: "Alas! Those proficient yogis who for long have practised meditation
Mistake the psychic experience of illumination
For transcendental wisdom."

S: Yes, now Milarepa is dealing with more advanced errors, mistakes such as the young shepherd himself may fall victim to. If you've been meditating for a long time you can have the experience of great luminosity, great awareness, great light. But this is a sort of psychic experience, this is not the light of wisdom, but you can mistake it for that, and that's the great danger.

Mark: What's the point here of the italics?

S: I think, well, those obviously are the translator's italics. He's drawing importance to this teaching as a very, very important one - drawing attention to it. It's a very important teaching, yes? Presumably in the original there's nothing like that.

Graham: "And are happy with this form of self-deception.
Therefore when at death the transcendental wisdom of the dharmakaya shines,
These yogis cannot unify the light of mother-and-son.
Since meditation cannot help them as they die,
They are still in danger of rebirth in lower realms."

S: There is this terminology, the mother-light, and son-light. The mother-light is the light of the dharmakaya. The son-light is the light of your own emerging wisdom going as it were to meet the light of the dharmakaya. Probably, for us in the West, mother-light isn't a very happy expression, you know, it suggests a sort of recession, going back into the womb, which of course isn't a place of light, it's a place of darkness. It might be better to speak of the father-light and the son-light, eh? Going to meet the father-light, yourself being the son-light or your own son-light - S-O-N of course - be in process of emergence. So Milarepa says that those yogis who during their lifetime have mistaken the psychic experience of illumination for transcendental wisdom and who've been with this form of self-deception, they too at the time of death will be in difficulties. They'll be unable to, as it were, grasp the light of the dharmakaya and in this way the unite or merge, to use those expressions, their own son-light with that mother-, or better still father-light of the dharmakaya. "Since meditation cannot help

them as they die" because they have not been meditating correctly, or at least have not meditated to a sufficiently advanced extent, they're still in danger of rebirth in lower realms. All right, on we go.

[94]
Ashvajit: "My dear son, best of laymen, listen to me carefully!"

S: So you notice the difference of address? He is now addressing him as my dear son. Why do you think that is?

Ashvajit: He's become his spiritual son.

S: Right, yes.

Ashvajit: "When your body is rightly posed, and your mind absorbed deep in meditation,
You may feel that thought and mind both disappear;
Yet this is but the surface experience of dhyana.
By constant practice and mindfulness thereon,
One feels radiant self-awareness shining like a brilliant lamp.
It is pure and bright as a flower,
It is like the feeling of staring
Into the vast and empty sky.
The awareness of voidness is limpid and transparent, yet vivid.
This non-thought, this radiant and transparent experience
Is but the feeling of dhyana.
With this good foundation
One should further pray to the Three Precious Ones,
And penetrate to Reality by deep thinking and contamplation.
He thus can tie the Non-ego Wisdom
With the beneficial life-rope of deep dhyana.
With the power of kindness and compassion,
And with the altruistic vow of the Bodhi-Heart,
He can see direct and clear
The truth of the Enlightened Path,
Of which nothing can be seen, yet all is clearly visioned.
He sees how wrong were the fears and hopes of his own mind.
Without arrival, he reaches the place of Buddha;
Without seeing, he visions the dharmakaya;
Without effort, he does all things naturally.
Dear son, the Virtue-seeker, bear this instruction in your mind."

S: So Milarepa says, or sings, "When your body is rightly poised", eh? I mean, he begins with fundamentals: sitting correctly. "And your mind absorbed in meditation", your mind really concentrated, all your energies flowing together in the same direction, "you may feel that thought and mind both disappear; yet this is but the surface experience of dhyana." Don't think that you've achieved anything very great or very ultimate, very deep. This is always a mistake which one is liable to commit: you feel prematurely that you've really got there.

"By constant practice and mindfulness thereon", that is to say on that surface experience, "one

feels radiant self-awareness, shining like a brilliant lamp. It is pure and bright like a flower, it is like the feeling of staring into the vast empty sky. The awareness of Voidness is limpid and transparent, yet vivid. This non-thought, this radiant and transparent experience, is but the feeling of dhyana." You've not even approached prajna or wisdom, you're still in the region of dhyana. "With this good foundation", and it is only a foundation, "one should further pray to the Three Precious Ones", invoke the Three Jewels, eh? Why do you think this is? Apparently coming back to beginning.

Sagaramati: Just to remind you what you're actually doing.

S: Yes, remind you, not only what shall actually doing, but what you're actually seeking. The Three Jewels represent the transcendental values. I mean, you can have a good meditation, even experience all those dhyana levels, without being a Buddhist. These dhyana levels are common to all religions. But if you want to penetrate into the transcendental, if you want to develop wisdom, then you must think in specifically, as it were, for want of a better to term, Buddhist terms, so you invoke the Three Jewels. You, as it were, open yourself to purely transcendental experiences.

Padmavajra: So you get stuck.

[95]
S: In other words you get stuck, though of course you can't really get stuck because you'll only fall. You can't maintain the dhyana level indefinitely; the gravitational pull will sooner or later assert itself if you don't seize hold of the transcendental; you try to do that through invoking the Three Jewels. "With this good foundation one should further pray to the Three Precious Ones" - to the Three Jewels - "and penetrate to Reality by deep thinking and contemplation. He thus can tie the non-ego wisdom with the beneficial life-rope of deep dhyana." In other words, dhyana is not enough, there must be wisdom too. There must be penetration into the transcendental. "With the power of kindness and compassion, and with the altruistic vow of the Bodhi-Heart" - the bodhichitta - "he can see direct and clear the truth of the Enlightened path." So dhyana is the foundation, then transcendental wisdom conjoined with absolute compassion, so then he can "see direct and clear the truth of the Enlightened path", or the path of Enlightenment, "of which nothing can be seen, yet all is clearly visioned." Again this paradoxical language, because we're concerned with the Mahamudra, with the ultimate truth. "He sees how wrong were the fears and hopes of his own mind," because all were based on ego, "without arrival, he reaches the place of Buddha." There's no 'I' that arrives; there is an arrival, an arriving, but nobody who arrives, so "Without arrival he reaches the place of Buddha, without seeing, he visions the dharmakaya." The dharmakaya is not an object. "Without effort, he does all things naturally." This is very important as a corollary, this spontaneity, yes? The one mind, the mind which is neither subject nor object is as it were spontaneous, it's innate, it's natural, it wells or bubbles up within you.

Padmaraja: That is the Mahamudra?

S: Yes, I mean this is an aspect of the Mahamudra, this sort of spontaneity. So once you've got over the ego-sense, once you don't think any longer, or experience any longer in terms of object or subject, you not only realize the one mind, you know, which is beyond subject and object, but also you liberate a tremendous creativity, a tremendous spontaneity. So this is a very important aspect of the Mahamudra teaching, this teaching of spontaneity. Not that you

should deliberately be spontaneous, but there is a sort of practice when in order to as it were be spontaneous, even though [96] on a lower level, you sort of just do whatever occurs to you. This is a practice in itself, and, you know, if you do this sort of practice very often you can't do any other. If you feel like going for a walk, you go for a walk; if you feel like eating, you eat; if you feel like drinking, you drink; if you feel like singing, you sing; if you feel like going to sleep, you go to sleep: you follow your impulse but with great awareness. This is in itself a practice. Obviously quite a difficult one, a dangerous one even, but it is a practice because spontaneity is a corollary of the realizations of non-ego, so when you realize non-ego you don't become all sort of solid and stolid and steady as it were, and reliable, no, you might become apparently, to other people, very whimsical and unpredictable and very unsatisfactory. So there is this aspect of spontaneity: "without effort he does all things naturally." There's no effort, it just sort of bubbles up, eh? He doesn't have to make any effort to do anything to help people, it's just fun. I mean this is again an aspect of the Bodhisattva's career. The bodhicharya is anaboghacharya. Anaboghacharya means - as Suzuki translates it - "the life of spontaneity" eh? You're spontaneous all the time. [97] When you become enlightened, if you can imagine or dream of that day, you won't become all solemn and very religious and very spiritual; no, you become very happy and carefree and, you know, you'll be bubbling over with joy all the time, it'll be much more like that. Though not that you can say, well, when you're enlightened you'll always be bubbling over with joy, that's how you always will be. No, because you're unpredictable, you might sit quietly in a corner too, you know, just for fun (laughter) or just to puzzle or bamboozle people a bit, so that they don't associate the enlightened state with that sort of, you know, bubbly joy, as it may appear to be, yes? But the principle is that naturalness and spontaneity are very much stressed by the Mahamudra, eh?

Padmaraja: In the, um, I was reading the Bodhicaryavatara and a comment by Matics, he said the bodhisattva doesn't need to act. Is that sort of what you get ... ?

S: Well, in the sense that there's no egoistic activity, I imagine that's what he means. He doesn't need to act, he acts, it's spontaneous, he doesn't have to do anything, he just functions, he's just his enlightened self. So then Milarepa says: "Dear son, the virtue seeker, bear this instruction in your mind." So he wasn't finished, even then, so let's carry on and conclude.

RG: "Milarepa then gave the boy complete initiation and verbal instructions. After practising them, the boy attained superlative experience and realization. He was known as one of the 'Heart-Sons' of the Jetsun, Repa Sangje Jhap. This is the story of Milarepa's second visit to Ragma, and of his meeting with Repa Sanje Jhap."

S: And so he too became a 'repa', a cotton-clad one, like Milarepa. So "This is the story of Milarepa's second visit to Ragma, and of his meeting with Repa Sanje Jhap," the young shepherd. We're not told how many years it took him; very likely it was quite a number of years, huh? All right, now for the contrast with the previous section, the previous story, what sort of contrast do you find? What sort of contrast to do notice?

[98]
Ashvajit: The feel of it is completely different.

S: In what way?

Ashvajit: That this, sort of, feels continuous and flowing and spontaneous.

S: Yes

Ashvajit: Whereas the other was sort of jumpy, more like the reactive mind.

S: Well, Milarepa wasn't being reactive but he was having to respond to a reactive mind and keep hammering away at it, as it were. You know, demolishing it, you know, assumed a different form every time it shifted its ground. But here the young shepherd is much more alive and spontaneous and, yes, flows along as it were.

Padmaraja: Yes, in the last one he's sort of talking about renunciation a lot, it's just very passive, he's just pointing out the path to this ....

S: Yes, in the first section it's more as though Milarepa is smashing, breaking down, the conditioned mind, eh? The reactive mind, eh? Whereas in the second section or the second story with the young shepherd he's encouraging the creative mind, yes? I mean in the long run, yes, it amounts to the same thing, but there's certainly a great difference of approach and feel, yes?

Mark: There's also, um, if he was to carry on with the couple, having smashed down their reactive mind, he'd then have to go on to encourage any, you know,...

(end of tape)

S: Yes, we're not [told] anything about that in detail, but in a sense though it's different persons; the stories are in a way continuous, aren't they? Yes? But the young shepherd gets off to a much quicker and better and positive start. After all he's only sixteen when Milarepa, as it were, catches him.

John: The fact that he had to go out of the cave to meet the reactive mind in the village ...

S: Yes.

John: Whereas the boy ...

S: That's true ...

John: Travelled to him.

S: The boy came to him, yes. Even though it seemed like an accident, eh? But not altogether, as the other shepherd didn't come back, but the young shepherd did. It's almost as if he was drawn there, yes?

[99]
Padmaraja: It sort of shows the genius of Milarepa to teach to totally different people.

S: Right, yes. To break down the conditioning of this elderly married couple, and to encourage the natural spiritual genius of the very young shepherd, eh? He could do both of

these things. All right, let's end on that note, then, eh?

(Talk about making tea follows, then ...)

RG: What of the old shepherd?

S: One wonders what happened to him.

RG: If he's come along on his own perhaps Milarepa could have been giving him the teachings.

S: Well, perhaps the young shepherd sorted him out eventually; we're not told.

Padmaraja: In the Milarepa songs he's always going on about, well, not always but I mean there's instances where he sort of is with a pupil or he meets somebody and he says "Ooh, there's a good karmic link between us." Can you say a little about that? Does that mean they've had an association in past lives?

S: This is what it means literally, but, you know, one may take Milarepa's words for that but one doesn't know oneself, as it were, but it seems like that sometimes, yes. Though there has been, I mean, why should you as it were take to someone when you meet them for the first time? And not to somebody else, I mean you can explain it in other ways, maybe its chemical, psychological, but it doesn't seem like that sometimes, eh?

Roy: I think very often it's to do with associations with people who this person reminds you of, physical appearance, as much as anything else.

S: There's that, too, yes?

PS: Tibetans seem to take that quite literally, don't they?

S: They do, yes.

Padmapani: I remember at the chanting at St John's church.

S: Yes.

[100]
Padmapani: When they did the Mahakala puja. The man, I can't remember his name, the head monk, at the end, lama rather, said that everyone in that audience, they had a sort of karmic connection with him. It was very odd. I mean, everybody, even the door-keeper.

S: Hum, um, um.

PV: It's quite similar to the Jatakas where at the end of the Jatakas the Buddha said that in this life you were this chappie Ananda and somebody else was Devadata and ...

S: Well, patterns repeat, eh?

John: Like there's a science fiction writer called Kurt Vonnegut. He's evolved this, er, concept as a karass: K-A-R-A-S-S. Everybody has different karasses that would roughly correspond to a karmic link.

S: Um.

Sagaramati: It does leave room for the other horrible subject of saying that in the male-female relationship, "Oh yes, we've met lives before so we've been together forever," yes.

S: Yes, right.

PV: Oh God:

S: Well, perhaps you have, perhaps that's the whole trouble. (laughter) Maybe it's not mother, or father.

Sagaramati: Maybe that's just a sort of a reactive process that you have to break away from.

S: Maybe it was just that same person in a previous life, eh?

Sagaramati: So you're just repeating yourself.

S: Maybe you've been married to her for a hundred lives in succession.

PV: Ugh, how boring. (laughter)

S: You've still not got over it.

PV: I would have thought that would have put people off actually.

S: Apparently it doesn't.

Sagaramati: Do you think we should concentrate more on younger people as it were? You know, actually instigate going out to schools or ...

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S: I mean, one plans give it a try at least. It's a question of oneself having a limited amount of time and energy. It's a question of using it to the best possible purpose, eh? I also quoted to someone the other day a saying that if you don't produce a disciple who is twice as good as you are, you have betrayed the Dharma, yes, huh?

PV: Wow.

S: Now what does that mean? Because if at every generation the disciple is just a little bit below his teacher's standard, well, what happens to the Dharma after a few generations?

Sagaramati: It fades away.

S: So you've got to aim to produce someone better than you are, even twice as good as you

are, just so that the Dharma may continue. So can you afford to compromise all the time and just do a little bit with this person and a little bit with that? You must keep an eye open for a few really good people, really promising people, that can go a long, long way. Otherwise there's no hope for the future of the Dharma.

Roy: I suppose the figure of twice is probably the idea of the disciple building his own experience on top of yours.

S: Yes, in a sense. But aim at twice as it were, well, he may then be just at least as good as you. In that way the Dharma will continue. If in each generation the sum loss, the sum diminution, what happens in a hundred or two hundred years time? So to be satisfied with mediocre disciples is to betray the Dharma. So keep your eyes open always, or even go out and look for the brilliant disciple, eh? Which doesn't necessarily mean the flashy one, you know, who's always protesting how devoted he is, but the really solid reliable person who's going to make a real effort, and that usually means the younger person. I wrote a few sayings the other week for a new possible collection that came quite spontaneously, and one of them was, you know, it's a bit relevant here: It is a waste of time to help the weak, nowadays it is the strong who need help.

PV: That's a gem.

S: Copyright, by the way. (laughter) It is a waste of time helping the weak, nowadays it is the strong who need help.

[end of seminar]

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