

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

DISCLAIMER

This transcript has not been checked by Sangharakshita, and may contain mistakes and mishearings. Checked and reprinted copies of all seminars will be available as part of the [Complete Works Project](#).

SONGS OF MIAREPA: THE STORY OF THE YAK HORN

MEN'S SEMINAR AT PADMALOKA - 22. Nov. 1980

PRESENT: Ven. Sangharakshita, Vimalamitra, Andy Friends, Ratnaguna, Surata, Jyotipala, Brian Platt, Gerald Burns, Dave Luce, Alan Morrow, Robin Cooper, Gerry Corr, John Rice.

Day One Tape One

S.: Would someone like to read the first paragraph?

Gerry: "Obeisance to all Gurus. Having helped S'ah;le Au~i, the 'outstanding Yogini, to further he'r votion, Jetsun Milarepa went toward Balkhu to welcome 'h'i's art-son 'Rechungpa ('upon his return from I'n'di'a. On the way there) he stayed at Betze Deyun'dzon (The L'and of P"leasure') ~for some time. As Rech'ungpa w'a's approaching from 'Gun'g Tang, the Jetsun saw in a vision that he was suffering ~from 'pride. (With this knowledge in mind) he we'nt to we~lcom'e' 'Rechungpa."

S.: Rechungpa has gone away to India. In the course of these two volumes he goes off, I think, three times, to study logic and other things, usually against Milarepa's advice. So, on this occasion too, he's been away for some time. And, Milarepa knows that he's on his way back. So he goes to meet him. And it says: "As Rechungpa was ap- proaching from Gung Tang, the Jetsun saw in a vision, that he was suffering from pride. With this knowledge in mind, he went to welcome Rechungpa". Well, what do you think happened? "The Jetsun saw in a vision that he was suffering from pride". How should Milarepa know this? Why in a vision? Do you think it is possible? Of course, he knew Rechungpa very well, you could say. He knew he'd been away, engaged in all these advanced studies. Perhaps he knew what sort of effect that would have on Rechungpa's immature mind. On the other hand, he may have been, as it were, in direct telepathic communication with Rechungpa and have actually know, by way of direct perception, that that was in fact the case, and seen it in the form of a vision. But why in the form of a vision? What does that suggest? Why did not simply the idea come to him, the thought that Rechungpa was suffering from pride. Why did he see it in a vision?

Voice: Maybe he was~a more visual person.

S.: Yes, he may have been a more visual person. Yes, he 'certainly wasn't an intellectual sort of person in the sense of being a person who operated mainly through concepts. Perhaps his temperament was more visual - his experiences or intuitions or insights were, so to speak, I won't say automatically but perhaps spontaneously translated into visionary terms, so he just s'aw that.

YH 1 2

Jy~otipal~a: How would you define vision, in this sense, as opposed to actually thinking about something? Some- times you actually think about something, almost like visualize

something and then vision, how do you see the difference?

S.: When a vision is a mental picture, it can be varying in degrees of intensity. It can be just no more than an ordinary mental picture or you can actually see, even more vividly than you see ordinary sense objects. In this case, perhaps, it was very vivid indeed and, therefore, the translator uses the term 'vision'. It was more than a mental picture. It's not so difficult to form mental pictures, but actually to see visions as say, Blake saw them, is a much more - I won't say difficult perhaps - but a less common thing. So Milarepa seems to have had this faculty. He just saw what was happening, what was going on. He saw visions. And so in this case, he had a vision, or he saw 'in ~a vision, that Rechungpa was, you know, suffering from pride. So, "with this knowledge in mind, he went to welcome Rechungpa". It's as though he was prepared. Alright someone like to read the next paragraph.

"When the father and son met in the center of the Balkhu plain', Re'ch'ungpa thought, '~I~ have now ~gone twice to study in India. Hereto~fore,~ ~I have been f~ollowing my Guru' s instructions to ~serve~ the Dharma and sentient beings. My Jets'u:n Guru' s compassion '~and 'grace are in- deed g~reat, but I am much more learned in B'uddhist philosophy and logic than he.~ N~ow he has come to welcome me, I wonder if he' will return the obei~s~ance to me when I bow down to him.' With this: thought in mind 'Re'chungpa prostrated himself before Milarepa 'and presented him with the Ahkaru staff that Dipupa had g~iven him to offer to the Jets~un. But Milarepa ~gave' ~not the slightest sign that he would ~even c~ons'ider returning ~the courtesy . 'Rec'hungpa was very displeased. ~However, he ~s~aid, 'Dear Guru, where did you stay while I was in India? How i's your health? How are my ~Repa b~rothers? ~ ~Whe~re shall we go now?'"

S.: So one can see the train of thought in Rechungpa's mind. He says, "Heretofore I have been following my Guru's to serve the Dharma and sentient beings. My Jetsun Guru's compassion and grace are indeed great, but I am much more learned in Buddhist' philosophy and logic than he." Well, this was very likely the case. He'd been studying these things in India. Milarepa hadn't studied them. Milarepa had only been meditating. He'd only gained enlightenment, - he hadn't studied Buddhist philosophy. But do you see how Rechungpa compares the two things? He's quite aware that Milarepa' s "compassion and grace are indeed great", but he thinks that his greater knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and logic balances that, as it were, as though well. he's got compassion and all that sort of thing, but I've 'got a knowledge of philosophy. So he' 'equates~ the two. So he thinks that they are on equal terms now. So what does this suggest? What is Rechungpa ' S misunderstanding?

Dave: He's confusing knowledge with wisdom.

YH 1 3

S.: He's confusing knowledge with wisdom. He doesn't really understand the difference. He doesn't even mention wisdom directly, when referring to Milarepa. He says, "My Jetsun Guru's compassion and grace are indeed great11. He doesn't specifically mention wisdom.

It's as though he thinks of Milarepa as a very kind, friendly, fatherly sort of person, but he's the one with the knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and logic. It's as though he's saying,

'well Milarepa is strong when it comes to emotion, positive emotion, but I'm strong when it comes to intellectual understanding'. It's as though he doesn't really have any idea about wisdom, judging by this statement. He attributes, you know, kindness, he attributes grace to Milarepa, but not anything more than that. In a way, he's seeing Milarepa as much less than he actually is. It's as though he's equating intellectual understanding with spiritual wisdom. He doesn't even see Milarepa's wisdom, it seems. He just sees Milarepa as kind and gracious. And he thinks that that kindness and graciousness is counterbalanced by his own intellectual understanding, of Buddhist philosophy and logic. So it's as though he doesn't have any real understanding of wisdom. He's just thinking in terms of kindness on the one hand and intellectual understanding on the other. But in any case, the result is that he starts thinking that because they are so to speak, equal, in the sense that Milarepa had kindliness and grace, yes, but Rechungpa has the knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and logic. He starts thinking that as individuals they are equal. It's almost as though the Guru/Disciple relationship between them no longer holds good. It's as though, well, Milarepa was his Guru; he was very kindly and gracious, but Rechungpa has now become virtually his equal by acquiring this knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and logic. So inasmuch as Milarepa was~ his Guru, well, alright, he'll salute him, but since he, Rechungpa is now the equal of his Guru, he expects his Guru to salute him back. In other words, to recognize that they are now on the same footing. In a way, this is natural. It would be natural if you were, you know, on the same footing as your Guru. Well, surely your Guru will recognize that, and will not treat you in a sense, as a pupil any more, but he'll treat you as an equal - just as your father, so to speak, when you grow up, well, he starts treating you as a man. He doesn't treat you as a child anymore. But you know, the point is whether you have in fact become equal to the Guru. Whether you've really spiritually grown up. So Rechungpa is represented as thinking: "Now he has come to welcome me, I wonder if he will return the obeisance to me when I bow down to him." With this thought in mind Rechungpa prostrated himself before Milarepa and presented him with the J~karu staff that Dipupa had given him to offer to the Jetsun". So don't you think it's strange that Milarepa is thinking in this way, before they actually meet? What does that suggest? Before they actually meet and they haven't after all, seen each other for a long time - maybe some years have passed. Milarepa is his Guru, he is the dis-

YH 1 4

ciple - or at least he ~was the disciple - but as they approach each other, - as they are about to meet, the only thing that Rechungpa can think of is whether Milarepa is going to return his salutation. Whether Milarepa is going to recognize him as an equal now. So what does that suggest?

Vimalamitra: ~ Well, he's in his head, isn't he? He's not really kind of aware. He's not~ really picking up on(

S.: Yes, but in a way more obviously than that.

Jyotipa~la: He's not ready to communicate because he's in a fixed position. He says this is me, that's him and even before they actually start communicating, he's already closed himself up to it to a certain extent.

S.: So what is his preoccupation? His main preoccupation is how he relates to the other person in terms of, apparently, inferiority and superiority. That is his main pre-occupation. But don't you think that that is, you know, a quite common kind of thing? It's the sort of jostling for position, or jockeying for position and you often find this when two people meet. There's a sort of manoeuvring, especially if they've got any sort of position, as to who is to recognize whom or you know, who is to pay respect to whom- There was an incident of this sort recently in the newspapers, when the Pope went to Germany. The Pope apparently wanted that the German Chancellor should call upon him. I mean, the normal diplomatic usage is that the visitor should call upon the head or whoever corresponds to him in rank, of the host country. If, for instance, say a reigning monarch visits Britain, he calls upon the Queen. If she visits his country, she calls upon him. In the same way, a visiting Prime Minister calls on the resident Prime Minister. But the Pope didn't want to do it like that. He wanted that Chancellor Schmidt should call upon him. But Chancellor Schmidt wouldn't call upon him. He wanted the Pope to do the calling, but in the end a compromise was reached. That they met in some sort of neutral place so that neither would actually be calling on the other, you see. So this is the sort of thing that you get in worldly life even if it is' the Pope and the Chancellor. So what does this show? This shows really that you're more concerned about your position than anything else. This is the primary consideration. Rechungpa wasn't concerned so much with how Milarepa was - didn't even experience his own happiness at seeing Milarepa. There's no word of that - that he was overjoyed to see Milarepa after such a long time. No. All he was concerned about was his position in relation to Milarepa - whether Milarepa was going to return his obeisance and recognize him, that he was equal to him, or not. So why do you think that people are so concerned about position, even a spiritually gifted person as Rechungpa certainly was, in relation to Milarepa? Why should he be so concerned about his position? What does it matter? Why did it matter to him so much?

Gerry: Maybe he was insecure about his own inner sub-conscious.

S.: Any other possibility? Why does anyone think in terms of position in relation to another person?

yH 1 5

Jy~otipaia: Because wherever you are with other people, you have to relate to that other person in some way or another and it probably helps you if your feeling is secure. In other words, it's a threat to you confronting anyone, even a friend. So if you're sure of your position, then it's not such a ...you're not threatened as much if you know your position.

S.: But why should it threaten you not to know your position? What does it threaten? Why does it matter to you so much that you have to ascertain your position in terms of inferiority and superiority or equality with regard to the other person, before you can communicate?

Gerry: In order that you'll know how to communicate.

S.: Well, yes that is obviously important. But why ~ should you try to fix the terms of the communication as regards superiority and inferiority before you actually communicate? Because surely you don't know who is inferior and who is superior in any real sense, until actually you communicate.

Robin: You don't want to be open.

S.: You don't want to be open. It's as though you don't want genuinely to discover, who is really ~superior- who is 'really' inferior, if in fact those are the right terms. You want to have established all that beforehand and then operate from that basis. In other words, you're not really concerned with the facts of the situation. In Rechungpa's case, it's as though he can't bear to face the fact that Milarepa perhaps is still "spiritually superior to him and that his knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and logic are really of not much value. So it does seem as though Rechungpa is suffering from pride and it's this pride which prevents him from being open with Milarepa, compels him to think in terms of his own position and prestige and apparently prevents him even from being really happy at seeing Milarepa. Prevents him from being spontaneous. He just approaches him with this fixed idea. He's just concerned about whether his obeisance will be returned. So this is quite a terrible state to get into. So no wonder Milarepa had that sort of vision. "But Milarepa gave not the slightest sign that he would even consider returning the courtesy". (Chuckles) Not the slightest! As though the very thought didn't occur to him. "Rechungpa was very displeased. However, he said, 'Dear Guru, where did you stay while I was in India? How is your health? How are my Repa brothers? Where shall we go now?'" So what is happening here?

Robin: He's just going through the form.

S.: ~ He's just going through the form. He's just going through the motions, of greeting him.

Voice': He's still not being open with him...

S': He's still not being open, no. And in fact he was very displeased because if you have this sort of desire to be

YH 1 6

recognized as somebody's equal, and if they don't recognize you as an equal, you become quite frustrated, quite displeased, angry, upset and so on. We get quite a lot of this nowadays, don't we? - this pseudo-equality. That everybody is as good as everybody else and if that is not recognized people can sometimes become quite upset. What is the word to describe somebody's non-recognition of this theoretical equality? There's a favorite word which is always used in this connection. It's an 'ism'.

Voice': 'Elitism'.

S.: Elitism, yes. Have you notice~the way in which people fling this word around? If there's any sort of suggestion that people's complete equality is not being recognized then of course the accusation 'elitism'. Nobody can really be better than anybody else or more qualified than anybody else, except in some purely technical manner that doesn't really count. So maybe if Rechungpa had been alive today, he might have talked in these sort of terms.

Surata: He doesn't actually believe that everyone is equal, does he - Rechungpa - He think that he's risen to Milarepa's level.

S.: Well, even that isn't really clear. He says, "But I am much more learned in Buddhist philosophy and logic than he". He's putting it in terms of the present. "My Jetsun Guru's compassion and grace are indeed great. But I am much more learned in Buddhist philosophy and logic than he." It's as though he doesn't even really appreciate the fact that he was once-upon-a-time Milarepa's disciple - well he still is. But he doesn't even remember those days when he was very happy to be with Milarepa and to be taught by him and to receive from him. It's as though all that is blotted from his mind., He's just so obsessed with this idea that they are equal. So we do find much the same thing nowadays - people being so obsessed by the idea that they are equal to everybody and everybody is equal to them - that there's no question of anybody being able to learn anything from anybody else. And this is probably one of the biggest misadventures of modern times in the West. So Rechungpa seems a bit infected by this, but still he goes through the motions of being disciple-like. Enquiring after his Guru's health and all that sort of thing. Anyway, how does Milarepa respond? Let's read the next paragraph:

Jyotipala: "The Jetsun thought, "How 'is it ~that Rech- ungpa has become so proud? ~ 'He refused ~it~her ~ve~ hee'n possessed by demons or affected by ~the~ evil~l ~fluence of pagans. No matter what the cause, I must ~res~c~ue~ him from this hindrance of pride!" So he smiled and answered Rechungpa's questions in this~ song':~"

YH 1 7

S.: So, "The Jetsun thought, 'How is it that Rechungpa has become so proud?'" Well, he sees that he is proud, but he just wonders what the reason is. "He must either have been possessed by demons or affected by the evil influence of pagans." Who are these 'pagans'? The translator is using the word in quite an odd sort of way here.

Voice: Probably Hindus.

S.: Probably Hindus.

Jyotipala: Or maybe, were there Moslems there then in India at that time?

S.: There were some, but I think it's more likely to be Hindus. But why do you think Rechungpa might have imbibed pride from Hindus?

Jyotipala: Because they're great ones for that, aren't they? Their whole idea of caste, their whole lives, their whole religion...

S.: It's the idea of caste. The hereditary superiority and inferiority based simply on birth, regardless of actual qualities. So if Rechungpa had been living among these people, he must have been affected by this to some extent, if he wasn't spiritually developed himself. It's so easy to be affected by these sort of notions.

Jyotipala: Was Rechungpa of noble birth himself from the Tibetan point of view?

S.: It's quite possible. I don't remember whether he actually was, but it's quite possible.

Jyotipala: That might have influenced him. (Pause)

'S': ~ So Milarepa says, "He must either have been possessed by demons or affected by the evil influence of pagans." What do you think Milarepa means by these 'demons'? What does this tell you about Rechungpa's state?

Voice: Not very positive.

S.: Well, not only not very positive, but extremely negative. But if you think of someone as possessed by some evil outside force, well what are you really saying?

Jyotipala: That they're not themselves, they've been alienated.

S.: Not themselves, alienated - that they're behaving in such a way that it seems that they've been taken over by something. To what extent is that sort of language really justified, do you think?

Jyoti al'a: It can be sometimes. If you've got something that's really bothering you and you meditate, while you're actually meditating, this thing that's bothering you, intrudes upon the meditation and so the concentration that you've built up on the meditation goes to the thing that's coming. So in a sense your practice gives it life, strengthens it. So if you're not careful, it can become stronger and stronger until it can almost possess you.

YH 1 8

S.: Well, if you don't think in terms of a literal sort of demoniacal possession by actual objectively existing entities; if you don't think in those terms, then what you're thinking in terms of is a split personality. Because there is some kind of negative mental state which has so to speak, a life of its own. Rechungpa is a quite spiritually gifted person. He's been with Milarepa for many years. It's not as though he's a bad person. But he is subject to this terrible attack of pride. It's as though there's another Rechungpa (which comes into operation then. It's as though Rechungpa is a split personality. One part of him is very good, very devoted, very pious, very learned - he's experienced in meditation. But then there's another side which is so silly and so stupid and so conceited and so willful and so stubborn and so closed and so unopen. But both of these are Rechungpa. So it's as though there are two Rechungpas. So if you think of the first Rechungpa as the real Rechungpa, it's although this Rechungpa is from time to time just possessed or taken over by that other

Rechungpa so that all the good qualities are in abeyance and all these negative qualities are for the time being upper- most. It's as though he's possessed, has been taken over. But perhaps it isn't really an outside, objectively existing entity, it's another side of Rechungpa's own character, which is deeply divided from the rest of him, so that he's in a sort of alienated state.

Voice: Isn't that true of everyone?

S.: It's true of everyone to a degree, but when it becomes extreme then we speak in terms of a split, we speak in terms of schizophrenia and all the rest of it. There probably isn't any human being who isn't divided to some extent. It's doubtful whether anybody is completely integrated on any level, but if one is so divided, so split, that it's as though there are two quite incompatible personalities which can't co-exist, so that at one time one is uppermost and at another time the other, then that is a very different matter. That's much more serious. But it seems as though something like that is the case with Rechungpa. At the moment there's this demon of pride, so to speak, is uppermost, has taken him over. So, therefore, the Jetsun thought, 'How is it that Rechungpa has become so proud? He must either have been possessed by demons or affected by the evil influence of pagans.' So either he's been associated with people who are proud themselves, and whose whole life is organized on that sort of basis, or he's a kind of split personality. He's possessed so to speak, by demons. The Tibetans of course, in any case, believe in the possibility of literal possession by demons. But then Milarepa says, "no matter what the cause, I must rescue him from this hindrance of pride!" So don't you think this is significant? "No matter what the cause, I must rescue him from this hindrance of pride". What is Milarepa saying here?

Robin: In a way, it seems to be a criticism of the Psycho-therapeutic approach.

YH 1 '9~

S.: Yes it does.

Robin:~ That you're trying to go back to the cause in order to cure the ill person. You're saying whatever the cause...

S.: Yes, he's saying in a way, it doesn't really matter what the cause is, you've just got the fact that this person is suffering from 'the hindrance of pride' - hindrance of course, is a technical term. There are five hindrances of which pride is one. And the main thing is that Rechungpa should be cured. It's not necessary to be sure whether he's possessed by demons, or whether he's been influenced by pagan Hindus, the fact is that he's suffering from pride. The fact is that pride is a hindrance and has got to be got rid of.

Gerry: Is that strictly true? You spend a lot of time trying to find out why you are what you are at the moment. You say, "Oh, Christian conditioning or something." Then you can work on that. Surely that doesn't negate that!

S.: Do you think that is so then? That you don't need - that you in fact need to go back

into the past? Milarepa seems to be saying that you don't need - so do you in fact think that you do need to go back into the past? Is it helpful? Or to~what extent is it helpful?

Gerry: It's something you can grab onto.

S.: Well, why do you think Milarepa is dismissing it, or seeming to?

Gerry: Because he feels he can cure the thing (without it)

S.: Ah! So is that possible?

Gerry: It is, but I think you've got to be particularly strong to do it.

S.: So one might say, well, under what circumstances does one need to go back, and under what circumstances does one not need to go back?

Voice: Is it the difference between a psychological prob- lem and a spiritual?

S.: Yes. Well Milarepa has des~ribed pride as a hindrance, so obviously it's a hindrance to spiritual development, spir- itual life, specifically meditation, Is it possible to get rid of it without finding out what its cause is?

Surata: I'd have thought that with something like this - spiritual, you wouldn't need to, but with psychological, you would.

S.: But what is it then that makes the difference?

Surata: Psychological would stop you from being sort of a healthy, happy human being, whe~as spiritual would stop you from growing onwards.

S.: So in order to grow, what do you need?

YH 1 10

Voice: Freedom from psychological hangups.

S.:~ No, I'm not thinking in those terms. What do you need, as it were, in front of you?

Voice: Vision

S.: A vision - that is to say, more specifically?

Voice: Teacher

S.: Teacher, yes, but I wasn' ~thinking of that. (Pause) Well you need an ideal, let us say. You need a spiritual ideal, so perhaps one could say that if you have a spiritual ideal, and if that is very strongly before you - if you have an actual vision of that, and are thinking in terms of growing towards that, then you don't need to think so much about what is the cause

of the present unskilful state that you happen to be in. Because you're so preoccupied with the goal, you're so preoccupied with the ideal, and your energies are going into that and to that extent that they're going into that, they will be withdrawn from other unskilful things. So, you could say, that to the extent that you're pre-occupied with the ideal and your energies go in the direction of the ideal, to that extent you don't need to go into the causes of your present unskilful mental states. But if you've got no ideal, well, then what are you going to do? Well, it would seem that you just have to try and go back into the past and find out what brought about these unskilful states. But then the question arises, how far back? Because it does seem if one looks at psychoanalysis that there's almost no end to the process of going back. You can go back and back. They're now beginning to say that you can go back to the moment of birth, go right back to the time you were in the womb, back into previous lives. Well, Buddhism doesn't dispute that, but you can go back and back through a whole series of lives. And you can understand how one thing has led to another. But you still have to come back to the present and be emancipated from your unskilful mental states' in the present. And it would seem that the consciousness of the goal, and the consciousness of the ideal, or the vision of the ideal, enables you to do that and actually to switch your energies. So it does seem that in the end you have to come back to that.

Voice: So we have a choice really - we can either go back and sort things out in the past, or we can strengthen our feelings for the ideal.

S': Yes.

Jyotipala: In the end, from what you're saying the only real solution is the ideal...

S.: It would seem that for people nowadays in the West, that what you need to go back only to - I'm speaking about people, say, in a Buddhist movement - you need to go back to try to find out how your present mental states, how your present attitude has arisen, even when you've got an ideal in front of you, when your energies are so blocked and your emotion is so alienated, that the ideal is only an abstract idea.

YH 1 11

Do you see what I mean? You can have an ideal that is 'us~, well' - just abstract. It isn't really an ideal for

you. It's just an abstract ideal that you have and your energies are quite blocked due to some kind of conditioning in the past. For instance, you mentioned Christian conditioning. Well, if someone is heavily conditioned by his Christian past, he may not be able to have any ideal in the present. And he may be involved with the Buddhist movement, but he may just have an abstract idea about enlightenment and so on. Well, in this case, he may have to go back a little bit and just sufficient to unblock his energies. And then try to get a stronger feeling for the ideal and then go forward. But this is because we're in quite an exceptional sort of situation. But the general principle would seem to be: go forward, rather than go back. Think in terms of the ideal which will draw you out of your present situation, rather than trying to get out of the present situation by delving into how you got into it in the first place. If you've got an ideal and really got it as an ideal, not just an abstract idea, well, you don't need to go back into the past. You need to go back into the past only if you don't have

an ideal as an ideal. You need then go back only to the extent that it is necessary to recapture energy which can then be directed to the ideal.

Gerald: Isn't there a bit of a conflict though? Your mind would like to go back to trying to find the source.

S.: Well, perhaps it would, but the point is: does it really matter? This is what Milarepa says to be suggesting: He says, "No matter what the cause, I must rescue him from this hindrance of pride!" It's very difficult to tell sometimes, what is the cause. But what does it matter? What is important is that you should have enough free energy to direct to the ideal. Then it'll raise you above all these things. You may have a certain conditioning at present, some complex because your parents beat you when you were small. Does it really matter? Is it really important to find out whether it was your mother who beat you or your father who beat you or maybe an elder brother? It doesn't really matter now. If one says, practises the metta bhavana and you've got over all feelings of resentment towards other people including those who might have beat you, well, does it matter whether you know who exactly it was. I think it's always a temptation to go back into the past. I don't rule out the possibility to a limited extent despite what Milarepa says. It may be necessary to go back just a little bit and have some understanding of what has happened and how things have influenced you. But as soon as possible, one should start looking forward and towards the ideal, and thinking in terms of positive growth and development.

Vimalamitra: Maybe if you do go forward, it's easier to go back a bit.

S.: It's probably easier yes, but there's less need for it then.

Vimalamitra: Yes

YH 1 12

S.: Well sometimes it may happen spontaneously because ~re tal~ that the Buddha ~at the time of his Enli~~ghen

ment, among other things, among other experiences did just see - he did have a sort of panoramic vision of so many thousands even hundreds of thousands of past lives. But he didn't need to see them, it just happened. He wasn't trying to see them, it happened. So this may, you know, happen in our case too, sometimes but just as a result of our progress and our growth and development. It may suddenly occur to us, "Well, that's why I went wrong there or that's what happened! That's why I took that particular turning". Not that we're particularly anxious to know about it but we understand it sometimes spontaneously, just because we've reached a sort of vantage point in our development, from which we can see things more clearly. But we're not sort of anxious or fussing or trying to find out what happened. We're essentially concerned with growth and development in the present and the future. So, Milarepa says, "No matter what the cause, I must rescue him from this hindrance of pride!" So he smiled and answered Rechungpa's 5 questions in this song."

End of Side I

Side II

I am a yogi who lives on a snow-mountain peak. 'With a healthy body I glorify the
Mandala of the Whole. Cleansed of vanity from the Five Poisons, I am not unhappy;
I feel nought but joy! Renouncing all turmoil And fondness for diversion, I
reside alone in perfect ease. Forswearing the bustle of this world, Joyfully I stay in
no-man's land. Since I have left embittered family life, I no longer have to earn
and save; Since I want no books, I do not intend to be a learned man; I practice virtuous
deeds, I feel no shame of heart. Since I have no pride or vanity, I renounce with joy the
saliva-splashing debate! Hypocrisy I have not, nor pretension. Happy and natural I live
Without forethought or adjustment. Since I want nor fame nor glory, Rumors and
accusations disappear. Where'er I go, I feel happy, Where'er I wear, I feel joyful, Whatever
food I eat, I am satisfied. I am always happy. Through Marpa's grace, I, your old father
Milarepa, Have realized Samsara and Nirvana. The Yoga of Joy ever fills my hermitage.

YH 1 13

S.: Let's see what that means then. He begins~ by saying, "I am a yogi who lives on a
snow mountain peak. With a healthy body I glorify the Mandala of the whole." So what does
this mean? Well, first of all he states just a fact in a plain straight-forward way: "I am a yogi
who lives on a snow-mountain peak." Well, that's what anyone can see. That's
obvious, that he's a yogi who passes his time in yoga, in meditation and he lives on the peak
of a snow-mountain. But there's more to it than that. He says, "With a healthy body I glorify
the Mandala of the whole". It's not clear what Sanskrit term this represents - 'the whole' - I
mean, it could be the Dharmadhatu. But, "With a healthy body I glorify the Mandala of the
whole." Do you know what a Mandala is? Well, what is a Mandala?

Jyotipala: It's a group of things surrounding - you have the centre of things and several
things around it which are aspects of it perhaps, or related to it.

S.: This is essentially what it is, at least this is one of the main meanings, perhaps the main
meaning. So, if you think of the whole, the whole of existence, as a Mandala, then how are
you thinking of the whole of existence?

Voice: As related.

S.: As related, but just related?

Voice: To the ideal.

S.: To the ideal or even more than that? What is the difference between seeing things as
we usually see them and seeing them as a Mandala?

Jyotipala: Normally we see things, relating everything to ourselves rather than to reality.
Whereas this way, we're relating them to us in a higher ideal, a higher part of ourselves.

S.: Yes, that's true. So inasmuch as everything is related, or inasmuch as we see everything as related to the Ideal, we see everything in its true relation. And also we see things truly related to one another. The Mandala that you get say, in a Tankha, is a very simplified version. You have a Buddha in the centre and then you have Buddhas of the five cardinal points. And then you've the colours of those cardinal points and you've got all sorts of other things. You've got the elements and the Skandhas and they're all interconnected. They all find a place. It's a harmonious arrangement of all these different things around that central point, that central Buddha figure. So when you see the whole as a Mandala, it's as though you see the whole of existence as related to the Ideal and see also that their relationship with the Ideal, determines their relationship with one another. In other words, you see the whole cosmos as harmoniously organized, harmoniously arranged around this central fundamental principle. So that is the Mandala of the whole. But Mandala has got another significance too. It's the Mandala which is offered. Mandala literally means a sphere or circle. So a Mandala in this second sense is a sort of symbolical representation of the whole of existence.

YH 1 14

The whole of mundane existence. Well, it's a symbolical representation of the world system. That is to say: Mt. Meru with its oceans and encircling iron mountains and its various tiers and this is offered ceremonially - you might know there's a list of four preparatory practices - the Four Mula Yogas of the Tantra. One of them is making the offering of the Mandala 100,000 times. So the Mandala here represents~mundane existence - the world system according to ancient Indian ideas. And the offering of the Mandala is the offering of this to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, to the Guru, or' to the Guru as the embodiment of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and so on. So this represents the fact that even if the whole world belongs to you; even if the whole universe belongs to you; even if the whole world system belongs to you, you'd offer it all to the Buddha. You'd offer it all to the Guru, offer it all to Padmasambhava. So in this way, you develop your feeling of giving, of offering. You develop your devotion. Do you see what I mean? So there are these two main meanings of Mandala. Man- dala in the first place, the whole of Reality and in the second, the Cosmos, or you could say a particular cosmos. But again the two meanings are related because the whole of existence is clearly related to the whole in the sense of a particular cosmos. So one can take Milarepa's statement as referring to either. One can take the Mandala of the whole as either being the Mandala of the entire Dharmadhatu or the Mandala of a particular world system, our particular world system. Perhaps the meaning is ambiguous. Perhaps it means not either but both. But in either case Milarepa says: "With a healthy body I glorify the Mandala of the Whole." So what does that mean? - that he glorifies the Mandala of the Whole?

Voice: Does that mean that' he reveres it?

S.: Well, it could. The English of the translation would bear that interpretation. But I don't think it means that. It seems to mean that he with his healthy body actually glorifies it, makes it glorious. He adds to the beauty of the Mandala. It's as though he's saying that by living on the snow- peak, by practising Yoga, by gaining Enlightenment, he has glorified, he has illuminated, he has beautified the entire system of existence. He has, as it were, taken his true place in 'that. He is not a disruptive factor; he's not out of place; he's in place. S~e adds

to the beauty of the Mandala of the whole. Therefore, he glorifies it. So this, in a way, is a somewhat unusual way of looking at the spiritual life. Do you see what I mean? It's thinking of it in terms of finding your true place in the Mandala, and through your life, through your existence or spiritual practice, adding to the beauty of the Mandala of the whole, glorifying the Mandala of the whole; being a jewel instead of a little pebble, or being a beautiful flower, instead of just a heap of dung in the corner. It also suggests that gaining Enlightenment is not just a sort of personal concern. It's as though gaining Enlightenment, you enhance the beauty and the richness of the whole of existence, - you add to it.

Gerry: Almost as an example.

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S.: Almost as an example. (Pause) It's thinking, one might say, of the whole process of Enlightenment in aesthetic, rather than in ethical terms. It's thinking not so much in terms of 'being good' as in terms of being beautiful in the fullest sense, - the Ancient Greek sense, not just the modern restricted sense.

Voice: Will you talk in terms of 'glorifying the Mandala'

S.: It's beautifying the Mandala. I mean, you can't make the Mandala more beautiful without being more beautiful yourself. There is this sort of hackneyed expression 'a beautiful person' - it's terribly overworked, but still there is something in it, you know, if you take it in a more authentic sense. It doesn't of course, mean tripping around in a fairy-like sort of a way. It's something much more solid and much more genuine than that. You don't have to wear your hair long or have a beautiful golden earring - not that those things are necessarily excluded of course. (Laughter) (Pause) You also notice, he says: "With a healthy body". I'm not sure how literally that is to be taken - whether it means just a 'healthy body' or whether it's a healthy body in a much wider and deeper sense. A healthy being, a skilful being, a wholesome being - it could mean that. But it certainly doesn't exclude healthy body in the ordinary sense.

Robin: Am I right in thinking that he's actually directly replying to Rechungpa's questions in this song?

S.: Well, he says...

Robin: In turn he's replying to his enquiries after his health.

S.: So he says, "He smiled and answered Rechungpa's questions in this song", yes?

Robin: But he's not just straight-forwardly answering by saying, 'Yes, I am very well'.

S.: He's in a way, answering more than Rechungpa's asked. In a sense, it doesn't matter whether he's healthy or unhealthy. After all, he's realized the Truth. But well, perhaps just as

a matter of fact, he does have a healthy body. But he could mean more than just that. His whole being is imbued with health, with wholesomeness, with positivity. This is suggested by what follows. He says, 'cleansed of vanity from the five poisons, I'm not unhappy'. In fact he says, "I feel nothing but joy". What are these five poisons?

Voice: Ignorance, aversion...

S.: There's conceit, craving and ignorance. There's . . . Did you say ignorance? Is doubt one of them?

Voice: Envy?

S.: Envy is usually... the list varies a little bit. Sometimes envy is included, sometimes not included. So these are the five poisons, the five great defilements.

Voice: They're different from the hindrances, aren't they?

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Voice: Can you say a bit more what the difference is, apart from just the actual terms?

S.: The hindrances are especially related to meditation, aren't they? They're the mental states that prevent you from rising from the Kama-loka to the Rupa-loka and then the Arupa-loka. You could say, they represent, coarse, not to say negative, modes of mental function. But the five Klesas are in a way, more than that. The five Poisons. They go down to the very root of existence, you could say. It's the five poisons that stand between you and Enlightenment itself. In other words, supposing you were to get rid of the Five Hindrances. You'd be then able to enter upon the first Dhyana, the second Dhyana, the third Dhyana. But you would not have overcome the Klesas yet. At least, certainly, you would not have overcome some of them. They would still be there. They go even deeper. So you need to get through them. So, one could say that the five Klesas represent even deeper Hindrances than do the Five Hindrances themselves. They're more, so to speak, existential.

The Five Hindrances are, first of all: craving, especially in the sense of craving for experience on the Kama-loka level. There is aversion, especially in the sense of aversion arising out of frustration in connection with enjoyment on the Kama-loka level. And then you've got 'hurry and flurry' or 'worry and restlessness' as sometimes translated. And again you've got sloth and torpor. And then you've got doubt. Well, it's not doubt exactly, it's indecisiveness - indecision. So these Five Hindrances prevent you from attaining concentration, attaining the Dhyanas. In the case of the Five Poisons, the craving and aversion go much deeper. They pertain to these higher levels too. That is to say, the Rupa and Arupa levels and in addition you've got ignorance itself, which is the basic Klesa. And you've also got conceit which is, you know, that same basic Klesa from another point of view. And of course, you've got unmindfulness. No. It's not unmindfulness. It's another one. Not envy, but what sometimes takes the place of envy?

Voice: Jealousy?

S.: No, not jealousy. Envy and jealousy are more or less the same. Ah! Distraction!

Distraction is sometimes reckoned as the fifth Klesa in the place of Envy or Jealousy. So, these, especially ignorance and conceit, go very much deeper than any of the Five Hindrances. So you could say, that the Five Hindrances prevent you from achieving the Dhyana states, but the five Klesas, the five Poisons, which of course, includes the Five Hindrances, prevent you from seeing Reality itself. This is the difference between them. So the antidotes - those meditations which are anti-dotes to the Poisons include meditation practices which are not just Samatha practices, but which are 'Insight' practices, because it's only through Insight that one can have some experience of Reality. So it's only by Insight that you can get rid of the five Poisons.. It's only Insight that can dispel ignorance or that can get rid of conceit. So, when Milarepa says that Rechungpa is suffering from the hindrance of Pride - hindrance is not to be taken literally here - the translator is probably being a bit careless. It is really the Poison, the obstacle of Pride - conceit that Milarepa is talking about. He's not talking of one of the five Nivaranas, he's talking about one of the

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five Klesas. Usually we translate Nivarana as 'hindrance' It's more literally 'covering' and we translate Klesa as 'poison' or 'defilement'.

Vimalamitra: What's beyond the Klesas then? Is there another formulation beyond the Klesas? I think in the Manjugosha....

S.: What do you mean by beyond the Klesas? You mean a negative formulation?

Vimalamitra: I think - I can't remember at the moment - they're mentioned in the Stuthi - the Klesas and Avidya....

S.: You mean positive counterparts?

Vimalamitra: No, I think there's the two hindrances, the two main hindrances. The first one is the Klesas and the

S.: You're not thinking of Upaklesas - minor defilements. Sometimes they distinguish between major defilements and minor defilements.

Jyotipala: The Asvaras.

S.: There are Asvaras.

Vimalamitra: Ah~ yes, that's right!

S.: The Asvaras is another formulation. They can be sort of related. There were originally three but then they became four and even five. But it's the same kind of thing. There's the Asvara of craving for experience on the desire level, or in the desire-world. Then there's the craving for experience in the form-world - then the formless-world. And then there's the craving, the Asvara of Ignorance - that was added in later and then the Asvara of the craving

or attachment to Wrong Views. That seems to have been added later as an elaboration of Ignorance. So yes, these pertain to - they cover much the same sort of ground. Originally you've got the most primitive formula of lobha, dvesa, and Moha. That is to say, these the 'three' - well you could call these too Poisons. In Pali, they're called the three Akusila-mulas ; the three unskillful roots or the three roots of unskillfulness. That is to say, Craving, Aversion and Moha, which is Ignorance and bewilderment, and so on. So you could regard the 'five' as a sort of elaboration of the 'three'. Because Craving and Aversion remain the same, and then Moha is sub-divided, so to speak, into Ignorance, Conceit and Distraction. In that way you get your list of Five Klesas, though sometimes, as I say, Distraction is replaced by Envy or Jealousy. But perhaps the basic point to bear in mind here, is that there were really two main aspects: there is a sort of, so to speak, an intellectual aspect and there is an emotive aspect. The intellectual aspect is represented by such words as 'ignorance' and 'conceit' and 'distraction'. The emotional aspect is represented by 'craving', by 'aversion' and by 'envy' or jealousy. So you can see that both are quite deeply negative. So you could say, this is being a little bit, maybe over-schematic,, that the emotionally negative aspect is overcome by Samatha, but the intellectually negative aspect is overcome only by Vipassana or Insight.

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The Vipassana or Insight 'fixes' the emotional positivity, in the sense of making it permanent. Until you've got that Insight, well, you may sometimes be in a very emotionally positive state, but it may not last very long.

Surata: Do you only get over the Poisons by 'Insight'?

S.: You only permanently get over any of the Poisons by Insight, yes. Some of the Poisons can be suspended for the time being, through the development of Samatha, but only suspended. Some, of course, can't even be suspended. Again in the Mahayana, they speak of two Avaranas or 'two coverings'. You must have come across this again and again. The Klesavarana and the Jneyarvarana. That is to say, the 'covering of defilements' and the 'covering of - well, the literal meaning is 'knowables'. But broadly speaking, you can say, one - it represents the emotional obscuration and the other represents the intellectual obscuration. Klesavarana means all those factors - all those emotional factors or negative emotional factors which obscure the realization of the Truth. Here klesa has a more emotive meaning. And the Jneyavarana, means all those wrong ideas about Reality - all those wrong conceptions of Reality, which obscure the realization of the Truth. You often get, you know, this pair of terms in the Mahayana, but you can see sort of running through, all these terms, all these lists, the idea of a sort of two-fold veil, or two-fold obscuration. So the list of the five Poisons to which Milarepa refers to here, comprises both emotional and intellectual, so to speak, Klesas. And Vanity or Conceit is considered one of the more, as it were, intellectual ones. It consists in a fixed idea about oneself. According to some of the Buddha's sayings in the Pali Canon, one should not think about oneself as either inferior to or superior to or as equal to other people. In other words, you should not think comparatively at all. This is what Rechungpa was doing in the case of Milarepa. He was trying to work out who was superior, who was inferior, who was equal and so on. So this shows that he was

suffering from the Klesa of Conceit. The basic Buddhist position is, you could say, is that one should not think in those terms ~ 'all. If you even think in terms of equality, it means you're still essentially concerned with inferiority and superiority. You should approach another person and allow another person to approach you, without thinking in those terms at all! It's quite irrelevant from the spiritual point of view.

Gerry: Is Milarepa not saying this - he's stating an Absolute - "I am a Yogi and I live in a mountain." That's it! He's taking himself in absolute terms, not in relation to Rechungpa.

S.: Yes. He's not saying that 'I'm a better Yogi than anybody else', he's just describing what he does..

Surata: When you say there's two ways of looking at it - there's emotive and there's intellectual - aren't they very much the same thing in the end? vanity, for instance, it is intellectual, but it comes from root of emotions.

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'S': Well, they are interconnected, yes, because they're both aspects of you. But you could certainly say that some are predominantly emotional, others predominantly intellectual. Like when you get angry, well, no doubt there is some idea or some concept bound up with that, but the predominant experience is emotional. Your state is predominantly an emotional one. And in the same way when you have certain wrong ideas in the form of micchaditthis, well, no doubt there are feelings connected with those ideas, but it is the intellectual element which is uppermost. Especially if you formulate the micchaditthis systematically in the form of a philosophy.

Surata: Could you not deal with micchaditthis on the emotional level though? The feelings that are behind the micchaditthis, could you not deal with them there and then the micchaditthis would just vanish?

S.: Well, if somebody, as a result of their spiritual practice dissolved the emotions which are at the root of the micchaditthis, well, yes, the micchaditthis would vanish with the emotions. But sometimes you have to drive them back. It isn't even stated in Buddhism that you can reduce the intellectual to the emotional - it isn't as though the intellectual is at root, so to speak, emotional, because there is such a thing - at least according to the terminology - as an intellectual Klesa, so to speak. It's as though the wrong understanding is as fundamental as the wrong feeling. Not that you've only got wrong feelings and that the wrong thoughts or wrong ideas are 'only expressions of the wrong thoughts or wrong feelings. The one is as basic as the other, it would seem. In fact, the two most basic terms in this respect are, of course, 'avidya'- ignorance and 'trishna'- thirst or craving. And sometimes it would seem that avidya is regarded as more primordial - if you can use that expression. So it's as though, you come to a point - it's not so much that you can reduce the emotional to the intellectual or the intellectual to the emotional in regard to the klesas, but that they do converge. The more deeply you go into them, the more you find a common root. But that common root can't really be described in either exclusively intellectual or exclusively

emotional terms. It comes down basically to the division between subject and object. It's as though the subjective side of that division is what becomes emotion - the objective side is what becomes thought and intellect. So it's not as though the micchaditthis are just rationalizations of negative emotions. So it wouldn't be enough just to reduce the micchaditthis to their appropriate emotions, because you'd still have to reduce the emotions to something more basic. You'd have to overcome the subject/object division. But sometimes it does help to see the emotional connections, because then you get a more comprehensive view of the problem. It's not as though the emotional klesa is the root of the intellectual klesa, but there is the emotional counterpart to every intellectual klesa, even if there isn't an intellectual counterpart, yet, to every emotional klesa. But you don't get rid of the intellectual klesa completely just by reducing it to its corresponding emotional counterpart. You're still left with that emotional counterpart. Anyway, Milarepa says: "Cleansed of vanity from the Five Poisons I am not unhappy; I feel nought but joy!"

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Virtually Milarepa is, I won't say claiming to be - but communicating the fact that -he is Enlightened. Because if there were no five Klesas, no five Poisons, - if you've developed the five Nyanas, the five Awarenesses, then you are Enlightened. So, "cleansed of vanity from the Five Poisons, I am not unhappy; I feel nought but joy. Renouncing all turmoil and fondness for diversion, I reside alone in perfect ease." There's much more to this than meets the eye, because 'turmoil' and 'fondness for diversion' go much deeper than we usually think. And therefore, the 'perfect ease' in which Milarepa says that he is residing, goes much deeper, than ease in the usual sense. It's a complete relaxation, which is not just psychological, not to speak of - not just physical, but as it were, existential. It's the cessation of all striving, because there's nothing to strive for. You've gained whatever there was to be gained. And this, of course, ties up with the Mahamudra teaching which is not the teaching of how to relax at the deepest level, because that would be self-contradictory, but just the teaching of, you could say, relaxation at the deepest level of one's being. You don't even think in terms of trying to attain enlightenment. You've gone even beyond that. You're in a state of profound relaxation - so this is the sort of state that Milarepa is suggesting. But 'turmoil' and 'fondness for diversion' - it might seem strange - I'm just taking the words of the English translation quite literally - that you should need to renounce turmoil! One would have thought that nobody would want turmoil, anyway! But psychologically do you find that that is not so? That actually you like turmoil, or at least sometimes you like turmoil. It's something you actually have to give up. Do you ever find that?

Robin: I've found during meditation, I sometimes feel myself clinging to the turmoil of the thoughts. And that if I feel that beginning to die down, it's almost a fear arising as a result.

S.: Or even apart from meditation, some people like to live in a way which is full of turmoil, don't they? If life becomes quiet and peaceful, they get a bit uneasy. They don't really like it. So some people seem to thrive on turmoil.

Gerry: It's a way of getting their energies going.

S.: Hmm. Why should you need turmoil to get your energies going?

Gerald: I think it's when you're out of touch with yourself - it's a way of reassuring yourself you're still alive

S.: You're still there! Yes... What is the difference between turmoil and fondness for diversion? There is some difference presumably.

Gerry: One's active and one's passive.

S.: Yes, in a way.

Gerald: One's pleasureable and one's painful.

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S.: It's as though even turmoil, the painful state of turmoil, is better than the purely, as it~'would'seem toone, negative state of not being alive at all. Whereas diversion does suggest a going out in the direction of pleasure. But why do we give way to this 'fondness for diversion'? Why are we fond of diversion? What does that suggest?

Gerry: Something to occupy our energies, to occupy us - make you jump from one thing to another.

S.: Why do you think it is that people can't just sit quietly and just sit quietly and enjoy sitting quietly? Why this fond- ness for diversion? I used to notice this in quite extreme forms a few years ago, when I was down at Sukhavati and Friday night, or Saturday night, people would be desperately thumbing through the pages of Time Out. It's not that they wanted to go and see a film or wanted to go and see an opera, or wanted to do this or that or the other. I~t's as though they wanted to do anything. They didn't reall know what they wanted to do, but som-ething. But they just idn't want to stay there. They didn't want to sit quietly in their room - those that had a room, of course.

Jotiala: I think it's because you think you're missing out. You re not getting what you're entitled to or what you should be having - everybody else is having it, so' you should be having it.

S.: Ah! Yes! This I think plays a quite important part - twat you're missing out on' something. But why should you feel that you're missing out on something? Well, perhaps you are missing out on something, bu~t perhaps you're just not rightly identifying it . What you're really missing out on and should be quite concerned about is Enlightenment - you know you're missing out on that 'all the"- time . There it is. You're just separated from it by~ahair's breadth. So you feel some inadequacy, and some incompleteness, some insufficiency and that's quite right! But instead of just sitting quietly down' and asking yourself, "What is it I really need? What is it I really want?" - you go dashing off in the direction of whatever presents itself. As though you really want to see a film - well, probably--you don't. You probably don't enjoy it when you do see it. So you just forget things for a while and you come back perhaps to the state you were in before. I'm not saying that you can't en- joy a film but if you do enjoy it, or you're more likely ~to be able to enjoy it from - or if you go' from ~an experience of sufficiency and happiness, not if you~gofrom an exper- ience of in~ufficiency and just wanting something to fill the gap, almost anything -

anything to fill the hole.

Surata: Do you think that's the best thing to do if you feel that -" just to sit and experience it?

S.: Oh, yes, definitely! If there is something you definitely want to see because you are interested in that particular subject, that's another matter. Then you're following up an interest, rather than giving in to a 'fondness for diversion'. A 'fondness for diversion' suggests you can't bear yourself - you don't want to face up to the fact of your own inner emptiness. You don't want to try and find out what you really need and what you should really do or want to do even. It

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suggests that you're not willing to be in touch with yourself - not willing to experience yourself.

Gerry: Where does boredom come into it?

S.: Well, boredom seems to be halfway in between - that you are on your own - that you don't have anything particular to do. You're not actually seeking some diversion. You're not satisfied with yourself - your experience of yourself is not satisfying. On the other hand, there is nothing to disguise that experience or that fact from you - that you experience as boredom and you usually try to relieve it. But this is why I often say that if you feel bored, that's quite good! You just sit quietly, not just try to relieve the feeling of boredom by any means, just sit quietly and experience the feeling of boredom. And after a while you will start experiencing yourself and after a while again, you'll start coming into touch with what you really want to do.

Surata: Do you think that people do actually discover that? Because I mean, I've done that a lot of times - just sat and I can't say that I've ever discovered what I wanted to do...

S.: Well, I could say, you haven't sat long enough, obviously. (Laughter) You might have to sit for five minutes at least or even an hour!

Surata: Well, I've sat for a whole evening and I've just had to go to bed, with no change in the feeling...

S.: Of boredom?

Surata: Of boredom or just sort of emptiness.

S.: Well, that would suggest that your feelings of what you really wanted to do are quite deeply buried, as it were, and that it would take quite a bit of time to establish contact with it. I mean, it isn't such an easy business as I might be appearing to suggest. I think usually with most people, if they feel a bit bored, and they just sit down quietly, what they come up with

after a while is an interest, a genuine interest, rather than encountering what it is, or realizing what it is they deeply and genuinely want to do in a more, so to speak, existential sense.

End of Tape one

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Robin: ... as regard recontacting the self. A helpful tool is just to write out how you're feeling and often that way you can come back to how you got that way, and what you want to do next. It speeds up the process.

S.: Yes, very often people don't fact up to the fact of how they actually feel. If you write it down, then at least it's objectified and you see it in front of you. You know- 'depressed', 'angry', 'miserable', 'tired', 'bored', 'lifeless', 'inert', 'dead' (Laughter)

Vimalamitra-. The thing is you're in such a state that you don't actually even know what your emotions are.

S.: Right! Yes, or at least you don't see or feel it very intensely or very clearly. So if you write it down, that helps to bring it more clearly and definitely into consciousness. Anyway, Milarepa says: "Cleansed of vanity from the Five Poisons, I am not unhappy; I feel nought but joy!" Well, this is a very familiar state so far as Milarepa is concerned. He sings about it constantly. We've even got songs of his different joys. So he's got no problems at all. (Coffee break) So, "Renouncing all turmoil, and fondness for diversion, I reside alone in perfect ease." Then he says: "Forswearing the bustle of this world, joyfully I stay in no-man's land." What is this 'no-man's land'? What does the phrase usually mean?

Jyotipala: A sort of bardo-state.

S.: No, as we usually use it in English?

Jyotipala: Oh, is it the space between two countries, a boundary.

S.: Yes. but in Tibetan there is a phrase: 'The country of the No-Men'. The 'No-men' meaning - the Sanskrit Amanussa - those who are not human. In other words, animals. He is living high in the snow mountain, where human beings don't come, where only animals live. In other words, he is not living in company with other human beings. He's away from human society. He's got only the animals for companions.

Surata: Does it not have a deeper meaning than that?

S.: Well, one could say that. "Forswearing the bustle of this world, joyfully I stay in No-man's land." But first of all consider the literal meaning. What does it mean that Milarepa is living without any human contact? What sort of effect does this one have on one? That one is living only with animals, or seeing only animals?

Gerry: Much closer to yourself and nature.

S.: You're much closer to yourself and nature. It's probably quite difficult to have this sort of experience now. It is said, I have heard it said that it's probably only in Africa or some parts of Africa that you can still have the experience that man is in the minority - that other forms of life are more abundant. You can see it sometimes in films when you get great

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great herds of zebra or giraffes, or flocks of ostriches - thousands and thousands of them - antelopes of various kinds. We~ just don't usually have that sort of experience. I remember Buddhadasa some years ago, went on retreat up in Scotland on a peninsula facing the Isle of Skye and during the winter, he was cut off from the mainland because to get to the peninsula you have to cross mountains which were snow-bound in winter,, So he said, that for some months, all he saw were seals and lots and lots of deer and otters and birds - hundreds and thousands of them. And it was quite an unusual experience just to be surrounded by this teeming animal life. I remember he wrote me a letter at the time about this. So what do you think would be one's experience, just living without contact with other human beings, but seeing all this animal life around?

Robin: You realize your own humanity

S.: Yes, you'd realize your own humanity. You'd have a much stronger sense of yourself as a human being. I mean, here are all these living things, - they're all alive; they're very attractive; they're very beautiful but you can't communicate with them. You can just watch them and observe them. Maybe on a certain level you can communicate with them. After all, you are alive and they are alive, but in another sense, on another level, you can't communicate with them, because they don't have consciousness in the way that you have consciousness. They've not self-consciousness. This is why perhaps Cowper in his poem, 'Alexander Selkirk', describing the tameness of the animals on the island where he is shipwrecked - Alexander Selkirk says, "but that their tameness is frightful to me". It is frightful that they are tame, because it suggests the fact that they have had no experience of man - there is no other human being around. It's underlying the fact that he is the only human being there. So perhaps when you live in this way, away from human society, surrounded only by animals, you don't just experience your own individuality more intensely, you certainly do that - but you also experience yourself as a human being, as a distinct form of life,, You perhaps experience more intensively your distinctively human qualities and characteristics. You realize that you've got a lot in common with the animals, but on the other hand there are certain things that you don't have in common with them - you can't talk to them. You can't exchange your ideas. Maybe you can tame them, and maybe you can feed them and maybe they'll come and they'll take bread and all the rest of it, but you can't really communicate at a deeper level. You can't communicate with them in the way that you can communicate with a human being - however tame, however 'friendly' they may become. So, "Foreswearing the bustle of this world, joyfully I stay in no-man's land". Also of course, it's land that doesn't belong to anybody. In modern times, it's very difficult to find land that doesn't belong

to anybody. In fact, I think it's impossible, because all these states, the national states, have extended their boundaries so that they are completely contiguous. There's no land in-between which doesn't belong to anybody, over which no state exercises sovereignty. There is no such land anymore. There was still some at the end of the last century - maybe even the beginning of this century, but there isn't any anymore. So you can't get away from human society now. You can't get away from laws, you can't get away from the juris-

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diction of a particular government. Formerly you could. You could go off into the wilderness, which wasn't part of any country, any state, and you could just live there, a law unto

yourself. You can't do that now. So here was Milarepa living in this no-man's land with only the animals, - no human society, no administration, no magistrate, no police. It's very difficult for us to imagine that sort of state. A state of perfect freedom, - very few people could live in that sort of way, but Milarepa could. So he says, "Since I have left embittered family life, I no longer have to earn and save." Why does he speak of family life as embittered? What do you think that means? Why is it embittered?

Vimalamitra: Because you're dependent on each other.

S.: But how does that lead to 'being embittered'?

Gerry: Hate binds you together. You're kept together by hate.

S.: Not necessarily surely?

Gerry: Well, there's a saying that 'you choose your friends; you don't choose your family'.

S.: But what does 'embittered' mean?

Voice: It's some sort of resentment..

Robin: The lack of freedom produces the feeling of bitterness because you can't avoid being aware that your family is limiting your freedom.

Voice: Or that there's no real joy.

S.: No real joy.

Jyotipal-a: It's as though you're in a situation that you don't like which you can't do anything about.

S.: Ah, yes!

Jyotipala: ~ That's why it's embittered, it's just circumstances.

S.: But if you say of someone that they're very bitter, well, what do you usually mean? 'Embittered' means made bitter, or with an element of bitterness in it, but what do you mean when you say a person is a bitter kind of person?

Vimalamitra: They've done something that they regret.

S.: They've done something that they regret, or something has been done to them. They can't do anything about it or they think they can't do anything about it. I mean, most people regard family life as inevitable, don't they? There's no alternative, so you, even, if you don't like it, well, you've got to lump it. That can lead to a sort of embittered attitude. They can't think that there is any other way of living. It's like the man who says, "How can I possibly leave, - how can I possibly give up my family? Who will mend my socks?" Well, one hears that sort of thing - not in the 'Friends, of course, but one hears that sort of point of view.' You don't

particularly enjoy the family life but you feel that you need those sort of services.

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Robin: Surely, it's much more difficult, when it's a feeling the other way round and the bitterness springs from someone feeling that they want to leave the family life but who would look after the children? So there's a genuine concern about el

S.: Yes, right. So, in that case, there's ~conflict. But when there is that sort of conflict, what should one do? It's easy to take decisions when there are no conflicts, but when there is a conflict, well what should one do=

Robin: I think that one should face up to any real conflict that there is and work within that situation.

S.: But then what does one mean by 'real' conflict?

Robin: Well, to analyze it to make sure it is genuine - that you're genuinely looking at the real alternatives - was what I was trying to say.

Vimalamitra: And maybe seeing what the priority is, the real priority.

Voice: You may have to just jump and do something.

S.: I think in this sort of situation, what you must avoid at all costs is the feeling that you're forced or trapped in the situation against your will. The feeling of helplessness or unwillingness. Because I think this will definitely lead to resentment and bitterness. This is why, is one is in this sort of situation in any respect, not only the family situation, but any

other situation of this -type, then one must assess what is the conflict. Then one must, if there is an actual conflict, then decide what weight one is going to give to - well, 'first of all, if one is going to end the conflict just by walking out of the situation, whatever it is - if one thinks that would be the best thing to do - or if one is not, what weight so to speak, one is going to give to the different interests that are producing the conflict of the incompatibility between which is producing the conflict. But having made that decision, well, give so much 'of time and energy to 't'hat and so much of time and energy to tha~ but not feel- it as a conflict, because you've taken the decision that hat is what you are going to do. Otherwise you'll just start feeling more and more resentful and embittered and then the whole thing will blow apart in the end in a negative way rather than in a positive way.

Gerald: It's almost as if, 'if you take the initiative, you can't really feel embittered can you? Can't really feel re- sentful?

S.: Well, you feel resentful only if you feel that you're being imposed upon - that you're trapped, that you're in a situation you can't get out of. So I think therefore, the very first thing that one has to do is to say "Well, I'm here of my own choice; I'm in this situation of my own choice." "There's no law keeping me in it. I'm not being kept by any physical compulsion. If I'm in this situation, I am in it because I want to be. So alright, do I wish to continue in this situation or not? I'm quite free to walk out, even if I've got a wife and children, I'm quite free to walk out.

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They're not going to starve. The state is going to look after them, so I can do it if I want to. If I feel such a tremendous spiritual pressure, I can walk out, tomorrow. Nothing's going to happen to them. They're not going to starve as they might, say, in India. After all, this is Britain and we still have a welfare state." So then having cleared that in one's own mind, "well I can leave if I want to", then think, "well is it the most skilful thing for one to do, on balance?" So then you decide, "well, no it isn't. So alright, that's my decision, so I'm not under any pressure, so there's no need for any resentment. I'm doing what I Want to do. I'm giving so much time and energy to my family, so much time and energy to other things. This is ~ choice.' I'm not being pressured into it"; so of course, one has to sort out before one can arrive at that state of mind, or that sort of decision, any feelings of guilt - irrational guilt imposed by the group. One must be free from those, because that is part of pressure; if one is feeling, you know, if one is made to feel guilty on account of doing this or that, well one is still not free. So one must convince oneself that, yes, one is free. Which means being free from even those subtle pressures, and then ~decide so that what you are doing is the result of free choice, of free decision. If that is the case, you cannot feel embittered. You cannot feel resentful. So family life is 'embittered',- as Milarepa describes it, in the sense that people are in it, won't really fact up to the situation - feel that they're just victims of circumstances and just become resentful. Actually we're very often much more free than we think.

Gerald: Why do you say that?

S.: Well, very often what makes us think that we're not free, it's, well, feelings such as those

of guilt - the guilt being induced in us by other people, their views about the situation; not the actual situation itself. I mean, for instance, in this particular case have the view: 'A husband ought always to stay with his wife. A husband who doesn't stay with his wife is just a rotter!' This is the view of some people. So if you mention that you might be thinking of leaving your wife, not to speak of your children, well, people turn on you and say: "How mean! How selfish! How despicable! What a rotter you must be! What a cad! So you're made to feel guilty! So that feeling of guilt inhibits you from being free and from feeling free. But this is not appropriate to the actual situation. This is something induced in you by other people. So you're more free than you think you are in the sense that you think -that if you did this or did that, well, you'd be a despicable sort of person, whereas, that is not in fact the case. You're just giving way to other people's prejudices. Alright, supposing for the sake of argument, that, yes, it would be a despicable act. Well, thrash it out with them. If they convince you, well, if you're convinced, it would be a despicable thing to do, well, you shouldn't do it with conviction. "Well, I stay where I am, because that's the right thing to do!" But not because you're feeling pressure all the time.

Vimalamitra: - But isn't the point that you've still got the choice to do that despicable act, if you want to.

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S.: Yes, yes. The essential thing is that you must, as it were, create for yourself, a point of freedom, from which you act, without being under any sort of pressure. The pressure being always irrational. If somebody convinces you, rationally, that is not pressure. You must be open to conviction. When I say, convinced, I mean genuinely convinces you by discussing with you in a reasonable manner. Not just sort of blinding you with science, or overwhelming you or trying to overwhelm you with plausible arguments. That is a different kind of thing, that is a form of pressure.

Vimalamitra: You mean communicate?

S.: Really communicate with you! Yes. You must not allow yourself to be in a situation where you are under pressure; where you are passive. I was saying in the other study retreat, - we went into this quite a bit - that passivity is the complete antithesis of spiritual life. The spiritual life is essentially active. I'm distinguishing of course, passivity from receptivity. I think we tend to think of receptivity as a passive thing - it would be better if we thought of receptivity as an active state. But what you must not be in the spiritual life is passive! Because if you're passive, you will feel resentful - you'll feel that you're the victim of circumstances, - you'll feel that you are helpless and powerless and all the rest of it. So the first thing that you have to do in any of these situations especially, is to re-establish the fact that you are active. The initiative is with you. The onus is with you. And then do what you think is best. For instance, it's not a good thing even to be pressured by your spiritual friends, in a certain direction. If they try to pressure you even in a direction which is good, they're not really acting as spiritual friends. They must first of all help you to create a sort of 'point of freedom' as I've called it, from which you can act, without any sort of pressure in any direction. -Because only that is a spiritual procedure. If you take 'an~y step as a

result of pressure from anybody, it's not a spiritual step, it can't be, because it isn't active. You haven't taken the initiative. So, you know, family life is embittered~when you stay in it against your will. Perhaps you ought to stay in it, but if you stay in it, you must stay in it because you want to. Perhaps you ought not to stay in it, but if you choose not to stay in it, it's because you don't want to and you've decided that is the best thing. But what you mustn't do is to stay in it, or in any situation passively, just as a result of external pressure of any kind.

Gerald: Do you think that it's essentially, for men, at least a passive step anyway, to embark upon family life? It seems to be a passive thing for men.

S.: Well, I think it usually is in 'our' society. Because it isn't a young man reaching say, the age of discretion, or wisdom, takes a purely objective decision in the light of his own best interests to get married. It's something that he usually regards as inevitable, and if you find yourself slipping into it, you find you've got involved with a woman - you're getting attached to her, she's getting attached to you and you've started talking about getting a place together. Maybe she's got pregnant. Well, then you feel that you're just being pushed into

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it, bit by bit. You don't feel that you have taken a decision. You find this very much in India where the system is different. But it functions in much the same way that all the marriages are arranged or most of them are still arranged - 99.9% probably, of marriages are arranged and they usually work out quite well, on that particular social level. But you find, if you talk to young men, - if you say, "Well look, do you want to get married?", they say, "Well, no I don't." "Well, why do you?" "Well, it's not up to me, - it's all arranged." So they think of marriage as a sort of natural disaster. It's something that just happens to you unavoidably. It's like a flood, or a famine or a fire - it's just something that happens to you. There's nothing you can do about it. You just can't escape. This is because the social structure is so strong, not to say rigid. So, in contrast to that, we like to think that we are free, that our marriages aren't arranged. We choose ourselves. We take our own decisions. But is it really the case!? For instance, you go along, maybe to a dance hall or to a disco. Your friends are going. Maybe you don't particularly want to go" but you go along and you get dancing with some girl. You're not really thinking about marriage, even if she is. But it tends in that direction. Before you know where you are, you're going down that slippery slope. It's not that you've taken a conscious decision that this is how you're going to spend the next 25 years of your life, or 50 years of your life. So can we really say that well, these unfortunate Indians - they have all their marriages arranged. They don't have any free choice but in 'our' case of course, it's all a result of our free choice. Can we really say that? In our case the conditioning is much more subtle and you might say, it's not so obvious and also it's more random. The Indian system works better actually in my opinion, because the elders - they do think about the whole matter much more seriously and objectively. And they try to match people in an intelligent sort of way. But here it's much more random and therefore, I think much less likely to be successful.

Surata: I thought Indian marriages were arranged on economic grounds?

S.: Well that factor is also taken into consideration. Usually they try to pair off boys and

girls with comparable backgrounds or the same caste backgrounds, the same social background, religious background, economic background. So that there isn't a feeling of tension. So that the wife can never say, "My father's much richer than yours." Or the husband think, "Oh, she's only from a poor family." You see what I mean? They try to ensure a sort of parity between husband and wife, because if the family of one sort of, is more important than the family of the other, to a great extent, well, it will produce tensions between husband and wife and this is what they want to minimize. Or if she's from a very poor family and brings only a small dowry, well, he might say one day, "Well, if I'd only had more money, if you'd brought a bigger dowry, I'd be better off now and more successful in my business." - and that could lead to friction. So they avoid all these sort of things. But I think this feeling of helplessness and powerlessness is one of the factors that breeds great resentments and hostility. I think we find it in society. We find it today, especially - well, in this country to some extent - find it in America, among people, especially young people, who feel they've no choice. They've no voice in their fate.

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It may not really be like that, but that's how it seems to them, that they are in a purely passive position of having things done to them or things happen to them. But they've no freedom and then this finds it - their sense of frustration finds its outlet in violence. The only action that they can take is a negative action. So in a reasonably healthy human being, you'd rather be active in a negative way than not active at all. If you're not allowed to create - alright, you'll destroy, or at least you'll break a few windows. So I think it's very dangerous from a broader social point of view, to leave too many people in a situation, or in a state where they feel, whether rightly or wrongly, that their role is a purely passive one - where they feel that they're just victims - victims of the system or whatever, because there is bound to be a negative reaction from them. So you know yourselves, that you're most miserable when you feel there's nothing you can do about it and you feel most angry then. So, as far as possible, you shouldn't allow yourself to be in that state, because if you are, after a while, whether it's the family or any other situation, you'll start feeling embittered. If you're working in a co-op and you're feeling that more and more is being put on you - no-one asks you. They just give you more work to do. You can't say "No" - you'll just end up feeling embittered, even though you may agree with the broad general framework. So at every stage, you must tell yourself, "No, I'm quite free. I can walk out! I can walk out of my family, - I can walk out of my home; I can walk out of the co-op; I can walk out of the FWBO, if I wanted to. I'm quite free to do that. There's nothing to stop me. So if I stay, I'm staying wherever it is of my own free will! So there's no room for disgruntlement and resentment and bitterness or anything of that sort. If a situation is such that objectively, even physically you are not free, then you have to come to terms with that, in a realistic way. For instance, if you're imprisoned, you may be imprisoned unjustly - maybe there's nothing you can do about it. You must be very careful then that you don't just give way to resentment, because that would just make things worse. You might have been framed for instance. Well, there's nothing you can do about it. Then you're just in prison. You've

been deprived of your physical freedom, so you just have to be very careful that it doesn't affect your mental state as well. So you could even generalize and say, -well, family life is embittered only to the extent that you're in it against your will. So either stay in it because you want to or don't stay in it because you don't want to, but not stay in it against your will. That is a recipe for trouble all round for everybody. Anyway, perhaps that's enough of embittered life with the family or otherwise. Anyway he says: "Since I have left embittered family life, I no longer have to earn and"sa~e." Well, the reason for that is obvious, isn't it?

"Since I want no books, I do not intend to be a learned man This is a little knock, so to speak, at Rechungpa, isn't it?

Voice: It also brings up, how much do you need to survive?

S.: Yes. Well, if one isn't careful, reading books can be just a "fondness for diversion". You may just be looking for diversion. Maybe a more refined or sophisticated form of diversion, but still a diversion. So how much does one really need?

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One can look at it of course in another way. Most people have got very busy little brains - their brains are always ticking away, so it's very difficult to stop them. Just as, in connection with meditation, if we've got a very active mind, we don't just try to stop it like that, we give it something positive to occupy itself with. For instance, we give it a Mantra. So at least the mind is occupied with one thing and that one thing of a positive nature and that helps it to concentrate. So if your mind is very busy and active, well, it's better that it should be busy and active with books about the Dharma which after all do essentially deal with the same thing over and over again, in different forms, from different points of view. But of course, one mustn't ever become lost in that for its own sake. It's not enough just to be a learned man. I mean one must read the books just to remind oneself again and again about the Dharma. So Milarepa is not in need of books. After all, he's realized the Truth. You know, a learned man is a man who's acquainted with books, but Milarepa knows from personal experience the very things that the books are talking about. So what need has he to be a learned man. He's therefore, no intention of being any such thing. I think I've said in the past that it's not a bad thing, especially if one is by nature or temperament a voracious reader, just to go over a limited number of books again and again and know them and learn them thoroughly, rather than dip into something new again and again. Because most Buddhist books take a lot of understanding. Then Milarepa says, "I practise virtuous deeds, I feel no shame of heart". What does 'shame of heart' usually mean?

Gerry: When you feel you should do something, but you don't.

S.: 'Shame of heart' - I'm not sure how literal this translation is, but taking it quite literally, what do you think 'shame of heart' means?

Vimaia mitra:~ When you go against your heart.

S.:~ You go against your heart. You don't feel shame because you've not lived up to somebody else's expectations. What your own heart, so to speak, tell~you - that you've done wrong; that you've fallen short of your own ideal. You've not lived up to the best that is in

you. You've not done the best that you could and you're feeling ashamed - not because of what anybody else thinks, but because of what you yourself genuinely feel about yourself.

Gerry: The reason I said that - because quite a few people do virtuous deeds, or seemingly virtuous deeds, seemingly altruistic deeds, because of their own shame.

S.: You mean in the sense of guilt?

Gerry: Yes.

S.: I don't know how strictly the word 'shame' is used here. 'Shame' usually has a social orientation doesn't it? I mean sociologists talk of 'shame cultures' and 'guilt cultures'. I think, here the term is used in a quite general sense. So if you feel no 'shame of heart', it suggests that you're

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integrated. ~ There's no conflict, or no great conflict between

what you're convinced you should do and what you actually do. Then Milarepa says. "Since I have no pride or vanity, I renounce with joy the saliva-splashing debate!" Again this seems to be a bit of a hit at Rechungpa, because one of the reasons why he went off to India, on this journey or some other, was to become a master of debate - to learn logic so that he could defeat other people in debate. So therefore, Milarepa says: "Since I have no pride or vanity, I renounce with joy the saliva-splashing debate!" He's saying that this sort of debate even though it's ostensibly religious is really just competitive. It's a clash of egos, due to 'pride or vanity'. Sometimes we make a distinction between discussion and argument. What do you think that distinction is and of what does it consist?

Surata: Well, with discussion you're actually communicating with people, whereas with argument, you're just trying to hit them over the head....

S.: Yes. You're just insisting on your point of view, regardless of what the other person says. You're just trying to win. You're trying to defeat the other person, even do the other person down. (Pause) You notice he says, "I renounce with joy the saliva-splashing debate!" He's very happy not to have anything to do with these sort of encounters. (Pause)

"Hypocrisy I have not, nor pretension. Happy and natural I live, without forethought or adjustment." What is hypocrisy exactly?

Vimalamitra: Pretending to be other than you are.

S.: Yes. It is pretending to be other than you are, but not just that. Usually it's pretending to be other than you are so that you may secure approval or praise that you're not really entitled to. But why do people indulge in hypocrisy? Is it ever justified?

Robin: It may be justified in material terms, in that people may actually derive some

material benefit from it. I wouldn't have thought it could ever secure any spiritual advancement.

S.: Suppose for instance, you're living in a society where certain quite unreasonable demands are made upon the individual and suppose that if you did not comply with those demands, then you would be subject to severe penalties. Well, perhaps you would have to pretend to comply with those demands; to pretend to be other than you are. Suppose for instance, you were in a Communist state, or at least a totalitarian Communist state and supposing that if you did not declare your support of the system, well, you're just whisked off to jail, aren't you obliged to be, in a measure, a hypocrite?

(End of Side A)

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Jyotipala: ... you're still safe, you still say "yes"

S.: You're evading the showdown.

Jyotipala: Yes, you wouldn't admit that in the end. You get that in the lives of the 84 Siddhis, who during the daytime, they

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had to pretend to be Hindus and Brahmins and practise at night-time. But when they found out, they said "Oh yes, that's it."

If you're going to kill me or whatever it is, or throw me out, that's fine. I'm sticking to the Dharma."

Voice: What did you say a hypocrite was? He was somebody pretending to be other than what you are.

S.: Yes, not only other than what you were, but better, or at least better in the eyes of society, than what you were. It might actually be something worse, but pretending to be something that in the eyes of society is better for the sake of some gain or advantage, which could be even. ... Again advantage could be simply people's esteem or respect.

Gerry: Is there a difference between doing it with awareness and just doing it?

S.: Well, what I'm really asking is whether your motives are necessarily for being hypocritical, under these sort of circumstances - are necessarily unskillful? Usually hypocrisy is reckoned a vice, but is there such a thing as a hypocrisy which is not a vice - which is in fact, skillful?

Surata: I would have thought in the case you mention, it wouldn't be hypocrisy - not as I know it, anyway. Hypocrisy to me is something negative.

Robin: The case that you're talking about is maybe more like hiding yourself, concealing yourself, keeping a low profile, keeping out of the way. In the same way that if you were in a jungle, you might sleep in a tree to stay away from the wild animals. But you're not doing it to secure something that you don't actually deserve.

S.: No. It's a self-protective measure. It's as though hypocrisy, real hypocrisy, involves going out of your way, so to speak, to appear -better than you are, when you don't really need to do that. Because you just have an inordinate desire - even a craving - for esteem from other people that you don't really deserve. You accept their values but you don't live up to them. But you don't want to forfeit their respect, so you pretend to live up to them. And a hypocrite you could say, is one who shares the same system of values as the people he is trying to deceive. Whereas in the so-called 'exception', you wouldn't be sharing the same system of values.

Surata: Does the word hypocrite come from someone? Hippocrates?

S.: I don't think so. I don't know what the etymology of it is. I don't think it's a particular person. (Pause) So Milarepa is completely open. And he then says: "Happy and natural I live without forethought or adjustment." Is it really possible to live without forethought? Or what does he mean by 'living without forethought or adjustment'?

Vimalamitra: Well, living in the present.

S.: But can you live without forethought? I mean, are you going to eat tomorrow? What about those bills that come in?

YH 2 12 3L~ Gerald: Doesn't he mean more scheming, in a sense?

S.: Presumably, it means a sort of neurotic pre-occupation with what is going to happen in the future. If you simply have a certain amount of money and you say, "Well, I'll spend some today and the rest I'll spend tomorrow", and put it aside, well that is not really being with forethought, in Milarepa's sense. But if you're always anxious, always worrying and at the age of 20 you're planning your retirement pension at 65, well, that is really a bit too much, especially if you get really worried about it. And some people have a sort of neurotic need to know what is going to happen. They really like planning their lives. You see ads about this young men who are encouraged to plan their whole careers from when they leave school or college or university, right up to the age of retirement. They're not encouraged to plan anything after that. Maybe the insurance will look after the funeral expenses and so that's all that's really needed. But there's a sort of graph - that at the age of 20, you'll be this, at 25 you'll have got so far, at 30 so far, at 35 and then right up if possible to managing director at 45 or 50. It's all planned and plotted all the way through. I don't know to what extent this is realistic or to what extent it's neurotic, but certainly some people do exercise forethought in a quite unreasonable manner, to a degree which one could describe as neurotic. They want to know everything in advance so that they can be prepared for it. They can be sure of what is going to happen. This is just a great feeling of insecurity. I gave the example

once, - it was a real example from real life. Someone asked "Well, how 'do I get from here down to London?" So I said, "Well you just catch the train from Norwich". "Well, how do I get to the station?" "Alright, you get a bus." "When does the bus come?" I said, "I'll give you the bus times." "Well, how can I be sure that I won't miss it?" "Well, just get there 5 minutes early." 11 But supposing the bus happens to stop up the road and the driver doesn't see me? What shall I do then? What is the colour of the bus? Is it a red one, or a green one?" Because they want to be so sure of not missing it. "Supposing there's a breakdown that day, and it doesn't come? What can we do then?" It's forethought in this sort of way, more that Mila- repa is getting at, I think, It's really neurotic. Some people like to have their lives planned out~ in this sort of way to know exactly what is going to happen, from year to year, e.~en and be deeply disturbed when anything happened to disrupt their arrangements. So 'without forethought or adjustment' - what do you think adjustment means? I think it would be something like compromise - adjusting to other people's attitudes and views, but unreasonably, at the sacrifice of your own genuine con- victions. (Long Pause) Then, "Since I want not fame nor glory, rumours and accusations disappear." It's sometimes said that reputation is one of the last attachments to be given up. Fame, glory, reputation, a good name, etc. etc. But supposing rumours and accusations do appear? What is very often one's reaction? You want to expose the rumours or you want to defeat the accusations, and establish or re-establish your fame or glory or good name. But very often, the more you try to do that, the more other people may try to do the other thing. In that way, the whole situation becomes worse. So Milarepa says, the thing to do is just not to bother about fame or glory or reputation and then there's nothing

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for anybody to fight about. The rumours and accusations dis- appear. Supposing, they do say, "Well, Milarepa's not a real yogi!!" Well, Milarepa's not going to bother saying: "Yes, I am a real yogi!!" He just doesn't say anything. He just keeps quiet. So people after a while, they get tired of saying Milarepa's not a real yogi, so they start talking about some- thing else. But if he was to say, "Yes, he is a real yogi!!" and he was to bring forward several people to bear witness to the fact, well, then the other pedple could bring forward other people to bear witness to the fact that he wasn't a real yogi. Then someone could write a book about it, that one reckoned he was a real yogi; the other that he wasn't a real yogi and in this way, it could go on for years! So that - it only goes on in that way if you really care about being thought a good yogi and are bothered when people say that you are not and try to maintain your position, so to speak, as a good yogi. If you don't bother, well, after a while, the whole thing just collapses - there's nothing for anybody to fight against.

Gerry: There's also an element of self-persuasion in that.

S.: In what sense?

,#Gerr: Someone says, "You're not a real yogi" and he says, Yes I am, yes I am!" - trying to

persuade yourself -

S.: Yes, you may not be completely convinced. If you are completely convinced, you tend not to bother so much what other people think. It's enough that you know within your own mind. You might think that it's rather unfair or unfortunate that people don't see you as you really are, but you don't feel any great desire to prove to theTh what you're really like. You're just sorry that there's been a failure of communication. "Where'er I go, I feel happy Whate'er I we'ar, I feel joyful, Whatever food I eat, I am satisfied. I am always happy. Through Marpa' S grace, I, your old father Milarepa, Have realized Samsara and Nirvana. The Yoga of Joy ever fills my hermitage." What do you think this means? - to 'realize Samsara and Nirvana'?

Surata~::~ ~ Is that sort of, they're not two distinct things.

S.: They're not two distinct things. He's realized their non-duality. He no longer sees things in terms of pairs of opposites. So, "the Yoga of Joy fills my Hermitage". So Rech-ungpa has asked him how he is, and this is what he says! Would someone like to read that next section of the same song:

Your Repa brothers are well; Did you secure the teachings that you wanted? On hills remote they make progress in their Did you obtain all the various instructions? meditations.

' Have you gained much knowledge and much learning? Oh, my son Rechung Dorie Draugpa, Have you noticed your pride and egotism? Have you returned from India? Are you altruistic in your thoughts and~ actions? Did you feel tired and weary on the journey?

This is my song of welcoming for~ou, Has your mind been sharpened and refreshed?

On your return. Has your voice been good for singing? Did you practice and follow your Guru's instructions?

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S.: ~ Well, Rechungpa might not think it much of a song of welcome! But 'your Repa brothers are well1 - What is a Repa?

Surata: Is it someone who just wears worn cloth?

S.: Yes. 'Re' is cotton cloth, 'Pa' means a person or man, so "Repa' is a Kagyupa yogi, espec'ially who is wearing a single cotton garment as a sign that he' has mastered the inner psychic heat and doesn't need any protection from the cold.

Jyotipala: Do they still do that today?

S.: They still do that. I have met Kagyupa yogis but they generally nowadays wear ordinary monastic dress with a white cotton garment over that. I've~ never actually seen one going around just in the cotton dress.

Surata: Would that suggest that it's become ecclesiastical rather than natural?

S.: It would suggest that, yes, though I am sure there are still some people who practise

this certainly and not only among the Kagyupas but from all different traditions. But for the Kagypa Order as a whole, it has become as you say, a bit ecclesiastical. So, "Your Repa brothers are well, On hills remote they make progress in their meditations." Another little reminder to Rechu'ngpa, because he, against Mila- repa's advice, went off to India, neglecting his meditation. "Oh, my son Rechung Dorje Draugpa, have you returned from India? Did you feel tired and weary on the' journey? Has your mind been sharpened and refreshed?" What is the significance of these terms? - the mind being 'sharpened and refreshed'?

Jyotipala: Because he's gone to study logic, he certainly hopes...

S.: And refreshed? What is it that refreshes the mind?

Robin: Something new?

S.: Something new.

Voice: A stimulus

S.: I would have thought that was connected more with sharpening. I would have thought that the mind was refreshed more by meditation, don't you think? Immersion in positive mental states. Anyway, this is what he says: "Has your mind been sharpened and refreshed? Has your voice been good for singing?" Why do you think he asks that? What does the singing represent?

Gerry: Other than just purely intellectual...

Voice: Emotion

S.: It's communication. Don't forget they communicate in these songs. So this suggests freedom of communication, also inspiration. That he hasn't just been studying Buddhist philosophy and logic but that he also kept in contact with the sources of inspiration and has spoken out from those - has sung from those -

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has communicated it. Not just debated and argued. So, "Has your voice been good for singing? Did you practise and follow your Guru's instructions?" Well, he's coming a bit nearer to the bone now. Or was it that you were so immersed in your Buddhist philosophy and science, that you forgot all about the instructions of the Guru? "Did you secure the teachings you wanted?" He went there to secure certain teachings, went to India to secure certain teachings, among them of~course, the - as we learn from another chapter in another study, the Dakini Dharmas that Milarepa himself had not been able to obtain when, from Marpa because Marpa had not obtained them himself when he went to India. Have you gained much knowledge and much learning? Have you noticed your pride and egotism?" Now we come to the real crux. What he's really wanting to say to Rechungpa. "Are you altruistic in your thoughts and actions? This is my song of welcoming for you, on your

return."

So you notice there's a complete antithesis between pride and egotism on the one hand and altruism in thought and action on the other. It's as though, if Rechungpa had really been inspired by the Bodhisattva Ideal, which is the most altruistic ideal imaginable, then he wouldn't have been so dominated by pride and egotism. It's not just a question of getting rid of pride and egotism, but of developing the Bodhicitta - taking the 'Bodhisattva Ideal seriously.

Surata: Would there have been the Bodhisattva Ideal in those days?

S.: Well, yes, certainly, because that is the Ideal or that is included in the Mahayana teaching, and though Milarepa follows more the Vajrayana teaching in a sense, the Mahayana teaching certainly the essence of the Bodhicitta contained in the Vajrayana. You can't really enter upon the Vajrayana unless the Bodhicitta has arisen - unless one is taking the Bodhisattva Ideal very seriously indeed. That is the foundation. It is in fact one of the four Mula-Yogas, isn't it? - The generation of the Bodhicitta. So, Milarepa's perhaps saying, well there's nothing wrong in learning Buddhist philosophy. There's nothing wrong in learning logic, but the question is, with what intention are you learning it? What is your motive? If it is simply to help you spreading the Dharma for the benefit of all living beings, - if it's an expression of your Bodhicitta, well, there's nothing wrong in it. But if it is simply for your own self-glorification, so that you can defeat others in argument in an egoistic way, then it's entirely unskillful. Some of the Mahayana texts do say that the Bodhisattva should equip himself with the knowledge of all the arts and the sciences, because that knowledge will help him to communicate the Dharma to a greater number of living beings. So there's nothing wrong in learning these subjects. The point is that with what motive does one learn, and what use does one make of that knowledge afterwards. So this is the welcome that Rechungpa has got, and perhaps it wasn't really what he was expecting. Perhaps he was expecting a really big welcome from Milarepa - not to speak of the obeisance which he hoped he would return.

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But we often find that this is the sort of thing that happens. We have these false expectations, but they're disappointed. But that's probably quite good for us, especially if we're being disappointed by someone like Milarepa who really has the situation well in hand, so to speak. (Chuckles)

Robin: One gets the feeling of a tremendous and genuine concern however, on the part of Milarepa.

S.: Oh yes, indeed!

Robin: I mean, comparing this passage with the welcome that Milarepa gives given by Rechungpa, there seems to be a big difference there.

S.: Yes. Milarepa is not reacting at all. He doesn't change in any way. He's still concerned about Rechungpa's welfare. (Pause) So Milarepa also says: "Have you

noticed your pride and egotism?" What does this suggest?

Voice: He's unaware of himself.

S.: He's unaware of himself, but, also, pride and egotism are such big things in a way, that you can have them and yet not notice that you have them; not realize that you have them. They may be obvious to everybody else but they're not obvious to you.-- But you could say that the bigger they are, the less obvious to you they are! That is their nature. "Me!?! I'm not egoistic. I'm the least egoistic person. I just appreciate myself at my true value. Other people don't appreciate me. I'm not egoistic!" And very often this is people's attitude. "I'm not proud!"

Gerry: Then what is the difference between egoistic and self- confident?

S.: And self-confident? Well, what is the difference?

Gerry: One seems to me to be a true assertion of your own value.

S.: Is assertion quite the right word?

~: Assessment, rather.

S.: Self-confidence? Self-confidence suggests you don't need to know in advance. For instance, you might~ go off to a foreign country, maybe to give a lecture. But if you're self-confidence, you don't want to know everything in detail: what it's goin⁹ to be like; exactly what sort of people are going to come along, and what sort of hall it's going to be. You know you've got enough self-confidence to carry you through all that without actually know- ing in advance everything. This seems to be an essential charact- eristic of self-confidence. It's the ability to cope with the unknown, and the unforeseen, and the unexpected. It's also perhaps, the feeling that you are able to do this. Perhaps that doesn't explain very much though -- that you've got this confidence to rise to the occasion. You feel that you are bigger than the occasion. But you don't think of it in competitive terms, in comparison with other people. It's more the occasion, the sit- uation, which may of course, include other people. But you feel that you are able to cope. You are able to deal with the situation. It's not going to be too much for you. But on the other hand, you don't go seeking out such situations. The egoistic person will often search out opportunities for be-ing- egoistic or asserting himself, or being overbearing and so on. The self-confident

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person will not do that. They just know that if a certain situation arises, they're quite capable of dealing with it. They don't even think too much whether they're capable of dealing with it or not!

Ratnaguna: Isn't it something to do with, not so much having an idea of yourself as you have in egotism, but in self-confidence, you just give of what's there.

S.: Hmm. But sometimes the egoistic person has not only an idea, but a strong feeling,

about himself, the feeling also goes along with the idea, with the concept of himself.

Voice: What would you say that feeling is?

S.: I think it's basically one of insecurity. Because the thought I7a false thought, a false idea of yourself.

Gerald: So what you were saying earlier -the converse would be true then - sort of planning too much for the future would indicate insecurity and la~k of (self-confidence).

S.: Yes, indeed. That you didn't feel able to cope with things as they arose, as they happened. You just have to have everything set out in detail beforehand so that you could know what to expect and make all the necessary preparations. You don't feel that you have the capacity to improvize* If you've self-confidence, you feel you're able to improvize, if necessary. For instance, even if you're sort of suddenly asked at five minutes notice to stand up and give a talk about Buddhists, well, you can do that. You improvize if necessary. Then you've got self-confidence with regard to your knowledge of the Dharma and your ability to give expression to that knowledge. (Pause) But if people want to know too much in advance in too great detail, I think that is always a sign of insecurity and lack of self-confidence. Of course, there is the opposite - there is over-confidence. "Oh! Don't bother about that! Oh, we'll cope with that when it comes along!" But that may not always be justified. That is going to the other extreme. It's like when you're asked to give a talk and you're given maybe plenty of notice, but you don't bother to pre- pare. So maybe your talk~isn't as good as it could have been. You manage. You give a talk, but you could have done better if you hadn't been so over-confident and if you had prepared more. Anyway, that's the end of the song, so let's leave it there for this morning and tomorrow afternoon we shall be seeing what Rechungpa has to say in reply. He'll put up a good defense!

(End of Tape 2)

YH 3 1

S.: Right you are then! Rechungpa's song in reply to what Milarepa has been saying. Would someone like to read that first part:

In reply, Rechungpa sang:

Obeying my Guru, I went to India. My journey was hazardous and full of fear, I underwent great pain and toil - But the trip was well worthwhile. I saw Dipupa,,the great Tantric Master, And met Magi, the great Yogini. Also I saw the wondrous Patron ISuddha And witnessed fulfillment 'of the Dakinis' prophecy. I have unmistakably attained The longed-for Pith-Instructions - Those of the Illuminating Wisdom Lamp, The Wheel Net of Prana and the NidIs, The Universal Mirror of E~quality, The Lantern of the Great Bliss Injunctions, The True Words on the Mirror of Self-Mind, The Supreme Form of the Sunlike Realization, And the

S.: If we look back at other chapters - we have been studying those other chapters on other occasions - we find that it wasn't exactly in obedience to his Guru that Rechungpa went to India. He starts off by saying, "Obeying my Guru, I went to India". But it wasn't quite like that. What actually happened was that Rech- ungpa very much wanted to learn about debate and logic so that he could defeat the logicians in argument. And Milarepa strongly advised against Rechujgpa going to India but Rechungpa actually in- sisted, so since he insisted, Milarepa said, "Alright. If you insist on going to India, then go. But don't go just to learn the science of logic. Go to learn and bring back certain teachings of the Dakinis which my teacher Marpa, was not able to obtain when he was there." So on that condition, rather reluctantly, he allowed Rech- ungpa to go to India. But here we have Rechungpa saying, "Obeying my Guru, I went to India". He is making quite a virtue of it. As though he went to India in response to a direct order by Milarepa. So what do you think is happening here? What:'~s Rechungpa doing? What sort of little game is he playing?

Andy: He's justifying his own sort of behaviour.

S.: He's justifying his own behaviour. He's trying to make out that he is a very good disciple. He went to India in obedience to the Guru, whereas the actual truth of the situation was that he requested permission from Milarepa with great difficulty. And even then, Milarepa only allowed him to go on certain conditions, which perhaps he has fulfilled, which perhaps he hasn't. So the fact that his song opens in this way, with what is virtually an untruth, it makes you suspicious about what comes afterwards. He says, " My journey was hazardous and full of fear" - that may well have been the case - "I underwent great pain and toil - but the trip was well worthwhile. I saw Dipupa, the great Tantric Master, and met Magi, the great Yogini. Also I saw the wondrous Patron Buddha and witnessed fulfillment of the Dakinis' prophesy. I have unmistakably attained the longed-for Pith instructions -

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Then he mentions those particular five Dharmas, five teachings of Dakinis which Marpa had not been able to obtain, not had time to obtain. Rechungpa has brought these teachings in book form. He may or he may not have mastered the contents but anyway, he's got the books! What sort of impression does this part of Rechungpa's song convey? What impression do you get from it?

Jyotipala: He's boasting a little bit.

S.: He's boasting a little bit, the way he talks about it.: "I say Dipupa the great Tantric Master(!) I met Ma~gi, the great Yogini!" He's been really doing around trip of Buddhist India; seeing all these great Masters and Teachers and Yogis, having all sorts of wonderful experiences. It seems a bit like some of the people who go off to India nowadays from the West and make the rounds. Sometimes, of course, you don't even have to go off to India, India comes to you. You can go down to London or along to a hall and see at least, from a distance, all these spiritual figures. And he also says, "I have unmistakably attained the longed-for Pith instructions - " perhaps he feels he has unmistakably attained them because here he's got the books in his hand! So yes, he does seem to be boasting a little. Anyway, see

what he says in the next verse:

I drank Nectar - the Essence of Immortality, I received teaching on the Bardo, The Pith-Instructions on Dhyana practice, On the Five Gems and Symbols Three. I was told how to practice the Six Yogas, And how to win what I wanted in the world. The Mothers and Dakinis gathered for me All these wonderful instructions.

The Deities and Gurus were all well pleased, And my mind united well with theirs. Like a rain of flowers, Accomplishments fell upon me.

Heavenly food was fed into my mouth, The Pith-Instructions were put into my hand.

In farewell, the Deities wished me good luck. My desires were met and success was won. Like the rising sun My heart is bright with joy. Now I am back, my Jetsun Guru! Now I give you the Dakinis' teachings! Please observe them, Praise and serve them - The holy Dharmas that have brought me my achievement.

S.: So what do you think of this? What's the impression you get from this part of the song?

Surata: Now he's trying to come across as the teacher.

S.: Almost yes. because he says, to Milarepa when handing over the books: "Now I give you the Dakinis' teachings! Please observe them, praise and serve them - the holy Dharmas that have brought me my achievement." He's just a little bit patronizing!

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S.: Anyway, he begins with: "I drank Nectar - the Essence of Immortality, I received

teaching on the Bardo, the pith-instructions on Dhyana practice, on the Five Gems and Symbols Three. I was told how to practice the Six Yogas, and how to win what I wanted in the world. The Mothers and Dakinis gathered for me all these wonderful instructions. So it's as though he's been going from teacher to teacher, receiving this instruction, that instruction. But one feels that's not going very deeply into any one of these things. One does find this sort of practice even among modern Tibetans. They sort of go from one teacher to another teacher, sit in on all sorts of wonderful initiations instead of settling down to practice any of them - they just go on to somebody else and get another initiation. You might find some Westerners doing this sort of thing. Subuthi I think mentioned - made some reference to it in an article in the recent Newsletter. So it's as though Rechungpa had been doing something of that sort. Now one can imagine it was such a long difficult journey to India and then he finds himself there. He finds himself seeing famous teachers and Yogis and sitting in on initiations and receiving instructions, so he gets a bit carried away by it all. And now he's come back to Milarepa with these books of the Dakinis' Teachings and he's even being a bit patronizing towards Milarepa himself. And he's emphasizing how well he got on: "The Deities and Gurus were all well pleased, and my mind united well with theirs. Like a rain of flowers, accomplishments fell upon me. Heavenly food was fed into my mouth, the Pit-instructions were put into my hand." It's not such an easy thing to unite one's mind well, with the minds of Deities and Gurus but this in fact is what he's claiming.~ Perhaps he did have some spiritual experience, but clearly, at least in Milarepa's eyes, not nearly enough. So one often finds that people do get into things to some extent. They do have some experience, a quite genuine experience, but then they start, at it were, misusing their own experience. They start thinking too highly of themselves on account of their experience and instead of just carrying on steadily with their practice, they start sort of priding themselves on what they've already achieved, and making that the basis of all sorts of claims. In this way, they don't make any further progress. Perhaps they even start regressing.

Gerry: I think the line, "And how to win what I wanted in the world." - is quite important. He is still thinking in material terms.

S.: Yes, yes.

Jyotipala: What are - "The Mothers and Dakinis gathered for me all these wonderful instructions." What does that mean?

S.: Well, that can be taken in various ways. That the Mothers or the Matricas - a bit like Dakinis you could say. Dakinis are associated with the sky whereas the Mothers are associated with the Earth. They also represent forces of inspiration. One could think of those forces of inspiration as coming from above or coming from below. If one thinks of them as coming from above, they're Dakinis, - if one thinks of them as coming from below they are Mothers. - Matricas: Mothers with a capital "M". There is a tradition in the Vajrayana, that certain teachings of the Buddha, certain teachings of Padmasambhava, were~suitable for revelation to people or not suitable for communication to people at the time that the Buddha lived or at the time that Padmasambhava

lived. So there is Vajrayana tradition that these teachings were either written down or hidden away here or there or they were taught to non-humans like Nagas and Devas and Dakinis and they safe-guarded those teachings until such time as some human beings at least, were ready for them. So Rechungpa seems to be referring to that kind of thing: that the Mothers and Dakinis who had been entrusted with various teachings in the past by the Buddha himself or Great Spiritual Masters, gathered all these together for him and transmitted them to him in one form or another because he was fit to receive them. He was ready to receive them. So what he is really saying is that he is a very spiritually gifted person and that various teachings which had hitherto been held esoteric or had been kept secret were transmitted to him while he was in India. And no doubt in Buddhist circles at that time as in Tibet, even down to the present, various teachings come into circulation. They look like new teachings but then it is said these aren't really new. These are teachings which have been handed down for hundreds of years but which have been kept secret. They've only now just been made public. So it could well be that Rechungpa was in contact with people, with Buddhist circles that was sort of publishing these teachings which according to them at least, had been kept secret for many centuries and he felt very pleased that some of these teachings had been entrusted to him. And he could bring them back to Tibet in book form. It's quite possible for one to have this experience by going to India and meeting Tibetan Lamas. You might meet some Lamas who say, "Well, this teaching has not yet been written down. It came to me from my Guru who had it from his Guru. The Dakinis revealed it to him but it hasn't yet been written down. But anyway, I shall write it down for your benefit." This is quite a common sort of happening, as though there's a great reservoir of oral traditions even now, that is being constantly drawn from. It's not always easy to distinguish the authentic from the unauthentic. But again, one might say, if it works, if it does help you, well, take it as authentic. In principle it's authentic. In principle it goes back to the Buddha. In principle, it goes back to Padmasambhava.

Joti ala: I suppose he would have felt important if someone had said that to him, "You're hearing this for the first time."

S.: Yes. So you can see that Rechungpa is a sort of mixture as so many people are. There is good in him - there is genuine spiritual aspiration. But there is a sort of restlessness and impatience too. There is the pride of learning - there is a sense of self-importance. There is a genuine devotion to Milarepa, at the same time he is disobedient. He has in some ways, got great faith in Milarepa but on the other hand he doesn't always follow his instructions. So many people are like this. They're not either unambiguously good or unambiguously bad. They are a strange mixture and a strange combination of the two elements. But here we see Rechungpa rather carried away by his experiences and contacts and achievements in India and coming back to Tibet and meeting Milarepa just a little bit inflated. And you may remember that the thing that he was really concerned about, just before their meeting was how Milarepa would welcome him. Whether he would return his obeisance or not. And that in any case, tells quite a lot about Rechungpa. He may be quite puffed up on account of his various attainments and acquisitions in India, even though some of them might have been quite genuine. Alright, let's hear then what Milarepa has to say to all this.

Then Rechungpa gave the books [that he had acquired in India]4:~ to the Jetsun. In order to clear up Rechungpa's pride and arrogance, Milarepa sang:

Do not be proud and pompous, My little child, Rechungpa, Whom I have nurtured from your teens.

In a tuneful voice I sing for you A golden-rosary of song with meanings deep. Keep it in your mind, if you agree with it.

Goddesses cherish the Formless ~akin~i Dharmas, [But] he who strives to become too big Is liable to be slain by villains. The hoarded goods of wealthy men Provide enjoyment for their enemies; To indulge in luxury and pleasure Is the cause of poverty and death. He who does not know his limit And acts above his station, Is stupid as a fool. If an officer ill-treats his servants, He harms his country. If a servant respects not his master, He will lose his mind And bring misfortune on himself. If a Doctrine-holder cannot behave, He will destroy the Dharma. He who does not keep the Da~kin~is' teaching secret, Disturbs and offends them.

S.: Alright. Let's consider this a little. "Don't be proud and pompous, my little child, Rechungpa, whom I have nurtured from your teens." It's as though Milarepa brings Rechungpa right down to earth. He in a way attacks him directly. He says, "Do not be proud and pompous, my little child Rechungpa" - my spiritual child, my spiritual son. 'Don't give yourself airs and graces, so to speak, in front of me' - "Whom I have nurtured from your teens I mean, I have known you a long time. I know you very well. I know exactly where you're at. I know that all this learning that you have brought back from India doesn't amount to very much. So don't be proud and pompous. "In a tuneful voice I sing for you a golden rosary of song with meanings deep. Keep it in your mind, if you agree with it." So he's going to give Rechungpa some good advice - going to give it in the form of a song; a song with deep meanings. Since he says, "Keep it in your mind if you agree with it". It's as though he's still leaving Rechungpa complete freedom of choice and actually it's up to him to accept it or reject it. If he accepts it, alright! Let him bear it in mind. So, "Goddesses cherish the Formless Dakini Dharmas, but he who strives to become too big is liable to be slain by villains." What does Milarepa mean by this? What is the connection? "Goddesses cherish the Formless Dakini Dharmas".

Gerry: It seems very very important.

S.: That of course he is saying, yes. (pause) Well, there's a sort of antithesis between "Goddesses cherish the Formless Dakini

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Dharmas" and villains slaying someone who strives to become too big. Why do the Goddesses cherish the Formless Dakini Dharmas? Because there's something very good in them, something worth preserving, worth cherishing! But why do villains tend to slay "he who strives to become too big"? Because he's put himself in that sort of position. Because if you strive to become too big - if you act in an overbearing arrogant way, then that may bring you into collision with people who aren't very scrupulous. You may offend them and upset them and that may be the end of you. So you've got these two sort of different situations. Something like the Dakini Dharmas - something as valuable as the Dakini Dharmas, will be cherished by Goddesses, but someone who "strives to become too big is liable to be slain by villains". What that is positive, that attracts support - that which is negative tends to attract the opposite. So it's as though Milarepa is saying that if you really identify yourself with the Formless Dakini Dharmas, if you really practise them, if you realize their meaning, well, you will be cherished and protected. But if you simply try to become too big, then your very arrogance will lead to your being destroyed; even to your being killed. Milarepa is also pointing out a great discrepancy between the Formless Dakini Dharmas which Rechungpa thinks that he has achieved and Rechungpa's actual state of mind which is not at all in accordance with those Dharmas. He's got the books but that's about all apparently! So Goddesses will protect or cherish the Formless Dakini Dharmas, but villains are likely to fall upon someone as proud and arrogant as he is. So it's as though you can't have the fruits of the Formless Dakini Dharmas without actually realizing those Formless Dakini Dharmas. And Rechungpa should realize he hasn't realized those Formless Dakini Dharmas and therefore he is unlikely to experience their fruits. Then he goes on: "The hoarded goods of wealthy men provide enjoyment for their enemies; To indulge in luxury and pleasure is the cause of poverty and death." Well this is almost worldly wisdom. "The hoarded goods of wealthy men provide enjoyment for their enemies". You can't take it with you. What you've cherished all your life may be divided among people who are quite inimical to you. And then "To indulge in luxury and pleasure is the cause of poverty and death." Well that's obvious enough. So he goes on to say: He who does not know his limit and acts above his station, is stupid as a fool." What do you think Milarepa means by 'knowing one's limits and acting above one's station'?

Robin: Knowing one's level of spiritual attainment.

S.: Yes. Here it means knowing one's level of spiritual attainment. And 'acting above one's station'?

Voice: Behaving as though one has more spiritual attainment than one really has.

S.: And this clearly is what Rechungpa is doing - so that is to be as 'stupid as a fool'! - an absolute imbecile. And Milarepa is pointing out in a general way, it's so easy to think that you've mastered something simply because you've understood the philosophical explanations of those things. It's easy to think you've realized the void when you've only

read and understood a book about the philosophy of Sunyata - that is quite another matter. So Rechungpa has come back loaded down with scriptures he's collected, teachings he's gathered, in India, - but that means nothing. They could have all. They could have all been brought back on the back

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of a donkey, but the donkey wouldn't have been able to understand them. So it's very important to know one's limit - to know exactly where one stands. That may be very difficult sometimes because one changes very much but at least one should not think too highly of oneself or think one has achieved something which one has in fact not achieved; understand something which one in fact does not understand.

Jyotipala: There seems to be that sort of attitude in a lot of people. Sometimes I detect that in myself. When you think there is something special for you and you need a special teaching, or something like that. You know there are special teachings for you and you have to have these special teachings and only these particular special teachings are good enough for you. I was looking at something by Conze where he was saying that these people want Zen and Darshan and all these other things. They can't be satisfied just with what they can actually practise.

S.: Yes. Like in worldly life, sometimes people think, well, there's just one woman in the world that was meant for them and they've got to find her!! Not realizing, well, you can settle down equally happily, well, with thousands of women. I don't mean all at the same time, but any one among thousands of women. It's more or less accident which one you do settle down with. But some people talk as though there was one special person who was meant for you - who is destined for you! - fated for you! - and you've got to find that one person - but really it's not like that at all. In the same way as you say, that sometimes people think, well, there's one particular teaching that is meant just for you and you've got to find that and that'll enable you to progress spiritually really very very rapidly. If you just get that right teaching! that right Mantra! that right meditation postures! the right little exercise to do and you'll make wonderfully rapid progress. But in fact the truth is that any old practice will do. (Laughter) The main thing is that you must practise it. Any Mantra will do really! Any 'mindfulness of breathing' or Metta Bhavana or Stupa visualization or anything. The main thing is that you should really get into it and practise it but some people are obsessed with this idea of getting the right practice, the right method, the right technique, the right Koan, the right Mantra, the right Guru, the right School of Buddhism, the right monastery, the right cave, (Laughter) - the right piece of white cloth, the right begging bowl.

Ratnaguna: What do you think lies behind that? Do you think they actually believe there is something - there is the right meditation....?

S.: I think there are several micchadittis here. First of all, one might suspect that such people are really avoiding the necessity to practise at all. They're putting off the day of practice. That is one element. Another element is that they're convinced that they are very special people, but in a rather negative sort of way. They are very special people and therefore they need a very special teaching. So it's almost a sort of form of narcissism, you could say. And again it represents a faith in technique, rather than in the principles of the

spiritual life. If you get exactly the right combination of things, exactly the right combination of letters in a particular Mantra, well that would do the trick, It is not really a transformation in you that is needed, they think. It's you getting hold of the right box of

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tri~ks. So there are these three elements in this sort of attitude.

Surata: Lots of magic in this sort of. . when they know the right word for. ...

S.: Right. 'Open Sesame!' (Pause) So "If an officer ill treats his servants, he harms his country". Milarepa is apparently thinking of the Tibetan style government-officer who ill treats his servants - that is to say, the people who are working for him and helping him with the admin- istration. If he ill-treats them, well, they don't do their job properly and the country is not well-administered and the country itself suffers. "If a servant respects not his master, he will lose his mind and bring misfortune on himself. If a Doctrine-holder cannot behave, he will destroy the Dharma". The last two comparisons were leading up to this: that "If a Doctrine-Holder cannot behave, he will destroy the Dharma" In Pali and Sanskrit there is this expression - Dharma-dhara or Dhamma-dhara which means literally a Dharma-Holder or Doctrine Holder, it's sometimes translated. So it means 'one who preserves the Dharma' ; someone who transmits the Dharma. Literally, it's someone who bears the Dharma, carries the Dharma. But an interest- ing thing here is that the word 'Dharma' actually comes from the same root as the word 'Dhara'-to bear'. Dharma comes from the root meaning 'to bear' or 'to support'. It means also 'that which bears' or 'that which supports'. So the Dharma-dhara is the supporter of that which supports. So how do you support that which supports? Well, you support it by supporting yourself or being yourself a supporter. In other words you preserve the Dharma by practising the Dharma. Do you see what I mean? That you can't preserve the Dharma other than by practising it. So, "If a Doctrine-holder cannot behave, he will destroy the Dharma". If one who proports to preserve the Dharma, to maintain the Dharma, does not himself practise it, well, he will destroy the Dharma, because the Dharma is not preserved by writing it down in books. The Dharma is not preserved just by giving lectures about it. The Dharma is pre- served when you practise it. Because the~ Dharma is not a book! The Dharma is not a lecture! The Dharma is your life!! Your Enlightened life!! That is the Dharma. 7o there is no way of preserving the Dharma other than by practising it. (Pause) You don't preserve the Dharma by writing it down and hiding the writing in holes in the ground. That's not really preserving the Dharma or by putting Buddhist literature on tape and sealing them up in little cylinders and burying them in the midst of blocks of concrete, (Laughter) - that isn't preserving the Dharma. Pre- serving the Dharma means embodying the Dharma in your own life, and transmitting it in that way. So Rechungpa probably thinks of himself as a Doctrine-holder because he has literally brought these teachings, these Doctrines back from India. But Milarepa is saying that if the so-called Doctrine -holder does not practice the Dharma, the Doctrine, - then he will destroy the Dharma, destroy the Doctrine. It can only be preserved by living it. In mean, in the long run you can only transmit or you can teach Buddhism only dut of your own experience. It's only to a very limited extent that you can go on just repeating ~ther people's words or repeating what you've heard. Sooner or later you have to be able to speak out from your own experience. (Pause) It's very very easy to think about the Dharma or think about Buddhism or think even about the FWBO as something separate from yourself. Do you see what I

mean? Sometimes one has had the ex-

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perience of people, maybe Friends, maybe Mitras, maybe anybody, talking about the Movement and even criticizing the Movement, as though they didn't belong to it. Not realizing that if there was anything wrong with the Movement, well, it meant that there was something wrong with them and other people. That the Movement or the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order didn't exist apart from the people who actually composed it. So if I wanted to bring about a change in the Movement, I'd have to bring about a change in those people, including Oneself, preferably starting with oneself. (pause) Then Milarepa says, "He who does not keep the Dakinis' teaching secret, disturbs and offends them". What does Milarepa mean by this? What is meant by 'keeping the Dakinis' teaching secret'? One could say, to begin with, that the Dakinis' teaching - that is to say these "Formless Dakini Dharmas" are rather - one might say 'esoteric' teachings. In any case, they're Vajrayana teachings, which pertain to a high degree, a quite high level of spiritual development. So they're not to be made the subject of public exposition on the basis of a purely intellectual understanding or a knowledge of the books or a knowledge of the literature. They are something to be communicated from teacher to disciple in a very genuine manner, in a very authentic manner. So if you don't keep the Dakinis' teaching secret, if you don't transmit it in the proper manner, if you make a sort of public show or display of it, then you disturb and offend the Dakinis. Now what does that mean? Disturbing and offending the Dakinis? Who are the Dakinis? What are the Dakinis?

Jyotipala: It was said they were forces of inspiration.

S.: Yes, forces of inspiration. They certainly mean that among other things.

Jyotipala: An aspect of Enlightenment which perhaps is a communicative....

Voice: It can be part of your subconscious, well, - something of ~.

Robin: Perhaps disturbing them or offending them means that, if you made these teachings general knowledge, if you allowed them open for public debate, they would perhaps even to some extent, lose their powers as esoteric teachings. They would no longer be valuable in transmission from a teacher to a ..

S.: If there were certain teachings which had come to you so to speak, as a result of some inspiration on somebody's part, whether your own inspiration or that of other people and if you were to start communicating or trying to communicate or trying to impart these teachings in the wrong sort of way, that would reverse, as it were, the flow of inspiration. It would block the flow of the inspiration and the Dakinis would be 'disturbed and offended', one could say. Certain teachings, certain understanding might come to you as a result of your own inner inspiration, but if you were to misuse that, if you were to talk about it too loosely or to the wrong sort of people, then that would interrupt the flow of the inspiration itself. Very often, it is said that one shouldn't talk about, say, experiences that you have in meditation with other people especially not with other people who don't know anything about meditation or who are even unsympathetic to it, because in order to talk about it at all, you'd

have almost to alienate your- self from the experience and that would tend to inhibit the exper- ience and inhibit the continuation of the experience.

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Surata; Would you necessarily feel, Bhante, at the time as if you were actually doing an injustice?

S.: It might, but if you were a bit unmindful or a bit careless, you might not be able to stop yourself. You might realize too late when you were already talking about it. I mean sometimes it is said in connection with Tantric init- iation, Vajrayana initiation, practices generally, sometimes one is told that you should discuss the practice only with fellow disciples of the same teacher who have that same practice, and not talk about it in a loose way, generally. That applies to deeper experiences of any kind, whether going through meditation or in any other way. You shouldn't make them li~htly the subject of general conversation or discussion. If you are in really genuine commun~ation with some- one and you feel really open to that person and he is open to you, and especially if you feel that talking about your experience, would be encouraging or inspiring to him, then one is certainly free to do so. But if one tries to talk about them in a more general way, in public as it were, or make something of them, then you find, sooner or later that in fact you are not talking about those ex- periences, because you had to distance yourself from them, in order to talk about them. You've alienated yourself from them, you lost them - the sources of inspiration have in fact dried up. You know yourself, you might have the experience of talking to someone or trying to talk to someone about something that is very meaningful and significant to you and after a while - maybe very quickly you realize you've made a mistake. They're just not in sympathy. They can't understand, they want to understand and you feel really sort of quite upset that you you've started trying to talk about that particular matter to them. It seems to be doing you some harm even. It seems to be upsetting and disturbing you. So it's this sort of thing that is meant. It doesn't represent the arbitrary imposition of a secre~ y - 'Oh no! You mustn't talk about this, or oh no! you mustn't talk about that!' It's to do with our quality of communication. You mustn't force the communication. If you do the energy of the communication would just dry up. If you try to force the inspiration, the inspirati~n will dry up.

(End of Side A)

Voice. . . . or other people, aside from the hurt you cause yourself.

S.: I think that is rather doubtful. I don't think you could do much harm to other people, because if they were in a more positive state, in a more receptive state, you would be able to communicate to them, but they're not. So you're not really telling them any- thing they ought not to know. You can't. It is not possible. So probably you don't do them any harm at all, I would imagine. In a sense, they don't know what you're talking about. They don't care.

Gerry: Y?u may very well plant a seed, in their brain that might grow in time to come and. ...

S.: Well, you might. You don't know. But it's probably unlikely, in that sort of situation, where there is such a lack of communication that you yourself are disturbed, by the fact that you tried to communicate at all, in a situation where in fact there is no possibility of communication.

Ratnaguna: You're more likely to encourage them in a more superficial understanding as being spiritual.

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S.: Or they might go away under the impression that you've had a discussion about the esoteric teachings of the Vajrayana. But I don't think you can do any serious harm under those conditions. But one might wonder, well what is it that makes you want to try to communicate something, when the conditions of communication are not at all, suitable? I mean, it could be that already you've got out of contact with that inspiration. It's already got a bit dim and you've just got a mental idea about it, on account of that mental idea you try to communicate~with others. Or it's the mental idea itself that you are trying to communicate.

Gerald: You're almost trying to convince yourself again.

S.: Perhaps you do.

Gerald: Couldn't it be just wanting to share the experience. If you have somebody to ask you who hadn't meditated, what the benefits of meditation were, it's quite tempting to get over-enthusiastic perhaps, or carried away, even.

S.: But what is it that makes you try to share something with somebody who is not able to share it with you? I mean, presumably if someone did ask you genuinely something about meditation, you'd be able to share something with them, if they were open and receptive. Even if perhaps you wouldn't be able to share everything, but you'd be able to share something. But that's not the sort of situation that Milarepa seems to be talking about. He seems to be talking about a situation in which you try to share something - in this case the Dakinis' teachings with somebody with whom you can't possibly share. And that you realize your mistake. You know, having committed this mistake, you yourself are seriously disturbed, and upset. Your flow of inspiration has sort of reversed. It's flowing backwards as it were. And perhaps also we have to be careful not to use our own even genuine inspiration in an over-bearing sort of way. Because we feel inspired we try to almost force the other person to feel inspired~ If we try to do that, then of course the whole thing will backfire on us. But it does point to the importance of setting up the conditions for genuine communication and not trying to force the pace on the basis of a purely mental idea of what is to be communicated.

Ratnaguna: What was the phrase you used? Setting up the conditions for a genuine communication? How would you do that then? What do you mean by that?

S.: Well first of all perhaps, you'd have to make sure that you had time. If you really wanted to communicate something of importance to somebody, you'd have to arrange to meet them and spend a certain amount of time together and not just try to catch them on the wing and sort of tell them that particular thing, whatever it was, just in five minutes when they were in a hurry and on their way somewhere else. You'd have to make sure, that if it was sufficiently important that you weren't likely to be interrupted while you were in the middle of a communication. Something quite important is happening and the door flies open and somebody bursts in and you're interrupted. I was talking about this not so long ago, in connection with the family situation. I almost made a sort of resolution that I will not attempt to have a serious conversation in a family situation, if I happen to be visiting a family. Time and time again, I found it so difficult and frustrating - that is to say if there are children especially in the family - because nowadays children are brought

up in such a way that they interrupt constantly, usually and clamour

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for attention. You cannot have a connected conversation with their parents while their children are around. You might just as well not try at all. It's quite out of the question. I've attempted this several times but I've now given I think, almost in disgust. And sometimes the parents seem not aware of what's happening. Maybe they're so used to this. Maybe they themselves have never been able to have a connected conversation while the children have been around. It's only after the children have been in bed - but usually if you're visiting they keep the children up so that they can also see you - so the very possibility of a connected conversation not so speak of communication is just out of the question.

Voice: it's almost as though the kids tend to dominate the parents.

S.: Oh yes, that they're the center of attention. You can't have any real sort of contact with the parents while the children are around. And even going further than that, even if the children are not around, if you are talking to, say, a couple - husband and wife - sometimes they interrupt each other. You can't have a communication with either of them - it's not possible of course to have a conversation with both of them because they're really so different so if you're talking to both of them you can only stick to generalities - and you can't have a conversation with either of them while the other is present because the other keeps butting in, not wanting to be left out. So you're left with the proposition that communication is virtually impossible with anybody under those circumstances. , So if you want to communicate with someone who happens to have say, a wife and family, well, don't pay a visit to him at home and try to communicate with him there. No. You've got to invite him out, and have a quiet chat somewhere else. You can't communicate under those circumstances. Or don't ring him up while he's at work. That's also not fair. He may be very busy and here are you trying to talk with him about something important when maybe other phones are ringing and people are coming and putting things on his desk. So this is what I mean, on a very simple basic level about setting up the right conditions for communication. At least ensure these things. That you're going to be alone together for a certain length of time free from interruption, able to concentrate just on the communication itself. And make sure that you yourself don't have anything else on your mind and you're not thinking of rushing off somewhere afterwards.

That your mind is free and you can just give yourself to the communication. But as with meditation and even with puja, the preparation as I've said, is often have the battle, so to speak. It's like that with communication. You can even sort of set up the right conditions in a very simple way. I mentioned say, inviting somebody - he has a family - inviting him to your own place - well, be ready when he comes. But it's really quite frustrating if someone has invited you to meet them and have a good talk and when you arrive, you find that they're in the middle of something, so you feel you've arrived at the wrong time - even though you've arrived at the time that they've asked you to arrive. They say, "Oh I'm so sorry, I'm in such a mess. Well, do sit down." And they take a pile of newspapers off so that you can sit down. That's all wrong! A jarring note is struck from the very beginning. You should be ready for them. If you're going to give them something to eat, well, have it all ready and on hand. The place neat and tidy. Be tuned to their arrival. You see what I mean? Make the place warm and comfortable, if it's wintertime. Make them feel welcome. This will make everything go so much the more smoothly. But if they visit you and you're not ready and the phone keeps on ringing and you keep scuttling in and out to do this and that, how is communication-

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cation possible under those circumstances! So you must ensure that the right conditions for communication are present. And then you'll find the communication developing much more naturally and easily, at least without unnecessary obstacles and hindrances. So in the same way, taking it a stage further, there are certain things which you can talk about - certain things which are of deeper significance, so far as you are concerned, only when a certain level of communication has been established. And broadly speaking, the greater the number of people present, other factors being equal as they say - the more the possibilities of communication are reduced. Usually the fewer the number of people present, the more intense the communication can be. So in the end you get the most intense communication, just with one person. But you have to be sure, of course, that it really is communication. I mean, you can have a very intense experience with just one other person, of a sort, but it may not necessarily be communication. You must be quite clear in your own mind as to what is actually going on.

Gerry: What would you say then is the criterion for real communication?

S.: That's quite difficult, isn't it? I'm sure everybody's experienced real communication to some extent. I think what people usually experience when it's a question of real communication - I don't think I can give a comprehensive list of characteristics of real communication, but you experience a feeling of relief. Relief that you're not having to hold anything back. That is one characteristic. You feel a lot of energy; energy really flows, in real communication. It can also really flow in a sense when you're 'talking your head off', as they say, but the energy that is generated in real communication is not like that. Also if you've really been communicating, you don't feel exhausted or depleted afterwards, even though you've been talking for quite a long time. If anything you feel an enhancement of energy, an enhancement of vigour. You don't feel exhausted. I think in most cases you find that if you keep up your communication long enough, it becomes quieter and quieter and gentler and gentler but not less intense. You may end up not feeling any need to say anything. (Pause)

I think also during real communication you are very concentrated. Your mind doesn't

wander. You know very often when you're talking with somebody, your mind wanders. You start thinking about other things. I think in real communication, you are very concentrated, very absorbed as you are when you have a good meditation. I think also in the case of real communication, you talk about things which really matter to you. You don't just talk about things which aren't very important to you - things which are trivial or insignificant. Real communication occurs when you are talking about things of vital significance to you or at least it is more likely to occur when you talk about such things. (Pause)

Robin: You say that real communication tends to be most intense when it's just on a one to one basis. What would you say about the sort of communication that takes place in study groups? Not necessarily this one, but general study groups at the Centres. Would they be better if there was a smaller number of people there?

S.: Well, I can't say very much about study groups at which I'm not actually present (Laughter), yeah? I think broadly speaking, that if there's a smaller number of people - it also depends on who the people are - there is the possibility of a more intense communication between them, in the context of a study group. But again, depending upon the people, you can have 20 people

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in a study group, and have excellent communication, though I think that is comparatively rare. Therefore, I say broadly speaking, if you have a study group of six or eight, you get a more intense communication, other factors being equal - than if you have 10 or 20 people. Or to go to extremes, if you have 40 or 50, there's no question of discussion. When you have an Order Meeting, people go round the circle 1 reporting in' and then this can be a very positive experience. But here it's one person speaking and reporting in and everybody else listening. It's very difficult to have a discussion going on, among 40 or 50 people. Sometimes a 'pseudo-discussion' goes on where you get four or five people discussing something and with everybody else listening,' but I wouldn't regard that as being a discussion group of 40 or 50 people. It's only a small number of people having a discussion or holding a discussion and others in fact providing the audience for that.

Jyotipala: The others in fact have to hold back. They may want to say something but realize that everybody can't say something so they just hold back because they realize that the situation doesn't warrant them....

S.: Yes, indeed! So I think there is a general tendency to keep study groups fairly small so as to ensure a certain degree of intensity. That doesn't automatically ensure it because if you've got five dull people that doesn't add up to a lively study group. (Laughter) whatever the text may be. You could have a better - a more lively study group with 10 lively people than with five dull people, if you see what I mean. So it does depend to some extent on the people too. That's why I say, 'but other factors being equal' - you have a better study group with eight lively people than with 40 lively people. Forty lively people in the study group doesn't really bear thinking of. (Laughter) But it depends very much on the combination of people and one has to keep one's eye on that, and not generalize too much. Has anyone got any experience of these sorts of things? Size of study groups and....?

Jyotipala: I've had experience of dull study groups (Laughter) boring ones...

S,: Big ones? Small ones?

Jyotipala: You can get that with very small groups. You know at Tyn-y-ddol we've had small study groups with just three of us, to help communication more than actually study as a means of... and sometimes they're not very good but at other times, they're really great. They're quite intense! almost explosive because they are so together, so small. At other times, if we're all a little dull, then they can be quite dull. They reflect our moods, if they're too small.

S,: If they're too small, they're too much at the mercy of the moods of the individual members. If there's ten in a study group, it's unlikely that all ten will happen to be feeling dull on the same evening. There could well be two or three who feel bright and lively, well they eventually, we hope, spark everybody else off. Or at least the study group leader should be able to do that, even if he has got five or ten or twenty dull people, he should be able to spark them all off, by the time the evening is over.

Robin: So I've found that the leader seems to have~ the most in- fluence on how the study group goes perhaps, rather than the size or even who else is present.

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S,: But you could have, say, the best possible study group Th~der, but if he had 50 people in his study group, he wouldn't be able to do so well, I think, as would be able to do, if he had only a dozen people in his study group.

Gerry: I went to Subhuti's seminar on the 'Tibetan Wheel of Life' and there was about 25 people in the study group and most of the time it was very good. What happened once was that two guys or three people, just got their heads together and started talking their own little study group and it really put you off. I felt like saying something to them -but they just quietened down after that.

S,: That can be very disruptive. There is that sort of danger w7uh a larger number of people especially if they are not very disciplined or not very aware. I've also noticed something about study groups more recently especially in the context of the comm- unity, that sometimes study groups are better when they are worse (Laughter) if you see what I mean.

Well like Mae West if you see what I mean. She died a few hours ago and there was a little sort of obituary tribute to her on the radio. One of the things that was said about her was - one of her sayings was quoted 'that when she was good she was very good, but when she was bad she was better'. (Laughter) So the same thing about study groups, that therefore, a study group is better, I've discovered when it is worse. Hmm? So what does one mean by that? Obviously it's a bit of a paradox. Well, what does one mean by a 'good' study group? That is to say a study group where yo~~u keep strictly to the text and go ~nt~ it thoroughly and nobody says a word out of place, nobody goes off at a tangent. ... is very attentive and mindful. This is a good study group, yeah? But it's better when things are worse - that is to



say when things loosen up more and people feel more freedom to say what they're thinking and to talk about things which are on their mind. Do you see what I mean? So one could say that the purpose of a study group is not just to stick strictly to the text, and to just go into the text in analytical sort of a way, The purpose of the study group is also to arouse, one could say, a certain kind of energy in people, to stir them up a bit; to give them the opportunity of expressing and communicating, is also very important. So in order to achieve that, you may need to allow the strict study group format to relax a bit or even break up a bit from time to time, provided of course, you can bring it back again later on, and come back to the text in the end. Just like in a classical piano concerto - all these elaborate cadenzas, you know, ~ they go on and on for minutes together, ~ playing all sorts of fancy musical tricks, but in the end you come back to the original theme and back you come, there's a lead into the orchestra again, back on ~ familiar ground. It's a bit like that. You should think of these divergencies in study groups as like little cadenzas people play from time to time. You see what I mean? You know what a cadenza is don't you? Well, I don't have much on musical knowledge so I don't know if I can explain. You know what a piano concerto is.. you get a bit of the orchestra and then the piano comes in, then a bit of the orchestra, then the piano comes in - but sometimes the piano just takes off and the pianist goes on improvising theoretically, and - it's difficult to describe - he's making all kinds of impromptu variations on the themes that have been played at, but eventually, the piano rejoins the 'party line' so to speak, and comes in together with the orchestra again with a great 'bumpf' (Laughter) and then usually the movement concludes. You see what I mean? It comes back to base line, so to speak. So in study

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there should be room for that sort of thing. Yeah? So that's why I say, a study group may be 'better' when it is 'worse'. It's only technically worse, It's achieving a fuller purpose. I discovered this quite by accident because on one occasion I led a study group myself and I thought one particular morning it hadn't gone very well, I wasn't very pleased with it. But afterwards the participants were saying that it was the best study group they'd had for a long time. They had thoroughly enjoyed it and what a good study group it was. So I started wondering why they felt like that and I came to the conclusion for that sort of reason, because actually I wasn't feeling very well that morning so I just let things have a loose rein and hadn't said as much as I usually say and it seems people had enjoyed that more because they'd had a chance to say more and get more off their chests, for instance and stray a little bit away from the text. So one has to think along these sorts of lines as well. Anyway, the end of that little 'cadenza'. (Laughter) Alright, like to read those next two lines:

"Oh, my son, our ride in what you have learned Will lead you well astray!"

S.: This is really a serious admonition, to Rechungpa. I mean, he's not only learned, not only learned a great deal but he's developed pride in what he has learned and this Milarepa says, will lead him well astray. It seems quite paradoxical that you should learn about Buddhism, study Buddhist philosophy, learn all about the void, learn all about Sunyata, all about Anatma and all about non-ego and that this should make you proud. But this is what happens. There's another story here about a gathering of representatives of different

Christian monastic orders in Paris I think it was, on one occasion and a Franciscan Friar got up and said, "well everybody agrees that the Dominicans excel in learning and as for diplomatic ability, well, the Jesuits are really better than anybody else, but when it comes to humility, we Franciscans are tops!" (Laughter) It's a bit like that - someone can be tops in humility, as it were, in the same way, in a Buddhist context. Someone can be proud of his knowledge about non-ego. This is the sort of thing that does happen.      Alright would someone like to read the whole of that next verse:

To preach a lot, with empty words, Ruins your good Experience and meditation. To be swollen with pride and arrogance Proves you have betrayed the Guru's precepts. Nothing gives cause for more regret Than disobedience of the Guru. No one is more distracted and confused Than he who ceases to meditate in solitude! Nothing is more fruitless Than a Buddhist who renounces not his kin! Nothing is more shameful Than a learned Buddhist who neglects his meditation. Nothing is more disgraceful Than for a monk to violate the rules.

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S.: So Milarepa is being really severe, really strong here. He says, "To preach a lot, with empty words, ruins your good Experience and meditation.<sup>1</sup> It's not that Milarepa is against preaching, but he says, "to preach a lot". Why do you think he says this? What does he mean by 'preaching a lot'?

Gerry: Spending too much time. ...

S.: It's spending too much time on it, as if to say, maybe preaching becomes your full-time occupation. You don't ever do anything else, You don't meditate, you don't communicate, you don't spend any time of your own, you don't study. You just go on preaching. You become a full-time preacher. So, "to preach a lot with empty words" - if you go on preaching too long, your inspiration will dry up. You might have had some knowledge and understanding to begin with, but in the end your preaching is just 'empty words'. ~ don't know if anyone's ever had that experience. You might have been standing in front of an audience and - or even talking to someone individually - even talking to a group of people and you suddenly realize that what you're saying is just empty words. There's no meaning, there's no truth in it, there's no feeling, no experience. So, "to preach a lot with empty words, ruins your good Experience and meditation. If for no other reason than that talking takes a lot of energy. Have you ever noticed that? I think people noticed it years ago, when we had retreats at Keffolds and Quartermain When we started introducing periods of silence- even half a day of silence which was quite a lot in those days, and people were really surprised to notice how much more energy they experienced after a period of silence. Which does suggest that a lot of energy goes into talking. You conserve a lot of energy by remain- ing silent or by not talking unnecessarily. If you have something really meaningful to say, if you're ~really communicating, you don't lose energy in the same way. But if you're just talking, well you

do lose energy. And this also would not have a good (experience - influence?) on your spiritual experience and your meditation.

Robin: What does he mean by "good Experience and meditation"? What is the experience he is talking about?

S.: I think - Experience is printed here with a capital 'IE' - You don't in fact get capitals in Tibetan - It probably refers to Dhyana experience or even a deeper understanding, of spiritual truths. You probably all know from your own experience that when you go on talking too long, - however well~ you may have started, you start feeling very empty, and dry and exhausted. So the same thing can happen even if you're preaching the Dharma a lot. It all becomes a bit meaningless and unrelated to your own experience. Just a matter of words. You can feel very depleted and the result can be that your formerly good experience, your meditation is ruined, for the time being. (Pause) To give a talk, to give a lecture in a genuine kind of way, as a genuine communication to really receptive people, this can be a really worthwhile and stimulating experience but just to have to get up on a platform and spout something to people who aren't particularly interested, can be really exhausting. So this sort of situation one shouldn't get into. You should first of all, speak from your own experience - be close to that experience, be really in communication with your audience and ideally have an audience which is genuinely receptive to you. If the

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audience isn't. really receptive you can't communicate to them - you're just then speaking to yourself. Just like reading some- thing aloud.

Gerry: How does the idea then, that within the Friends, we should go out more and speak to different groups of people, rather than keeping within ourselves. . .how does that fit into what you say?

S.: Well go out and speak by all means, but stick to what you know from your own experience. If for instance you work in a co-op and you meet somebody who's got an ordinary job and who thinks that is the only possible way of working, well, tell him this isn't so. There is another way of working and then talk about your own experience, about (living) in a co-op. You don't have to necessarily talk about the 'Four Noble Truths' and Nirvana and Enlightenment and so on. You can say quite a lot, keeping quite close to your own experience, even though your own experience may be quite limited. But if you keep close to your experience, there's a lot that you can say. And usually, it's what you're able to talk about from your own experience which will be of greatest interest and inspiration to other people.

So when I suggest that people go out and contact other people and give lectures in schools and things like that, I'm not thinking so much in terms of giving a general talk on Buddhism, though some are qualified to do that - sometimes that may be appropriate. I'm thinking more in terms of trying to communicate one's own experience in the Friends and what that means to one another and how that can benefit even more people. I mean, one could have a full-fledged lecture, as it were, on Buddhism, one can have an informal talk on living and working in a co-op, or one could just have a chat with somebody over a cup of coffee. All these ways of spreading the Dharma can be taken advantage of. So, "To be swollen with pride and arrogance proves you have betrayed the Guru's precepts." Why

should this be?. Why should being 'swollen with pride and arrogance' in particular prove that 'you have betrayed the Guru's precepts'?

Jyotipala: Because if you followed the Guru's precepts and just practised which is what you wanted to do, well, you wouldn't feel like that. It's only because you want something else other than the actual practice that makes you proud.

S.: Yes. You think that you know better than the Guru, and that involves pride and arrogance, doesn't it? Following the Guru's precepts is the antithesis of 'being swollen with pride and arrogance'. Because if you follow, you can't be proud, you can't be arrogant. You have to be 'humble' - in inverted commas. So 'pride and arrogance' is the quality most opposed to following the Guru's instructions, and observing the precepts that he has given; the teachings that he has given. Precepts, not so much in the sense of the Five Precepts and the Ten Precepts, but instructions meant particularly for you. If you meet someone who professes to be following a particular teacher, if he's proud and arrogant, you can be pretty ~certain, he isn't - you can be pretty certain he has betrayed his Guru's precepts because no Guru could be giving him precepts to behave in that sort of way. Then Milarepa says something quite striking, he says: "Nothing gives cause for more regret than disobedience of the Guru". So, this word 'disobedience' - this is rather an ambiguous word, isn't

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it? Not to say 'ambivalent' word. What does one mean by 'obedience' and 'disobedience' in relation to the Guru? What must one not think of the Guru in terms of? or as~ an authority figure. So perhaps 'obedience' or 'disobedience' isn't - aren't quite the right terms. It's more of a question of being in tune with the Guru; being in harmony with the Guru; being on the same wave-length as the Guru.

Ratnaguna: Would the Guru represent your 'ideal self'?

S.: One could say that, but here Milarepa seems to mean the Guru in the quite literal sense - in the sense in which he is Rechungpa's Guru and Rechungpa did disobey him despite what he said about going to India in accordance with Milarepa's instructions. There was no such thing. Milarepa didn't want him to go and he disregarded that! In the end Milarepa had to agree to his going and to try to minimize the damage in some way or another. So it is the Guru in the literal sense that seems to be meant here. So, "Nothing gives more cause for regret than disobedience of the Guru" - being out of tune with the Guru, out of harmony~ with the Guru. Because if you're out of harmony with the Guru, well, you're out of harmony with what the Guru represents. You're out of harmony with the spiritual ideal. You're out of harmony with the spiritual life, the spiritual path - out of harmony with the Buddha, out of harmony with the Dharma, out of harmony with the Sangha. So what could give cause for more regret than that? To be out of harmony with the Guru represents an alienation from the spiritual life itself. And the same with regards one's spiritual brothers. If you're out of harmony with your Kalyana Mitras, out of harmony with the Sangha, out of harmony with the Order, this also would be a great cause for regret, because you are out of harmony with what they embody; what they represent. So, "No one is more distracted and confused than he

who ceases to meditate in solitude!" There is an ambiguity of meaning here - that is to say, in the English one could read it as: 'No one is more distracted and confused than he who ceases to meditate in solitude!' or you can read it as: 'than he who ceases to meditate, in solitude'. Do you see what I mean? In one case, the cessation refers to the whole act of going away and meditating in solitude - that is, one who interrupts his solitary meditation. But in the other, one who - even though he is in solitude, ceases meditating. perhaps it comes to the same thing in the end, hmm? But why is it that 'no one is more distracted and confused than he who ceases to meditate in solitude'?

ala: Because he's got nothing else to occupy himself, presumably.

S.: If it is the case of actually giving up meditation while you are in solitude, well, what could be worse than that?! Here you are in the most ideal circumstances for meditation, but you don't meditate so that really is a sign of distraction and confusion.

Surata: And your meditation presumably has increased your awareness and sensitivity and you're just cutting it off - quite painful, more pain than if you've never meditated...

S.: Yes, that could be. Also of course, Milarepa is addressing Rechungpa who went off to India instead of remaining in his hermitage and continuing with his meditation. So perhaps Milarepa

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means rather that 'no one is more distracted and confused' than he who just goes roaming around in foreign countries, ostensibly for religious purposes, instead of continuing to meditate in solitude when that is what he really needs.

End of tape~3

S.: But, "Nothing is more fruitless than a Buddhist who renounces not his kin!" Now this is a very severe saying in a way; what do you think Milarepa means? Does he mean that literally everybody ought to leave his relations? . I don't think so.

Gerr: Well, I think he means that the most important thing to a Buddhist is Buddhism and if he can practise it when his kin's around, that's OK but if he can't then...

S.: He seems to say it more strongly that 'nothing is more fruitless than a Buddhist who renounces not, his kin!' If you just take the words literally, it suggests that if you're a Buddhist and you don't renounce your kin, your being a Buddhist is completely fruitless. This is what he seems to be saying, so does he really mean that? If not, what does he mean?

Gerald: Is it something to do with the idea that you can't go forth and stay at home?

And you can't change and stay the same - is it that sort of idea?

S.: Ah huh. When he says, 'renounces not his kin', presumably f7e~means actually, literally severing connection with his blood relations. Presumably, this is what he means - that you don't achieve any fruition in your Buddhist life - that is to say, you don't make any real progress as a Buddhist, unless you re- nounce your kin. So, how are we to take this? Is this in fact so?

Jyotipala: One way it can be taken is either it means literally to do it physically or it could mean you could have no more psych- ological reliance on your family or kin. It could mean either of these two.

S.: Yes. He uses the word 'renounces' which in English would, I think, suggest literally leaving them. Le~t's assume for the sake of argument that it doesn't necessarily mean that. How would you know that you'd renounced your kin, as it were, in your heart unless you actually put it to the test? Are not the possib- ilities of self-deception too great? Supposing you do take it literally, why is Milarepa so strong on this? Why is he so insistent that a Buddhist - to be ~~ fruitful Buddhist, should renounce his kin? Why does he consider it so im- portant? What is there so inimical to one's Buddhist life in not renouncing one's kin - in keeping up one's ties with them?

Gerry: You're not really going for refuge then

S.: Yes. But perhaps put it more generally.

Surata: Is it just because if you're actually living with your family, you're having a lot of contact with them and they're going to have an effect on you just through that contact?

S.: Yes. It's(always)in a way, the same principle as that of right livelihood. I mean, yo~r kin, means those people with whom you're connected by ties of blood. That's all that connects you

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- you don't necessarily share the same interests. I mean, they-2~~re not necessarily sympathetic to your, say, interest in Buddhism. The only thing which connects you is the biological tie of blood. So perhaps, Milarepa is saying that so long as you remain in contact with the family - so long as you remain identified with the family, you are identified with, or you belong to a group of people with whom you don't necessarily have anything really in common, and that can be a really dreadful thing from the point of view of your spir- itual development - to be living with a group of people with whom you really have nothing in common other than the fact that you're realted to them by blood. You can even find your own parents thoroughly unsympathetic - your own grandparents, your own aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters thoroughly unsympathetic and uncongenial sometimes, even quite apart from the question of Buddhism. So Milarepa is perhaps saying that if you're thinking in terms

of you know, that the best possible environment situations and conditions for your development as an individual - well, y~ou need either to be on your own or at least surrounded by other people who have the same ideals as you -(who) will be supportive of your or supportive to you in your aspirations.

Gerry: How does this re1~te to Rechungpa? Because he left the people he was sharing with ~to go to India?

S.: Well, we don't kn~ow what he did in India - he was there quite along time. There was another chapter where he gets entangled with a lady and had to be rescued by Milarepa. The lady of course, is not a blood relation - is not kin in the strict sense but it's the same sort of thing, yeah? So how seriously is one to take tis statement that "nothing is more fruitless than a Buddhist who renounces not his kin". Milarepa seems to attach a lot of importance to that.

Voice: Quite literally bound.

S.: I think sometimes we don't fully understand the effect that our kin, let us say, have on us. If you've been away for a long time and then maybe you~ re-visit, - you just go to see them again, you can appreciate it then! You can be with them maybe two or three hours - maybe you're quite fond of them and you quite like to see them, - maybe they're glad to see you but you find after two or three hours that it's all beginning to have a certain kind of effect on you which is not at- ~all pleasant, which is not at all positive - not at all skilful, just after two or three hours, not to speak of a whole weeke~nd! And this is the experience of quite a lot~of our friends, isn't it? So it does seem as though one has to wish them well, for the time being, at least from a safe distance - Perhaps this means, since the~ context refers to kin - blood-relations, perhaps this refers most of all to fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters - people who've known you all your life! And another point that has to be borne in mind is that you are after all trying to change and your family, your kin tend always to see you as you ve always been.. It's not easy for them to accept the fact that you change - that you are changing, that you're going to change some more. They don't think in those terms. They themselves don't want to change, even if they do think that change is possible. So they want to go on seeing you in the same old way. Very often they insist on treating you in the way that they've always treated you. They insist that you are still the same person or you still are dear old so and so. They don't accept that you've changed.

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So since whenever you encou~nter them and when you live with them, they tend to see you as what you were before, to treat you in that way, they're trying in effect to pull you back in to the past and to negate the change that has taken place and to negate the development that has taken place.~ Sometimes they may even say quite openly, 'well, you may think that you're different - you may think that you've changed, but you're really still our little boy, our own little Johnny . (Laughter) Don't think you can really grow beyond that!'. Some parents actually say this, yeah?

Gerry: You were brought up a Catholic -you'll stay a Catholic.'

S.: Right, yes. So this is one of the reasons no doubt, at least, why Milarepa says, "Nothing is more fruitless than a Buddhist who renounces not his kin!" Because by not renouncing them, - by stay- ing firmly embedded in the biological group, the blood group as it

were, you make it so much more difficult for yourself to evolve!

Voice: To what extent does he mean 'renounce'?

S.: Well, he seems to be saying, sever physical connection. One must of course, remember that perhaps the Tibetan family was very tightly knit, because conditions of life were difficult or even harsh - you're surrounded by snow a greater part of the year perhaps, and intense cold and you tended to huddle all together for warmth and protection and all that sort of thing. So perhaps Tibetan family life was very intense and quite, maybe claustrophobic. Perhaps in the modern West, the situation is a little different. You don't have actually to live with your parents. Most people leave home as they grow up. So maybe, even from Milarepa's point of view, if you just go and see your parents from time to time, there's no harm in that but to live with your blood relations permanently, that is probably or almost certainly quite inimical to your development as an individual - not to speak of spiritual development. You can see that there are cases in Scotland - apparently young men who still live on at home with~mum~and dad, unmarried and still living at home when they're 25, 30,~40 -- they don't really grow up in a way, - they need to leave home. Then Milarepa says, 1, "Nothing is more shameful than a learned Buddhist who neglects his meditation." I mean, it's very good to know the scriptures; it's very good to be a learned Buddhist, to be a learned Monk but not at the expense of one's actual practice of the Dharma, especially at the expense of one's practice of meditation. There must at least be a balance between the two things. Or if you have to choose, it's better probably to choose meditation than book knowledge of the Dharma. But best of all, if you can have considerable experience of both.

Ge~rr : You said yesterday,~ that shame was very much a social disease or a social emotion. This is a different shame, we're talking about, here, yeah?

S.: Yes, this is connected with what in Buddhism is called ~ri and Ottappa'. ~ Hiri is more like 'shame' - Ottappa is more like conscience. One can say that there are two kinds of shame. There is the shame - about which I spoke yesterday - there is the shame in the sense of that sense which prevents you doing something because of what people~ght say if you did it. Not because of how you might feel if you did it. That's guilt. But how other people might feel or what other people might think of you if you did it - that's 'shame'. You see what I mean?

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But there is such a thing in Buddhism as 'sh~me' in ~ po~i~tive sense, that is to say, when it is your feeling or your consciousness, that you have done something of which your spiritual friends would not approve; not just society in general, but spiritual friends. That is to say, those who are your genuine well-wishers - those who want you actually to grow and develop; those who've got some degree of wisdom and insight. You're conscious that you've done something that they would be sorry to know that you have done. That emotion is called 'shame'. You're conscious that you have, as it were disappointed and let down your spiritual friends who wish you well. You see what I mean? So when Milarepa says, that something is shameful, he's thinking in this sense, or shame in this sort of sense. So,



"nothing is more shameful than a learned Buddhist who neglects his m~t~n° ~ I mean his spiritual friends must be really to see that - that there he is - he knows the Buddhist scriptures so well. Maybe he can give an excellent lectur~on so many aspects of the Dharma but he has no real experience of Buddhism himself. What a pity. He's right close to the water but he doesn't drink himself. He's so busy handing it out to other people that he's dying of thirst himself and doesn't realize it. And then Milarepa says, "Nothing is more disgraceful than for a monk to violate the rules". Milarepa is not someone who is over-keen on rules. He's not even a monk himself. He's just a sort of 'free-lance' yogi and hermit. So what do you think he means by 'rules and not violating rules'?

Gerry: Ethics.

S.: Hmm, but he says, 'than for a monk to violate the rules'.

Jyotipala: He must mean the 'Vinaya'.

S.: He must mean the Vinaya, but why~ does he think in those terms, although he's not a legalist or formalist?

Jyotipala: Presumably a monk is a person who's taken these upon himself. He's taken them~on. Why does he keep up the pretence of being a monk if he's not....?

S.: Yes, indeed! That's the point. If you've committed yourself to something, it is shameful not to honour that commitment. If you said, "well, I will not speak an untruth" and then you do that, that is very shameful. That is very disgraceful because it's like taking a vow and then breaking the vow. That in a way is worse than just doing that particular thing. Because you've taken a vow. You've committed yourself in principle with the whole force of your being and yet you've not adhered to that. So that suggests severe disruptive forces in your own being. So it's that fact - not just in a way, the technicality that you've done a particular thing but the fact that you've done it having vowed not to do it. This means that you're not master of yourself. You're not integrated. You can't even keep a promise - not even a promise to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. SO therefore, you have to be very careful of what you promise and have to be very careful of what vows you make or take. With regard to the Order - the Western Buddhist Order, we've got Ten Precepts and that's more than enough. In a way, you don't really need any more than that as precepts that you regularly and permanently observe. In the Theravada~Vinaya for Bhikkhus, there's 227. That's far too many. You cannot but break some of them. And it isn't good that you should be professing to~observe precepts which you are in fact not observing. I think even still worse, if

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when you receive a particular Ordination, where you take or are made to take precepts which you know you will not be observing and have no intention of observing, - I think this is very

undermining! So I think therefore, there should be a small number of precepts which you actually take and fully intend to observe. So these clearly should be quite basic ones.

Jyotipala: I remember Visuni at Aryatara when she used to come out of the Puja one night she said "Oh, all these precepts!" And there were just the Five precepts - she thought they were a lot to take!!

S.: Who said that?

Jyotipala: (Visuni plola?~~An Italian lady who sometimes comes... She thought just Five was a lot to take!

S.: Well, that's true. In Tibetan Buddhists - they go even further than that. There are one precept Buddhists and two precept Buddhists. They take it so seriously. They say, "Well if I can manage to take the first and second precepts I'll be doing pretty well" - "Not injuring living beings; not taking anything that doesn't belong to me. Sexual misconduct? No, I don't think I can manage that one!" (Laughter) You know, "Right speech? You know, not telling lies. Well, no. After all I'm in business, I'm a trader. I'd better not take that one! As for the fifth precept. I'm a Tibetan, of course. It's impossible for me to take that one!" (Laughter) So they're left with the first and second, but in many cases they feel they've got to observe that seriously. It means not murdering anybody or not stabbing anybody, or not going off on an expedition to rob anybody or not stealing anybody's mules. Well, they've got to take it really seriously, if they take it at all. Otherwise, better just to say, 'Buddham Saranam Gacchami' and recite 'Om mani padme hum' and get blessings from the Lamas, but not take any precepts. If you take them and break them, oh! all the devils will be after you!! Even Padmasambhava couldn't rescue you! You'd go right down into hell! This is how seriously they take it.

Gerald: How seriously do they take those two precepts?

S.: Well, I would say, those who take them, usually take them seriously. I will say that of the Tibetans. Many of them, of course don't take them, because they know that, well, it's not possible for them to observe them, they think.

Vimalamitra: Well, if they're a trader, for instance and they take the second precept, how on earth do they...?

S.: Well, some don't even take the second precept. A lot don't take any precepts at all. Unfortunately though, they quite often recite the Bodhisattva vow instead which means that the Bodhisattva vow has been seriously devalued. But what Milarepa is really talking about is 'honouring your commitments'. If you promise that you will do something. If you've said that you will do something, do it! A failure to do that indicates a very irresolute, a very unintegrated character. Then he says:

My son Rechungpa, if you agree with what I say You should hold it 'n your heart; If you disagree, do whate'er you please~ I am an old man fearing death, And with no time for chat and gossip. You are young and self-conceited, Whoever remonstrates with you, you will condemn him in return.

Oh, my gradow Guru, Marpa the Translator, Pray help me, the poor beggar Who forever abjures all worldly desires!

S.: The text says 'wordly desires'. I think it should be worldly desires'. So Milarepa says, "My son Rechungpa, if you agree with what I say, you should hold it in your heart;". Here again Milarepa is hypothetical, not Categorical. He says, "if, you agree with what I say". He's not saying 'you've got to agree with what I say'. I mean, he is the Guru, but nonetheless he is leaving Rechungpa Completely free. The fact that he is the Guru doesn't mean that he is trying to coerce Rechungpa in any way. Milarepa is just telling Rechungpa quite frankly, quite freely, exactly what he thinks. He's giving him good advice, but he's leaving him completely free to follow it or not to follow it. I think this is a very important point! It is possible to coerce people. It is possible to get them doing skilful things...

Voice: Through Coersion.

S.: Through coercion, yeah. For instance, it's possible to stop someone maybe committing murder, but this has only got significance within the positive group. It has got no spiritual significance. It is not contributing to the development of the individual as such. That is why the police force is not a spiritual institution and you can't have a spiritual police force. The Guru is not a spiritual policeman. So I think one has to be very careful on this score! Sometimes one may be justified in coercing. It may be objectively necessary but by coercion but by coercion or through coercion, you can never achieve more than a positive group! You cannot create a Spiritual Community through coercion!! The spiritual community must be based on the free consent of all concerned! And so you can intimidate someone into doing something. You can bully them into doing, persuade them, cajole them, but whatever they do, has got spiritual significance - Significance in terms of their development as an individual, only if they do it because they want to do it! Only because they themselves are convinced it is the best thing for them to do or have faith that it is the best thing for them to do. So, I think it's only Buddhism, among the world religions, so to speak, that seems aware of this. I mean, in the history of Christianity, you read of enforced Baptisms - the population of the whole country's being baptized and forcibly 'saved', so to speak, because the king has decided that it should be so.!

Gerry: Even in these freer days, you are baptized when you are, say two weeks old. You have no choice.

S.: Yes. Well, only a few weeks old (Pause)

S.: So a spiritual community can be founded only on the basis of complete individual freedom, but this means that only individuals can be free. You can't be free unless you're an individual and you can't be an individual unless you're free. That's a sort of paradox, in a way. You can't really be free, as I explained in the lecture the other week, you can't be really free unless you're not at the mercy of every passing whim and fancy and impulse. You're not free if you simply do what you like. You're far from being free. You're only free if you act with awareness and responsibility and emotional positivity. So therefore, Milarepa says, "My son Rechungpa, if you agree with what I say you should hold it in your heart; if you disagree, do whatever you please." That's all one can say, within the purely spiritual context. You can give your advice; you can advise someone; you can point out to him what is really best for him to do in your opinion, but then if he doesn't agree, well, he just has to do whatever he thinks best himself. There's nothing more than you can do.

"I'm an old man fearing death, and with no time for chat and gossip." Do you think he's really 'an old man fearing death'? He's not literally fearing death, surely, but he's saying to Rech- ungpa that he's an old man. He can die anytime, pretty soon. He is very aware of that. He's got no time to waste. "You are young and self-conceited, whoever remonstrates with you, you will condemn him in return". Self-conceited, is not necessarily a characteristic of the young. It can be a characteristic of the old too. It doesn't depend on age. In fact sometimes the old can be more self-conceited. "Well, I'm old. I've got more experience than you. I know more than you. I've seen more than you; done more than you. Who are you to say anything to me!?!". I sometimes remember that some of my young Nepalese friends in Kalimpong used to come along to me and~ complain ~ery bitterly about the way their grandfathers had been speaking to them. As soon as they apparently piped up with any remark or observation, their grandfather would say, "Keep quiet, you egg!" (Laughter) That's a Nepalese idiom - you know, 'Keep quiet.' You've no right to say anything. You've not even been born yet. You're still in the egg stage. Better keep quiet you egg!" (Laughter) And these youngsters used to get really annoyed when the old men used to talk in this sort of way.

So old men too can be quite self-conceited and opinionated. It doesn't necessarily characterize the young. So, 'whoever remonstrates with you, you will condemn him in return'. 'No one can give you any advice. You always know better. You always take him to task for trying to advise you. So I've had my say. I've given you my advice. If you agree with it, remember it. If you disagree with it, do as ~ou please. I'm an old man. I haven't much longer to live. I've no time for idle talk'. Well, it's as though he's saying, "I'm gonna get on with my meditation."

Voice: How old was Milarepa then?

S.: Some sources say that when he died, he was about 80, but he didn't sort of turn from the 'black' path to the 'white' one until he was 40. So there's hope for all! (Laughter~ So most of these episodes take place quite late in his life. Maybe he's more than 70. Then he says, "Oh, my gracious Guru, Marpa the Translator, pray help me, the poor beggar who forever abjures worldly desires!" So then what does he do? Would someone like to read that next paragraph and then the first part of Rechungpa's next song:

Picking up the books and the Ahkaru staff, Milarepa ran ahead with great speed by means of his miraculous power. Rechungpa could not catch up with him. He ran, gasping and panting, after his Guru as he sang this song:

Oh, please listen to me, my Father Jetsun! How could a son ever disrespect his father? I only pray you to accept the teachings I have attained. I was given, beyond any doubt or possible error, The instructions on the Formless Da~kin~j Dharms. From the profound, and the profoundest, doctrines I have gained conviction!

I pray you to understand this, my dear Guru!

S.: So, "picking up the books and the Ahkaru staff, Milarepa ran ahead with great speed by means of his miraculous power. Rechungpa could not catch up with him." - There's probably something symbolic-ally intended here - "He ran gasping and panting, after his Guru as he sang this song: Oh, please listen to me, my Father Jetsun! How could a son ever disrespect his father?" He says, 'no, I'm not disrespecting you'. He doesn't realize that, yes, he is disrespecting Milarepa. "I only pray you to accept the teachings I have attained. I was given, beyond any doubt or possible error, the instructions on the Formless Dakini Dharms. From the profound, and the profoundest, doctrines I have gained conviction! I pray you to understand this, my dear Guru!" So he's saying, 'you don't understand me. I really have attained these things. I really am great. I really am spiritually developed. Please don't continue to treat me as a spiritual little boy. It's not that I'm really being disrespectful. I really do respect you but please realize how I've developed!'"

This is what in effect he is saying. He's so insensitive that, yes, he has gained something. He has attained something spiritual in India, but Milarepa is just not recognizing it. He doesn't want to be disrespectful, but he does want Milarepa to recognize that he's not the old Rechungpa, huh? Here we come, sort of dangerously near possibilities of rationalization. Yes, because people do change. They do grow up but that hasn't happened to Rechungpa. And Milarepa is his spiritual father. He really does know better than Rechungpa. He's not just a biological father who cannot see when a change has taken place. He sees that no Change has taken place. If anything, he sees that Rechungpa is worse than he was before, and he doesn't hesitate to point out his faults. Rechungpa just thinks that he hasn't been appreciated by Milarepa, so he goes on reiterating: "I was given beyond any doubt or possible error, the instructions on the Formless Dakini Dharmas From the profound and the profoundest Doctrine~~ I have gained conviction! I pray you to understand this, my dear Guru!" Alright, that's pretty obvious. Carry on with the next verse:

In addition, I also attained the Yoga of Longevity, The Da~kinJs' Symbolic Secret Words, The principles of the Vajra Body, And the instructions of the Mother BuJdha. I now offer them all to you, my Jetsun Guru! Also I have attained

The profound Tiger Protection, the Cures of Diseases, And the Teaching of Dispersing Demons. All these golden instructions I now offer to you.

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S.: He just goes on cataloging all the teachings he has gained; all the teachings he has obtained in fact. "The Yoga of Longevity, the Dakinis' Symbolic Secret Words, the principles of the Vajra Body" and So on. But he says, "I now offer them all to you, my Jetsun Guru! Also I have attained the profound Tiger protection, the Cures of Diseases, and the Teaching of Dispersing Demons. All these golden instructions I now offer to you." He's still thinking far too literally, not to say, literalist-ically. He thinks he's got these when in fact he hasn't. He's got the verbal teachings, maybe; he's got the books. So he thinks, 'well, maybe I just ought to offer these things to Milarepa. This is perhaps where he thinks I'm going wrong. Alright, (out with them!)'. But he doesn't realize that he hasn't gained them, in that sense, nor can he offer them in that sense. He's got nothing to give really. He's only got the memory of the verbal teachings. He's only got the books, but he doesn't realize what the situation really is. He still thinks he's got something. Maybe he's advanced a stage further, because he's thinking now he should~ give ~that something - whatever it is - to Milarepa.. He wasn't thinking that before, apparently. What he doesn't realize, is that in a deeper, more significant sense, he does not possess the things that he thinks he possesses; does not possess the teachings he thinks he possesses. He hasn't really attained them. He's heard about them, learned about them, got books about them, but he hasn't really mastered them in the spiritual sense. (pause)

Ger~ry: It still shows, he really does like the Guru.

S.: Yees.. especially when the Guru lets him have his own way - (Laughter). That's also pretty obvious. He's as ~ said, a mixed sort of being. Yes, he's very fond of 'dear old Milarepa'. He's very devoted to him, but the old Guru sometimes, just gets things a bit wrong and he~ has to be put right. This is his attitude. (Laughter)

Ratnaguna: I get the impression it's a bit more than that. I get the impression that he's ~ery attached to him. It's really important to him that Milarepa doesn't mind...

S.: 'Attached' in the unskilful sense. Yes, because he has been brought up by Milarepa, since he was in his teens, so it could be that there's quite a mixture in his attitude. He does see Milarepa, as he is to some extent - he does value him as a Guru, but on the other hand he is the old man who brought him up. He's perhaps attached to him, rather as an actual father. So there is a mixture of the sort of devotion of the disciple and the rebelliousness of the son. These two things probably~get quite mixed up together. And sometimes he loves Milarepa, sometimes he hates him; sometimes he reveres him, and does what Milarepa tells him to do and sometimes he's wildly rebellious and does exactly the opposite of what Milarepa tells him. He argues with Milarepa; he disagrees with him. He's even disrespectful to him, at the same time he's really fond of him. Sometimes he really sees him as he is. Alright would someone like to read that last section of his song:

Upon my shoulder I have brought back The Medicine of Six Merits, And the elixirs of gods and goddesses; Now I offer them to you, my gracious Guru. This marvellous staff made of the supreme Ahkaru plant

Was used by ~kinIs to rest upon. It is a priceless and wondrous thing, Symbolizing the Tantric teachings of Dipupa; I now offer it to you, my Jetsun Guru. Please appreciate these wonderful teachings And have pity on me, the weary Rechungpa! Please commiserate me, and give me A chance to stop running and panting If you would please, please do so, It would be the best charity. If one can satisfy the hunger and thirst of others, It is of the greatest merit. To console people in distress is the best giving; To serve people with kindness and show them the right path

Is the obligation of all Dharma-followers, As taught by Buddha, our Lord.

S.: So what is Rechungpa really doing? He's trying to teach Milarepa how to teach him. He's saying, 'I don't like being taught in this way. Please teach me in another way.' This is what he's actually saying. Milarepa is giving him the teaching that he actually needs and Milarepa's running away is really very good for him. But Rechungpa doesn't realize that. He wants to be taught in the way that he wants to be taught! Not in the way that Milarepa is actually teaching him. So he tries to tell Milarepa how to handle him; how to treat him.

I remember in this connection - I've mentioned it before - the famous French Nun - French Buddhist nun whom I knew in Kalimpong and who gave quite a lot of trouble to several Gurus and one of them Dhardo Rimpoche. And I remember at least two of her Gurus telling me that she used to do this very thing. That she'd go to see them and she'd make these very respectful three prostrations, but as she was getting up from her knees - before she even got up off her knees, she'd start telling them what to do and how they were to treat her (Laughs) and her rationalization was of course, that they were Tibetan - they didn't understand French psychology. (Laughs) So they didn't understand what was good for her. So she knew of course, what was good for her. So she used to tell them what was good for her and what they should tell her to do, huh? She thought they didn't know their job as Gurus and they had to be told how to do it. And she used to get very angry if they wouldn't teach her in the way that she wanted to be taught. She used to come and complain to me very bitterly that they don't know their jobs - and they're supposed to be Gurus and they don't understand my psychology and they don't listen to what I say, etc, etc. (Laughs) So it seems that Rechungpa, although a Tibetan was not unlike that! He's even telling Milarepa what would be the best charity and what would be the greatest merit and how to console people in distress. He's teaching Milarepa all these things. He's teaching Milarepa a lesson on compassion, huh? So he really must be quite blind. But this is the sort of thing that happens. And of course, to begin with he says: "Upon my shoulder I have brought back the Medicine of

S~x Merits, and the elixirs of gods and goddesses; now I offer them to you, my gracious Guru. This marvellous staff made 6f

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the supreme Ahkaru plant was used by Dakinis to rest upon." - He's got this sort of collection of relics and rel~ous keep~ak~e~, huh? - "It is a priceless and wondrous thing, symbolizing the Tantric teachings of Dipupa; I now offer it to you, my Jetsun Guru. Please appreciate these wonderful teachings and have pity on my, the weary Rechungpa!" He's almost accusing Milarepa of not sufficiently valuing all these wonderful teachings and objects that, he,~Rechungpa, has brought back from India and not having sufficient pity on himself, Rechungpa. You also find that sometimes people try to invest themselves with importance by being the bearers of what is important! Do you see what I mean? I mean, Rechungpa has brought back from India all these wonderful teachings, so he's expecting to be received and treated as someone who has brought back wonderful teachings from India. So when Milarepa doesn't give him that sort of treatment, he in effect accuses Milarepa of not valuing the teachings which he has brought back from India, which of course, is not the case at all. It's Rechungpa himself who is not valuing them. So, "Please appreciate these wonderful teachings and have pity on me, the weary Rechungpa! Please commiserate me, and give me a chance to stop running and panting! If you would please, please do so, it would be the best charity. If one can satisfy the hunger and thirst of others, it is of the greatest merit. To console people in distress is the best giving; to serve people with kindness and show them the right path is the obligation of all Dharma followers, as taught by Buddha, our Lord. He ends up by preaching Milarepa quite a sermon, which is quite out of place. He doesn't realize that he himself, is being taught a good lesson by Milarepa - the very lesson that he needs. But very often you find people don't want to be taught the lesson that they need. They want to be taught some other lesson, which may be a very good lesson, but is not the one that they actually need. They may be perfectly ready to give up certain things and they grumble that their Guru doesn't ask them to give up the things that they're ready to give up. He's very unreasonable! He asks them to give up the things they don't want to give up - what a difficult Guru! (Laughs) So this is really Rechungpa's sort of attitude. People say, 'I won't ask me to give up that - ask me to give up anything else. I'm quite ready to give up anything you ask me, but not that!' And they think they are being really open and ready to give up things. (Pause)

(End of Side One)

S.: It also seems that Rechungpa wants to be appreciated - you know, he's very conscious of having gone to India. He's maybe been away a long time. He's had many hardships. He no doubt has worked quite hard. Perhaps he has visited many Gurus, received many instructions. He's gathered all sorts of manuscripts, some very important teachings. He's got all sorts of important relics and mementos and he's really expecting to be given a good reception by Milarepa. And as we saw yesterday, perhaps was thinking or was thinking that he was virtually his Guru, Milarepa's. Expecting Milarepa to return his obeisance; expecting Milarepa to really appreciate all of the things that he'd brought back and appreciate his own



attainments and be very appreciative of him and of every- thing that he had done. But he doesn't get any such reception. Milarepa treats him quite harshly, quite roughly almost. Father doesn't pat him on the back and tell him what a good Rechungpa he's been, he accuses him of pride and arrogance and of self-conceit and Rechungpa gets quite a nasty shock.

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erry :        He also seems to be confusing Dharma.. you said earlier that giving people water without realizing yourself dying of thirst. He uses the same kind of analogy here.

S.: Yes. He thinks of the Dharma as something quite external. Milarepa has already warned him about that, when he said: "If a doctrine holder cannot behave, he will destroy the Dharma". Because the Dharma is not an external thing that you can preserve without actually practising it yourself. (Pause) To what extent do you think it is a positive thing, a healthy thing for people to want to be appreciated for what they have done and to what extent is it an unhealthy and a negative thing? Should you want to be appreciated for say, meditating regularly or giving a good lecture and so on? What is the place of appreciation here?

pinkI think if it's a sort of natural appreciation. You sort of is quite natural if you do something that's not just ordinary - like if you do something that's good for you ,but if you do something for other people, you sort of expect some sort of gratitude in a sense.

S.: Yes. It's like if you speak to people you expect them to listen, even if they don't reply. You expect some sort of acknowledgement perhaps, rather than recognition. But in what way can that get sort of unhealthy and out of hand?

Gerry: If you do that for the appreciation.

S.: For that, yes. I mean, the appreciation should just be extra - it comes as a pleasant surprise. But if you do something for the sake of the appreciation, if the appreciation matters too much - if you feel disappointed and disgruntled when you don't get it, then that shows that something is wrong.

Jyotipala: And if you demand it as a right.

S.: And if you demand it as a right, or your duly earned reward.

Jyotipala: I suppose in a spiritual community, if we're all in sort of touch with one another and rejoicing in merits, then we will appreciate one another and rejoice in each others' merits.

S.: Yes. So what would you say is the difference between rejoicing merits and ordinary

appreciation?

Robin: One tends often to appreciate something in order that they will appreciate you in return. It's sort of something you expect.

S.: Yes. Mutual back-scratching, it's called. Ordinary appreciation can be a bit indiscriminate, whereas in the case of rejoicing in merits - you rejoice in merits! You rejoice when someone does something meritorious because it's as though there is now a greater amount of meritoriousness in the world. It's as though the merits in which you rejoice are for everybody's benefit - everybody's good. SO that makes you happy, you rejoice in that. You are not appreciating that particular person in an indulgent sort of a way, you are just rejoicing in~ a sort of impersonal way, that there is now a greater amount of good in the world - that there are more positive influences at work in the world - positive forces at work in the world than before. (pause)

Gerry: I also think ~there's something else important here in

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that what he's saying is true but it's not the whole truth, and you do get that, like, somebody says a part of something true - like something may be true in the Bible, then the whole lot's true. They make that quantum leap.

S.: Right, yes. It becomes true by association.

Jyotipala: Bhante, I'd be interested in finding out, from what you said before about practices when I was asking about practices and you said that any old practice would do, and then you get Milarepa here not worried about all these teachings coming from these. How much do you think that -these 3~rt of teachings will come into the Friends, in the Tantra. Is it of any use to ~s?

S.: Well, that's assuming that these particular teachings mentioned have actually come down in~ the Tibetan tradition to the present day, which is not necessarily the case. We can only find out from experience, because things are going to be translated more and more. They're going to become available and we just have to find out what we really do find helpful and beneficial, whatever the source it comes from. But I think there's quite a lot that we're not going to find really useful or~ helpful, if only because it has become in the course of centuries, so complicated. I was reading the other day a book which I have reviewed on - a work on the ~40 verses dealing with the Yoga of the (~uchya-samadhi) Tantra but it is so complex that I~don't think it would mean anything at all to most Order members, who would be able to read it. I don't think it would offer anything of any practical utility at all. Because the text, in any case, which summarizes a whole series of Tantric works, has been overlaid by commentary and sub-commentary and such technical interpretations have been given - some of them very ingenious - I think it would be very difficult for most people to see where all that material connected at any point with one's own experience ~and one's own spiritual life. So we have to take those things which do connect in that way. There are quite a lot of them - more than enough for us to be ~etting on with. It isn't as though we've finished with the Udana and finished with the Dhamma- pada and finished with the Heart Sutra and

now we're ready to go on to something else. That is not really the position at all! I mean, broadly speaking, in principle we ~accept the whole Buddhist tradition but not every part of it is equally useful to us. In fact, also Buddhism doesn't work like that. In the case of the Bible or the Koran, well, the whole of it is a revelation. You accept the whole of it, but in the case of the Buddhist scriptures, it's not although you have to master all the scriptures in order to get the Buddha's complete message. The Buddha's message is actually very simple but it has been expanded in various ways. It's been elaborated in various ways, explained from different points of view, for the sake of different kinds of people. One gets all these versions, all these explanations in what we call the Buddhist scriptures. But it may be that just two or three pages of these scriptures are enough to lead you to Enlightenment. If you just confine yourself to those two or three pages, then it's not as though there's a lot of the Dharma that you missed! It's not that! Because the essence of the matter, so far as you are concerned, can be contained in those few pages, even in a single verse.

Jyoti~ala: I mean, you can get confused especially if you read Tantric texts on Milarepa, when you think of what he went through to~ get initiation, there's all this emphasis in that whole tradition of - "You must get initiation!!" That initiation and going through the Tantras, all the way to get 3~c(J~~~od in this life.

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S.: ~ Yes, but then one must ask, what does initiation mean? One mustn't think b~ it ~in an external, ceremonial sort of a way, necessarily. What does initiation mean? It means entering into a particular kind of relationship with somebody, say, with a Guru - a relationship which is spiritually intense or a communication which is spiritually intense ~within the context of~ which a very~ great deal can happen. This is what it really means. It doesn't mean, going along to a particular place and going through elaborate ceremonies and being, as it were, given something. That is what it has come~to~be or come to mean, but the essence of the matter is quite different. It really means, entering into this intense relationship with a spiritual teacher, within the framework of which intense spiritual communication can take place. And the Vajrayana tradition stresses the importance of the Guru because the ~Guru is alive. You need a living Buddha, so to speak, not a dead one. The Guru is not only the living Buddha but the living Dharma, the living scripture. Because you can read a scripture and be very inspired by it, but can that text answer your questions? Can it enter into discussion with you, no. In the same way, you can read the Life of the Buddha and be very inspired by the life of the Buddha, but can you~,- as it were, stop and ask that Buddha a question? No, you can't. What he says is very very~ general but it's not meant just for you. It's meant for everybody, at least in principle. But ~if you enter into direct spiritual connection with another human being who's actually alive and who is spiritually more experienced than you and who knows you and can reply to your questions. Well, then you're in contact with something much more immediate; something much more oriented to your personal needs. So one mustn't allow the Tantra, the Vajra, to be sort of mystified. It's really very simple, even down to earth, very basic. (Pause) It's the same with regard to the spiritual community. You know, joining a spiritual community is not a matter of undergoing some particular ceremony etc.. but of entering into live communication with other people with whom we share certain ideas and having a constant communication with them., even living together there so that

communication is made possible. So what the Vajrayana in a way, does is to bring the Buddha near; to bring the Dharma near, to bring the Sangha near. So when the Vajrayana says that you must see the Guru, as the Buddha, what it means is that so far as you are concerned, - the person with whom you are in direct contact and who speaks directly to your need, your individual need. He is the Buddha so far as you are concerned. And the practice that you actually do, your own meditation, your own visualization practice, that's the Dharma so far as you are concerned. It's not all the teaching contained in the books, so far as you are concerned, the Dharma is what you actually practise. And in the same way, the Sangha are those fellow disciples that are actually in physical contact with and in whose company you practise. I mean, Sariputra and Mogalana, Nagarjuna and Asanga, they were great people but you are not in actual contact with them, so the Sangha for you is the people that you are actually in contact with, and practise with and especially those who are closest to you in that sense. So therefore, it is in this way that the Vajrayana speaks in terms so much as Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, as in terms of Guru, Deva and Dakini. But as I said, one must beware of mystifying the Vajrayana - mystifying the Tantra. It started off, in a very simple way to some extent, from a certain point of view as a reaction against the complexity and abstruseness of monastic Buddhism, after 1500 or 1000 to 1500 years of development in India. The (Sittas), the Indian Tantric Yogis, they didn't want to be monks. They didn't want to live in monasteries. It had all got too highly organized,

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too complex, too elaborate. But subsequently the Vajrayana itself became the subject of intellectual elaboration. You had Tantric Buddhist scholars which is very much a contradiction in terms but it is also a contradiction in terms to have a sort of Mahayana Bodhisattva scholar or a Hinayana Bhikkhu scholar, someone who is just a scholar in this particular form of Buddhism. But it happens at every stage of development. It's as though in every stage of development whether Theravada or Mahayana or Vajrayana or Zen or whatever, you have an original creative stage where the living ideas and images are produced and where people really practise and experience. Then you have a sort of stage of, you might say, 'mature development' where the whole thing is given a comprehensive intellectual framework, which is very useful. But then a stage develops where the intellectual framework becomes the subject of study for its own sake, and then that's the stage of scholasticism. And then you have a stage where only the outer forms are kept up, so it's as though in all the Yanas there's this process of development. I mean the Mahayana starts off as a sort of creative re-expression of the spirit of Buddhism and almost in opposition to the dull, dry scholasticism of the Hinayana. But in the end the Mahayana itself becomes quite scholastic and then the Vajrayana arises as a protest against that. But then the Vajrayana eventually becomes scholastic. Zen becomes scholastic. You know you get a classified list of Koans, almost dictionaries of Koans, with solutions. (Laughter) So we mustn't forget that. That all the great Yanas, all the great forms of Buddhism seem to have gone through this sort of four-fold process of development - well, development and decline.

Gerry: Could that happen to the FWBO?

S.: It could happen to any particular form or tradition, because the gravitational pull is always at work! It happens where individuals no longer have really individual attainments

and achieve-ments. I mean, the Dharma disappears when people no longer practise it. This is virtually what Milarepa has said. "if a doctrine- holder cannot behave, he will destroy the Dharma". People as~,~ well will the Dharma eventually disappear. They ask it as though the Dharma was something separate from the people who practise it. The Dharma will not disappear so long as people practise it. If they cease to practise it, you may have books and pictures, but you won't have the Dharma. Not the Dharma as a living experience and that's what the Dharma really is. That's why I spoke a little while ago, - I don't know if it was in this group or the other one - about spiritual communities. You mustn't assume that just because you live in something called a 'Spiritual community' that it is always a spiritual community. There's no such thing as a spiritual community. You've got a number of individuals living together in the same building -when they are all really being individuals and are relating to one another as individuals then you have a spiritual community! But sometimes it might be, some days it might be, some weeks it might be that people are not behaving as individuals. There's no communication between them as individuals. Communication might completely collapse. Is there, therefore a spiritual community on the premises? No. But then maybe next week, maybe for an hour or two, yes, people are fully individuals. They're rea-ly communicating as individuals. Then for that hour or two, there'll be a spiritual community present. Then maybe after that for a while, not. So it's not as though you've ~got a thing called a 'spiritual community' and it's always a spiritual community and you've got it regardless of the behaviour and attitude and communication of the people who in f act make up that spiritual community. This seems

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a very simple pont but I think it's one that people tend to over- look. You've only got a 'co-op' if people cooperate! If they're not cooperating, you can call it a co-op, but is it really a co-op? Of course not!

Jyotipala: So easy to get misled by labels, isn't it? (S.: Yes) It happens all the time and yet you can stop yourself for a while, but then after a while you forget and you go back to relating to labels again.. Constantly that happens all the time, doesn't it?

Vimalamitra: From what you were saying earlier, though, you seem to give the impression that it's inevitable that these movements will decay and another will take their place. Is that true?

S.: Well, in the case of Buddhism it's really the same movement all the time, under different~labe~ls so to speak, - a label of Thera~ada, a label of Mahayana, a label of Vajrayana, a label of Zen. It does seem, as far as I can~make-out that at all times, there have been some Buddhists wh6 really were Buddhists in all these schools, in all these traditions and that no doubt is still the case. But when it is the case, it is only because they are actually pra~tising what they profess to believe in, ~hat they profess to accept. They are really being holders or bearers of the Dharma. They realize that you can only hold it or bear it by practising, only by indentifying yourself with it. I remember in Kalimpong, my Gelugpa friends, used to make very gentle fun of some of the Ningmapa lamas. because some of the Ning- mapa Lamas, at least, made a great thing about having very esoteric teachings and all that sort of thing and the Gelugr.pas are much stricte~r in the way that they do everything. Aed in the Vajrayana, it's sort of axiomatic that you cannot give anybody, any initiation which

you've not received yourself. So some of my Gelugpa friends used to say, sort of gently, making fun of the Nyingmapas, "You know there's a very great Nyingmapa in Kalimpong at the moment. He's got some really sort of powerful initiations. They're so powerful that you can give them to other people even without having had them yourself". (Laughter)" Nyingmapa initiations are like that." So they'd make fun very gently in that sort of way. But the essence of the matter seems to be that you can't really communicate anything that you don't personally experience. And you've got to be very careful that you don't think of the Dharma or spiritual life as something, as it were, external to you which you can possess or achieve or attain without yourself being identified with it. I mean, I have actually met people who really believed you could teach meditation without ever having meditated yourself; which seems extraordinary! I remember a Theravada Bhikkhu in London with whom I remonstrated about his not practising meditation because on one particular occasion he presided at a meeting and he said, "We're going to start with a period of meditation! We're going to have two minutes Metta!" (Laughter) And I swear after 15 seconds he was tapping on the table that the two minute Metta is over! So I talked with him after about this and in the course of conversation he said to me, "Sangha-rakshita: what is all this fuss about meditation? In Ceylon, we Theravada Bhikkhus are meditating all the time!" (Laughter) Apparently he genuinely believed that if you're reasonably cheerful and positive, well, you're meditating. Some Theravadins, even Theravadin Bhikkhus seem actually to look at meditation in this sort of way. It's extraordinary!

Vimalamitra: Quite a lot of people in England even don't meditate.

S: This is encouraged for instance, by Mrs. Rhys Davids translation of Jnana - Pali version of Dhyana - as 'musing'. That the monks were

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'sitting at the foot of the tree', - you can read in her translation, 'musing'. (Laughter) So what a feeble impression this gives of meditation. - because anybody can sit at the foot of a tree and muse! (Laughter) And this is what she thinks it is - it's 'musing' - you just sit and muse (In a musing tone - "The Buddha - yeah, well, the Dharma, hmm, yeah, it's pretty good" - (Loud laughter)) You just muse and this is Dhyana; this is experiencing Dhyana states - (ironically said~ So some of the translators are to blame as well, aren't they? You can't really be surprised that even Theravadin Bhikkhus have got these sort of ideas about meditation.

Jyotipala: They must be quite into study.

S.: Oh yes, They can give probably quite a good lecture on the 40 Kamatthanas or whatever, and they sometimes seriously believe that they are monks. Well, they're wearing yellow robes and they shave their heads - they are Buddhist monks. And Upasikas who practise only Ten precepts, well, these are not to be taken very seriously!! They are very small fry indeed!! Especially if they've got all these whimsical ideas about meditation and right livelihood! They think this distinctly odd. I've written in my 'Thousand-petalled

Lotus' - when I turned up at Sarnath in my early day~~ I was given the impression by some of these Bhikkhu~s there, that meditation was a sort of harmless eccentricity. (Laughter) The fact that I meditated or took that seriously was a sort of foible on my part which could be over-looked. But what really couldn't be overlooked was the ~fact that I didn't handle any money and that I didn't have any money. That was really a serious matter tha~t I took that precept seriously! It was really extraordinary! Anyway, I don't want to go on about them too much because some are quite good- -chaps but, you can't really take them very seriously as Buddhists, or monks unfortunately.

Vimalamitra: Well, what about today? Is there any change in them in the last ten years?

S.: Well, this is 30 years ago. In some ways the situation is better, in some ways, worse. I think there has been a greater awareness of meditation and even some of these people have done a little bit of meditation now. But usually, unfortunately it's a one-sided Vipassana~practice which doesn't really help very much. What they want is lots of Samatha to begin with, some kind of Dhyanic experience. I think there is a greater awareness of meditation now and it's not thanks to Buddhists. It's, if anything, thanks to people like the Maharishi who has made meditation a better-known word, everywhere. I don't think it's due to the efforts of Buddhists particularly.

¼flwerr: But that's very different from the idea that your practice spills over into your every day life. Maybe that's where they got the idea from. (S.: Mmm!)

S.: Yes, I think in the case of some Buddhists in modern times, it's more your everyday life spilling over into your meditation which is not so desirable but certainly one's meditation should spill over into your everyday life in the sense that the experience that you have, the higher state of consciousness that you enjoy at the time of meditation should be prolonged into your, as it were, ordinary life. I think, perhaps what the Maharishi doesn't sufficiently understand is that there is a great deal in modern life which is incom~patible with the maintenance of the, the real maintenance of

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that kind of consciousness, that sort of Dhyanic consciousness. Anyway, we ha~ another cadenze there, didn't we, so perhaps we'd better leave it there for today.

(End of side 2)

S.: Page 426 at the bottom. Would someone like to read that little prose paragraph and then the whole of Milarepa's song that follows:

The Jetsun heard Rechungpa singing this song while he ~ ning after him. When the song was finished, the Jetsun stop then sat down on the ground and replied to Rechungpa, singing: ~~





Let us go into the mountains and meditate in solitude!

S.: So the Jetsun heard Rechungpa singing this song, while he was running after him. When the song was finished the Jetsun stopped. He then sat down on the ground and replied to Rechungpa singing: 'It is fine that father and son are in harmony -' I think he is being a little bit ironical again here. The father, of course, is Milarepa, the son is Rechungpa - "Maintaining harmony with people is a great merit, but the best merit is to keep harmony with one's father." What do you think Milarepa means by 'maintaining harmony with people'? Is it easy to maintain harmony with people? Should one in fact always maintain harmony with some people? What does Milarepa mean by this?

Gerald: Just getting along with people; just sort of being liked by everybody.

S': "Maintaining harmony with people is a great merit".

Ratnaguna: Is it like the four levels of perfect speech? The fourth one?

S.: It includes verbal harmony surely, but I don't suppose it's limited to that.

Vimalamitra: Maybe it means an openness. Just being in tune.

S.: It says 'maintaining harmony with people is a great merit'. So that suggests that maintaining harmony with people is not a very small matter, not a very easy matter. Otherwise why should he speak of it as being a 'great merit'? It is very difficult to maintain harmony with people. People are of so many different dispositions, so many different outlooks. They may disagree with you. They may be engaging in unskillful actions. You don't want to compromise your own principles, but at the same time you don't want to fight and quarrel with them. So 'to maintain harmony with people' is not easy. It requires great patience, great tact, great understanding. But exactly what is meant by 'harmony' here? If by people, one means people in general, well, that harmony cannot consist in agreement. You may be having to live with or work with people with whom you really disagree, people with whom you've no real sympathy, people with whom you've very little in common. But nonetheless, it's good if you can maintain harmony with them. And if you can do that, it's a great merit. So how would you maintain harmony with people in general, bearing in mind that they may not see eye to eye with you about so many matters?

Robin: If you perhaps keep an attitude of friendliness towards

the people you come into contact with - don't get involved in their

games, necessarily.

Gerry: Is 'equanimity' a good word?

1/4.: Yes. It is easy to maintain harmony or relatively easy to maintain harmony with people with whom you agree, with whom you have a lot of things in common. There's a basis for harmony then. It's much more difficult to maintain harmony with people with whom you don't have very much in common, even with people you personally dislike. So Milarepa says, 'Maintaining harmony with people is a great merit' - just getting along in the world, adhering to your own point of view, adhering to your own principles, at the same time, not treading on other people's toes, managing to keep up friendly relations with other people, this is not easy. So if you're able to do this, it's a great merit.

Ratnaguna: Do you think it's actually possible?

S.: Depends on you. It depends on how much tact and skill you have. Some people do seem able to do that. You do sometimes, meet people who can move about in the world, not departing from their own principles, yet at the same time managing not to antagonize other people - making it quite clear they don't agree with them, they think perhaps that they're wrong, but on the other hand still managing to remain on friendly terms with them. A few people have this sort of knack, this sort of art. But it isn't easy because there are two extremes here, both of which are to be avoided. One is that because you differ from other people, because your principles differ from theirs, you clash with them. That's one extreme. The other extreme is that you, for the sake of so-called 'peace', so-called 'harmony', you sacrifice your principles and go along with their way of doing things. That is the other extreme but to maintain your principles, and not to tread on their toes and remain on friendly terms with them, and in that way maintain harmony, this is the really difficult thing to do.

So if you could do that, it's a great merit. This is what Milarepa is saying. So, "it is fine that father and son are in harmony - maintaining harmony with people is a great merit; but the best merit is to keep harmony with one's father." Here by 'father' he means, of course, in relation to Rechungpa himself, or in more general terms he means the Guru, or in still more general terms, anyone who is spiritually more advanced than you are. I have spoken sometimes in terms of 'horizontal integration' and 'vertical integration'. In the same way one could speak of maintaining 'horizontal harmony' and maintaining 'vertical harmony', though they're probably quite contradictory expressions. But do you see what I mean? Horizontal harmony meaning harmony with those people who are roughly speaking, on the same level as you. And vertical harmony meaning harmony with those who are on a somewhat higher level than you are. So why is it the 'best merit' to be in harmony with one's father? That is to say, with someone who is more spiritually advanced or developed than you are. Why is that the 'best harmony'? Why is the best merit to keep harmony in that way?

~iala: Because that means you're receptive, you're open to receiving whatever that other person is able to give you. You can then receive it if you are in harmony.

S.: Because if you are in harmony with him, or to some extent you are like him, it cannot mean anything else. I mean, if you are in

harmony with &ll of the people that you meet, well, it is suggestive more of tact and diplomacy. You are in a way walking a tight rope, aren't you? It's so easy to upset other people. You have to be so careful. - It's so easy for the harmony between you and them to be disturbed, to be ~disrupted. But the harmony that you establish with someone ~who is spiritually more experienc~ed, is of a differ- ent, a different nature. It's much less easily broken. It's not going to be -broke'~n by the other person. You've only got yourself to think of; keep~ing yourself in harmony with~ him. You've not bother about him keeping in harmony with you. You've ~just~ got to attune yourself with him, and in as much as he is, so to speak, 'superior' - in as much as he is Spiritually more advanced, more developed than you, if you can attune yourself to him; if you can be in harmony with him, wel~l that is equivalent to spiritual development itself. Being in harmony with him, does~n't represent just a passive state ; it doesn't mean doing whateVer' he' tells you. It means genuinely attuning your being to hi~s. If your being is attuned to his, well, to some' extent, at least, your' being becomes like his. So keeping harmony with one's'father'is the best merit, because that ensures spiritual progress. Further, Milarepa says, "If one is discordant with all the people he knows, he must be a person ominous and obnoxious~". You don't often meet somebo~dy who is out of harmony with every single person tha't he' knbw~, 'who doesn't get on well with anybody. You don't often meet such a person, but you occasionally do - someone who can't get on~~with anybody else. And of course, he usually or she usually blames other people. But if you do find someone who is discordant with' allthe people he knows, the~n as Milarepa says, 'H~e must be a person7ininious and obnoxious'. - The text says 'ominious' but it must be ~ominous.

Voice: It's down twice as 'ominious'.

S.: Yes. Bad proof-reading. Why ominous? What does 'ominous' mean?

Robin: It implies that his future is in very grave danger.

S.: Of bad omen - not only is his future in grave danger, but it isa bad omen for anybody with whom he comes into conta'ct. He himself is a bad omen for anybody with wh'om he comes into contact because sooner' or later there will be discord. Some people get that sort of reputation. I mean people say, 'I'll don't have anything to do with 'him, he's sure to be' trouble sooner or later". They're ominous and obnoxious, thoroughly harmful to other people.

So, 'If one is discordant with all the people he knows, he must be a person ominous and obnoxious. Yet eVen' more ominous is dis- cord between father and son." That's a very strong statement. It suggests it's more important to maintain harmony with one's father, that is to say, so to speak 'one's spiritual father', than to maintain it with any other person. This reminds me of something else in the teaching. We have spoken in the past in connection with the' first precept - that according to the Buddha's teaching, w'ell, obviously the taking of life is a very serious matter, a' very ser'iou's offense' - the deliberate taking of life, especially human life. But do youremember that there's a sort of gradation of seriousness? Do you remember what that is?

John: I think the 'heinous crimes' aren't they? The first is to ~-the Buddha.

S.: 'To wound "a Buddha'. Yes, to wound a B~uddha.

John: Then either to kill your mother or father.

S.: To kill mother or father. Also to kill an Arahant. Alright, st~ose Youjust consider killing mother and father. Why is it

a more serious offense according to Buddhism, to kill your mother or father, than to kill someone who is not related to you in that way?

John: Because you've got this emotional tie, so to speak.

S.: Yes, there are natural emotional ties, so to kill your father or mother, indicates a much more serious disruption of natural human solidarity. There's much more to overcome in order to kill mother or father. There's much more in the way of human sympathy to overcome, in order to kill mother and father. So that is a more serious matter. In the same way, it's a serious matter to kill an arahant. Be- cause if you kill an arahant it is almost as if you're attacking the spiritual ideal itself. You're repudiating the spiritual ideal in the most extreme way possible. You're actually killing the per- son who actually embodies that, the person who has realized that. And in the saia~ way with the Buddha. According to the scriptures, you can't kill a Buddha. That is a commic impossibility, but you can wound him, as Devadatta wounded Sakyamuni. You can cause blood to f~ow. So that must indicate, that must suggest, an al- most sort of pathological, almost a sort of demoniacal state of an- tagonism to spiritual values. So that can have most serious con- sequences for you, for your development as an individual. SO it's much the same here - that it's not maybe perhaps such a serious matter, if there's disharmony between ~you and other ordinary people, but if there is discord between you and someone whom normally you look up to as more experienced, or more advanced than you, then that is a very serious matter ifldeed! Because you are disrupting something which is of vital importance to you in your life. You're closing yourself to that which you most need. So, Milarepa is speaking here very seriously to Rechungpa, be- cause the fact is that on account of Rechungpa's pride and conceit there is in fact some discord between him and Milarepa - not from Milarepa's side, obviously, but from Rechungpa's side. Again, in a more general way, ~ you may remember that the Buddha in the Pali scriptures, sometimes, speaking about ideal conditions in any given country, mentions the fac#hat the arahants come and go freely. That is to say, those who are spiritually attained, those who are enlightened, come and go freely. They're not subject to any hindrance or restriction - that is to say, people have respect for them\* People look up to them. So he mentions this as being a very desirable state of affairs...as indicating a very desible state of affairs. That people generally, in~ ~a'country, look up to peo- ple who are spiritually more developed That there is harmony: between them, as it were. Not discor~d; ~ that they look up to them. That they are receptive to them4 And if that state of affairs doesn't obtain, then it is quite unfortunate, q~uite disastrous, in fact for that country, for the people of that country. So it's a sort of general principle that if there is discord between those who are at it were, spiritually less experienced and those who are spiritually more experienced, then it is, you know, very disastrous as far as the former are concerned. But the most extreme, the most concentrated form of that, is discord between, as Mila~epa says, ~'father', in this sense a spiritual father and 'son', a spiritual son. It's as if father here represents almost the spiritual tradition itself. You disaffilia~e yourself from the spiritual

~tradition, when there is discord between you and your 'father'\* You cut yourself off from the living spiritual tradition. And of course, the same thing can happen when there's not enough, not only when there is discord but when there is even indifference or carelessness. It need not mean open hostility or anything like

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that; just carelessness and indifference, as perhaps was the case with Rechungpa. So, when Milarepa says, "If one is discordant with all the people he knows, he must be a person ominous and obnoxious. Yet even more ominous is discord between father and son," he's almost saying that well, even if you get on badly with everybody, if you get on well with your spiritual father, well, it will counter-balance the fact that you don't get on well with anybody else, because being in harmony, being in concord with your 'spiritual father', that is the most important thing of all - that is the most important relationship of all. So you notice the sort of emphasis, not only from the spiritual but from the cultural point of view, that according to Milarepa, according to Buddhism generally the most important relationship is the vertical relationship. Whereas in modern times in the West, what do we consider the most important relationship? Is it your relationship, say, with your local vicar? Is that the most important and meaningful and significant relationship in your life?

Voice: They don't even have any idea....

S.: They don't even know who he is, in many cases.

Ratnaguna: That wouldn't be regarded as a 'vertical relationship' anyway, would it?

S.: Well, even if, he probably wouldn't - except in a purely technical sense and it just doesn't mean anything to people. So what would people say was their most important and meaningful relationship?

Jyotipala: Husband and wife.

S.: Husband and wife, yes. So you see the difference? Milarepa is speaking within a purely Vajrayanic context. And as we've seen, for the Vajrayana, the Guru is all important, in a manner of speaking, more important than the Buddha. But that emphasis, though it is strongest in the Vajrayana, is not confined to the Vajrayana. One might say, in Buddhism generally, in Indian spiritual tradition generally, your most important relationship is with whoever you regard as your source of spiritual inspiration. That is the most important relationship in your life and all other relationships, whether with husband or wife, or with children, or with blood relations, or ordinary friends, those are all quite secondary. So look at the difference that this makes to our whole outlook. If your most important relationship, if the most important relationship in your life is with - in Tantric terminology - your Guru, what does that show, what does that indicate about your whole attitude towards life?

Ratnaguna: The most important thing is your life is the ideal.

S.: The most important thing in your life is the ideal. So in the same way, if the most important relationship in your life is with your wife, certainly in the case of a man, what does that suggest about your attitude towards life?

Gerry: Family life is the most important.

S.: Yes, but family life in what sense? Because lots of people don't have family in the sense of children, anymore?

Jyotipala: That the mundane is the most important.

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S.: That the mundane, yes! One might even put it more strongly - that pleasure is the most important thing in life. Whereas if the vertical relationship is the most important, it suggests that growth is the most important thing in life for you. But if that particular kind of horizontal relationship is the most important, well, it suggests pleasure. Because why do people get married? The most strongly operative factor is simply pleasure. It's something they instinctively go after. It's around that that everything else is built up. So on the one hand growth and development is given the most important place and in the other case, it's pleasure and in a way, self-indulgence that is given the most important place. If you take another sort of pattern, - suppose you take the medieval one - where for instance, your most important relationship is the one you have with your feudal superior - with your liege lord. Well, what does that tell you? What does that tell one about that sort of person's outlook upon life in general? What is most important for him?

Jyotipala: Protection.

S.: Protection, yes, protection. Also war, battle, politics. Yes, protection probably basically because that is originally why you seek a liege lord. It's a very dangerous world. You want someone to protect you, so you swear fealty to him, you swear to serve him on condition that he protects you, but of course, that might involve your serving him as a soldier, because he can't protect those who are dependent upon him without an army, without supplies for the army so he taxes you also. So can you think of any other sort of paradigmatic relationships? You've got the one between father and son in the spiritual sense; you've got the relationship between husband and wife, between the feudal lord and his feudal dependant, what other important patterns does one have of relationships, which colour one's whole attitude towards life?

Voice: Friends.

S.: Friends! Can you think of that in the same sort of way, or is not so important or has it ever been so important in...?

Ratnaguna: There's two sort of friendships, - there's one which is just ordinary acquaintances and then there's spiritual friendship which seems to have the ideal as well.

S.: Well, it's as though spiritual friendship - or let's say friendship in general to begin with - is something which is not completely horizontal, but not completely vertical either. It's something sort of half-way between. It's like this:-(demonstrating what he means humorously). It can tend towards the horizontal and it can also tend towards the vertical. If it is the relationship with friends, in the broadest sense, - which is the most important relationship in one's life, what sort of outlook upon life would that give you?

Surata: In the broadest sense, not spiritual friendship just....

S.: Not necessarily, in the broadest sense.

Gerry: Gregarious.

S.: Gregarious (Laughs)

YH 5 8 Rob in: The group.

S.: The positive group, perhaps - and the positive group has affinities with the not-so-positive group on the one hand and also with the spiritual community on the other.

Robin: How about the parent-child relationship?

S.: Well that is obviously very important. There are some cultures in which relationships between, let us say, father and son in the literal sense is the most important relationship in life. That's very strong in ancient Chinese culture. SO what sort of outlook on life would you have if your relationship with your father was the most important relationship in your life?

Gerry: Authority,

S.: Yes, you'd tend to be submissive to authority. You'd tend to be conservative and traditionalist, because the strength of your relationship with your father, would ensure that you had a tendency to do things in your father's way, to continue doing things in the old way and this is in fact what we find. It's very characteristic of Ancient Chinese Confucianist culture.

Surata: I find it quite unfortunate that Milarepa is talking about spiritual relationships in terms of father and son. Especially considering that Rechungpa probably does see Milarepa as a bit of a kindly old man. But I would have thought that he would try and make the distinction between Guru and disciple.

S.: Well, perhaps it is for Tibetans,, as for many ancient peoples, the father and son relationship in the ordinary sense, is a very positive one and perhaps - without the strongly authoritarian overtones that it has for us.

Surata: Do you think that's true, that it doesn't have those sort of overtones?

S.: I think probably. I won't be sure of that. Not that there isn't sort of ordinary disobedience and rebelliousness which Rechungpa exhibits, but perhaps it doesn't go to the

extreme that it can very easily go with us. You also remember, for instance, that the male and female Buddha figures, are represented in sexual union in Tantric iconography - are called the father and the mother. They're called Yab~Yum. Yab and Yum meaning 'father-mother', but in a slightly honorific sort of way. So perhaps it was rather different for ancient Tibetans, than it is for us. We don't think so much in terms of spiritual fraternity and all that sort. ...

Surata: You get a lot of that in Tibetan Buddhism, don't you? Father and mother. ...

S.: You get quite a lot yes. And it suggests that basically one's attitude towards father and mother is very positive, as when it's suggested that you should regard all living beings as having been your mother in some previous existence or other. That would be rather difficult for us, it would be a rather horrific thought; that even your best friend had once been your mother. You wouldn't like to think that at all. (Laughs)

Surata: What do you think we should do in that sort of case - just discard that sort of symbolism?

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S.: Well, it's a question of what you find positive in this life. If your experience, say, with friends is a very happy one, well then you can think, 'Ah well, everybody I meet might have been my best friend in a previous life, so why should I not have positive feelings towards them in this life'. Because this whole mode of approach suggests a very strong belief in the reality of rebirth. If one has that then one could say, 'well, in the course of these numberless previous existences, I must have stood in every conceivable relationship to all of the people that I meet now. I mean, they must have been my best friend in some life or other, so why should I not try to continue that kind of relationship in this life itself. We've been best friends in the past, why can't we be best friends in this life too?' You could look at it in that kind of way. Not reflect that they've all been your mother and that you're in fact surrounded by mothers. That might not be very positive or inspiring. (Laughter) But there's another very important relationship that we've forgotten. Perhaps nowadays, in some ways, it's the most important of all - even rivaling that between husband and wife! What is that?

Jyotipala: Between the boss and the. ...

S.: Yes! Master and servant - employer and employee. SO if that is the most important relationship in your life, what does that fact tell you about your attitude towards life?

Voice: It's economic.

S.: It's economic, yes.

Gerry: But what is economic at heart, surely that's a thing of a particular generation or a particular culture. Surely it's got its heart at something much deeper.

S.: Well, what is that?

Gerald: Isn't it a sort of modern version of the feudal relationship in some ways.



You're looking for- protection, and what that means nowadays, is economic protection.

S.: Well, yes and no. All these relationships other than the vertical - all horizontal relationships let's say, relationships which are horizontal from the spiritual point of view, have one thing in common, - they're all grounded on power. So they all involve in a way, protection. They all involve indulgence, they're all mundane. So they all have those particular features in common. But it would seem that, since the Industrial Revolution, since the growth of the Capitalist type of economy, the relationship between employer and employee has become- -much much more important, and much more central than it was before. And it has even been invested with, not to say glorified by, a particular kind of ideology. I was reading for instance, an article in the Economist a few days ago, about the way in which young executives are trained, especially in the United States. They're sent on special courses and they're groomed to be 'young executives'. And one of the points apparently that is being made, on these sort of courses is, that family life is quite inconsistent with the life of a young executive. He's not encouraged to get married. He's not encouraged to enter into the sort of relationships in a serious way, because they'll take up too much time and energy. They'll limit his mobility and in that way, impede his career as a rising young executive. So one gets the impression of almost a sort of - 'Capitalist asceticism' - is expected of him. It's as though Capitalism requires a sort of

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asceticism of you. You've got to give yourself up completely to that sort of life. Dedicate yourself completely to getting on in your particular firm or even hopping from one firm to another, rising higher and higher all the time. Mammon is your God in a way and you're prepared to sacrifice yourself on the altar of Mammon. So here are these young executives, being told in a way, in much the same sort of thing we tell people on retreats in the FWBO! - but for entirely different reasons. It's a sort of 'black asceticism' you might call it, rather than the pure white kind that we practise. (Laughter) So here you see the relationship is not so much with a boss in the personal sense, it's with the firm. The firm may be represented by the managing director or what not but it's perhaps more or at least as much, with the firm, as an institution as it is with any particular individual. But here you see this is a very significant thing, this whole question of the most important relationship. You can't get away from relationships. It means, people have sometimes asked me, in the past, 'Well, does the FWBO encourage relationships?' Well, in a way, it's an absurd question, because relationships are inevitable. To be a human being is to relate, is to have relationships. The only question is, well, with whom? Relationships of what kind? So one of the distinguishing features, one of the distinguishing characteristics of Buddhism is that it places such tremendous emphasis on the vertical relationship. One mustn't though, look at that in a one-sided way. It also puts emphasis on horizontal relationships, which are vertically related themselves. Do you see what I mean? That is to say, if you - let me sort of draw it diagrammatically - that'll be easier I think - (He draws as he's talking) : If you've got the horizontal here and the vertical here, here is you. Let's call you - what shall we call you? - mustn't call you 'son' - If I call you disciple and here's the Guru. So this is your most important relationship. But also there are other people who from your point of view, have the same relationships. Do you see? So here you've got 'D'. So there is also the relationship like that. You see what I mean? So this kind of horizontal relationship is also vertically oriented.

The horizontal relationship which you have with other people whose vertical

relationship is the same as yours is of a quite different kind from the horizontal relationship you have with- people who do not share the same vertical relationship with you. You see what I mean? 59 that kind of horizontal relationship has something of the quality of a vertical relationship in it. Its basis is in fact, a common vertical relationship. So it is not a horizontal relationship, pure and simple. So that relationship which is of course, the relationship which you have with fellow members of the Sangha, is, one might even say, of equal importance in Buddhism, because you've not only a refuge in the Buddha, you have refuge in the Sangha.

Ratnaguna: Would you say, it's a bit of an indirect vertical relationship?

S.: You could say it's an indirect vertical relationship. So you could say that was friendship in the sense of spiritual friendship, because amongst those with whom you have that kind of horizontal relationship, some are more horizontal than others, if you see what I mean. There may be some who - I mean may not be Gurus, well, at least they're sort of - well to use that terminology - rather like elder brothers, or older friends.

(End of Side A)

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Ratnaguna: Do you think then it's not possible to have a spiritual relationship, a spiritual friendship with someone, who hasn't got the same Guru as you?

S.: That's quite a broad question. I think that I could say that, you can have the intensest spiritual friendship, only with someone who does have the same vertical relationship, i.e. the same Guru, but you can have a spiritual friendship surely with someone who has some kind of vertical commitment, even though technically not the same Guru as you. You see what I mean? There is a difference of degree, or a difference of alignment, so to speak.

~auna: What about artists and poets who don't have the same sort of conception as you, but who have got a higher ideal?

S.: Well that depends on whether the artist does have a higher ideal and has it as an artist - whether it is a genuine ideal, not something tacked on. In that case, yes, if there was some ideal, implicit even in his life and in his work, in his outlook, yes, you would be able to strike up a spiritual friendship with him at least to some extent, because some kind of very broad common base would be there. So you can see therefore that Buddhism emphasizes the spiritual tradition, the spiritual community and so, and you don't get that sort of emphasis I think, in modern Western life. So you can see from all this that the fact that your most important relationship in life, is of a certain kind, a certain nature, affects your whole attitude towards life. If you take the case I mentioned, say, of the rising young executive being discouraged from getting married, well, it's seeing that there is a clash between the two. There cannot be two full-time commitments. Supposing you are a rising young executive, supposing you are married and then you're offered a very important promotion, well that would take you to a foreign country, away from your wife and family. Well, then you have to face up to, "Well which is most important? Is my career more important? Is my relationship with my boss more important, my firm more important, or my relationship with my wife and

family? Which is going to be sacrificed to which? You get sometimes this kind of clash, %~ this kind of conflict.

Ratnaguna: Do you think an~ne of these kind of relationships, are better than the other from our point of view?

S.: Which?

Ratnaguna: Well, say the young executive vs. the young married man - from our point of view which would you say is the more positive?

S.: Oh (Laughter). I would rather question which one was the less negative. It would be ver~ifficult to say - one would have to look at the individual example. There are firms and firms - there are marriages and marriages. One would have to look at each one individually.

Ratnaguna: Are there any cultures with teacher and pupil as the important relationship?

S Yes. This of course, can shade off into a genuinely vertical Ireationship. In Hinduism, in Brahminical Hinduism, the relationship between teacher and pupil is veryimportant. But this is later on distinguished from the relationship between spiritual teacher and pupil. But sometimes the line of distinction isn't always very clear. In Hinduism they distinguish between Vidya Guru and (Diksa?)

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Guru, sometimes. Vidya Guru - the Guru who imparts knowledge - that is the teacher in the ordinary sense and (Diksa?) Gur'i - the Guru who imparts initiation or spiritual inspiration. Obviously the same person can ~ulfill both functions but the two functions are distinct. And sometimes the persons are kept distinct. One person for ~this function, one person for that function. But Indians generally, and Tibetans generally, tend to have respect for teachers of all kinds, whether secfillar or spiritual, even for the teacher from whom they learned the 'ABC'. They retain respect for him, all through their lives. That is to say, that constituted the f-oun-d-a-tion of my kno~ledge and my education. Even if you far outstrip the old teacher who taught you 'ABC', you still retain your respect and your veneration for him. He laid the foundation. He's still a teacher.

Ratnaguna: It seems to me the most positive culture would be the one that started with father and son and went onto pupil and teacher and then guru and disc~ip~e.

S.: Yes, that is true. Also of course, sometimes you find, in some traditions, the same person fulfilling all three. There is your own father who begets you, let us say, who trains you when you are small, who teaches you your 'ABC', who takes you through various subjects, who when you become old enough, even initiates you. That is very rare indeed, because people of that kind are very rare. But the possibility is not ruled out. But it can become a sort of formality. Your father, perhaps managing to teach you, but when it comes to initiation, well, it's probably just a formality because by virtue of the fact that he is embedded in worldly life, he hasn't been able to keep up those spiritual interests to a sufficient degree.

Then you get a system whereby he formally initiates you, so you become technically a

-spiritual ~teacher and then you go through the whole routine again.. This is what has happened with the Buddhism of Nepal and to some extent with some of the Tibetan Nyingmapas. You not only become your pupil but your disciple and your Guru in turn. You get this sort of thing in some sects of Hinduism. So you get sort of hereditary Guruships. You get it in Islam - you get it in Judaism - the son of a Rabbi becoming a Rabbi. You get this with some families in England, in the Church of England. The son of a clergyman becomes a clergyman. It becomes sort of hereditary in certain families. Sometimes they do manage to reach a certain spiritual level, but more often than not, the whole thing just becomes purely hereditary and, formal as with the Brahmins of India. So it's a very important question that one can ask is, "what is the most important relationship in my life?" That will tell you a lot about yourself and your whole attitude towards life. If you ask yourself, "Well, if I have to sacrifice one relationship to another, which is the one that I would sacrifice?" To which? That would tell you, as I've said an awful lot about yourself, your whole outlook upon life. If you think that your relationship, say, with your wife or with your girlfriend is the most important relationship in your life, and if it came to the crunch, you'd sacrifice everything else to that, you can't be a Buddhist. Not in the full sense. That doesn't mean that a Buddhist can't be married or can't have a girlfriend, but that that particular relationship cannot be, if you really are a Buddhist who has 'gone for refuge', that cannot be the primary relationship in your life. So that's quite a thought, isn't it? It doesn't mean you can't give it any place at all, but you won't give it, as it were, the most important place. It'll have its place, perhaps its place in the Mandala, not right at the centre. You won't have your wife's photograph right in the centre of the

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Mandala - there's the Buddha there, but she can have a place in the corner (Laughter) - you're not going to throw her-- outside of the Mandala altogether. Well maybe she has a place in the Mandala in her own right anyway. Perhaps she wants to be in the Mandala. But you're not going to put her place right in the middle. That place is reserved for the Buddha. This is a question from the Buddhist point of view, of a sense of proportion and priority.

Robin: I hope this is not too much of a side track but something that has been puzzling me for some time is why it is that a lot of the greatest thinkers and artists in England and in the West, in general, have been very solitary people and don't seem to have had at least as far as one can tell many close relationships with spiritual equals, let alone superiors.

S.: I think I'd begin there by questioning the assumption itself. For instance, alright take Mozart - look at his father. His father was an accomplished musician - not a great composer but a good composer, technically well-versed in the music of his day. He gave young Mozart a thorough grounding in the technicalities of music, taught him instruments encouraged him. So Mozart is a conspicuous exception. What about Bach? Coming from a whole family of musicians, giving birth to sons who were musicians, nephews and grandsons who were musicians. I mean, there were 36 Musical Bachs listed, all of whom left compositions. That's another big exception. And who else is there? Can you think of anybody else like that?

Gerry: D.H. Lawrence.

Vimala-mi-tra: Scarlatti.

S.: There's the two Scarlattis, - you see what I mean? So I think modern post-Romantic times we've got the picture of the artist as a solitary...as an individual, not to say an individualist. We think in terms of Beethoven shaking his fist at the aristocracy and Byron ostracized by the aristocracy and the solitary defiant figures. But that's a comparatively recent and limited development. I mean, in the Renaissance period, say, in Italy, you find that painters were in regular contact with one another - they sparked one another off. They eagerly studied one another's work. They were in communication, but it's only apparently after certain social and cultural developments - that we can't go into now - only after the sort of Romantic period that there was a tendency for the artist to be isolated from society. Do you see what I mean? This doesn't seem to be a universal phenomenon or necessary. This has been remarked upon. I think T.S. Eliot has spoken about the difficulty that the artist feels when he has no accepted tradition through which to work. That is very much the modern predicament. It's as though the artist is an individual in many cases, who has outgrown his particular cultural tradition, who can't be a Christian, in the Orthodox sense at least any more. So find people like Blake, people like D.H. Lawrence who were quite isolated and had hardly anybody with whom they could really communicate, but that would seem to be exceptional, an exceptional case due to certain historical developments in the West. And it does seem clear, in some cases at least, not having a tradition through which to work, not having people of equal status, so to speak, with whom to communicate, has a damaging effect on the artist, contributes to eccentricity and onesidedness. This is certainly true of Blake and is probably true to D.H. Lawrence as well. How much better it would have been, perhaps for Blake and for Lawrence if there were 2 or 3 other people around of the same wavelength looking at things, at least the same broad general framework of reference. But they were very, very isolated and Blake especially, perhaps.

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Blake managed to remain comparatively healthy and sane, none the less. D.H. Lawrence didn't manage so well. Perhaps by the time he was born the situation had grown very much worse.

Vimalamitra: Isn't there a danger though - alright, you're in contact with other artists, but maybe they wouldn't have gone so far unless they were on their own, felt they were on their own, weren't tempted in some way by, you know, knowing other artists. They could have been happier, as it were, with the companionship of other artists but maybe not have gone as far, pushed as far.

S.: But it does seem that really great artists are helped in their work by their contact with other artists, equally great. For instance, if one thinks in terms of music, there is the elderly Haydn's contact with the youthful Mozart. Mozart is generally considered to have been a much greater musician - a much greater composer than Haydn, but Haydn's later compositions, show the influence of Mozart. He learned from Mozart. Apparently in a way, he didn't learn from anybody else, even though Mozart was a very much younger man. But Haydn had that sort of openmindedness. He fully recognized Mozart's genius. In fact he told Mozart's father: He said, "I swear on my honour that your son the greatest musician who has ever lived". He had that sort of opinion of Mozart even though Mozart was thirty or more years younger than he was and he allowed himself to be influenced by Mozart's music.

Gerry: By Beethoven's music rather than Mozart's.

S.: By Mozart's, but at the very end of his life, of course, he would also come in contact with the youthful Beethoven. I'm not sure if he was influenced by Beethoven to the extent that he was influenced by Mozart because Beethoven was very much a beginner, whereas Mozart, when Haydn met him, though very young, was fully mature as a musician. But what I'm trying to get at is that contact with other artists as great as yourself, if not greater, can have a much more stimulating effect, than the stimulus of just-having to work on your own. Sometimes, having to work on your own, and having to overcome so many obstacles, and not having anyone to understand or sympathize can be very discouraging and if it does stimulate you at all, it can be more reactive kind of a way - "Well, I'll show--them!" - that sort of way. There was something of that in Beethoven. I think probably - but it's very difficult to be sure - that it isn't always to the advantage of the music or the painting or whatever it is.

Gerry: It's been said that Beethoven had he been taught by Mozart as opposed to Haydn, he would have been better still, is that..

S.: I've no means of telling. (Laughter) I just couldn't say. Well, for instance, amongst the great artists of the Renaissance, we know that Michaelangelo and Raphael were in personal contact. They knew each other's work. Raphael was in fact, influenced by Michaelangelo's work and so on. So also, it does perhaps seem that those periods which are culturally most active, are periods when there are a whole school, and not were, of musicians, a whole school of painters. You don't seem to get just one... Sometimes you do get just one here and one there at the very greatest, but more often it's as though there's an upsurge involving a lot of people. They seem to spark each other off. Just like the sculptors of Classical Greece or like the painters of the Italian Renaissance, or like the musicians of Baroque Germany, or the Elizabethan playwrights, or the Victorian novelists. So probably for the artist it is better to be spurred on by other artists who are as good as you and who sort of challenge you

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rather than to be spurred on by the indifference or hostility of the masses who don't understand you at all. This is what I would think. But nonetheless the individual can go very far by himself, but in the same way, I think he goes even further, if he has the support of other individuals.

Ratnaguna: You've spoken of Beethoven's music as having quite a lot of will, disguised as power. Do you think that would be a result of that.

S.: I think it has something to do with Beethoven's having been in the sort of situation I've described.

Voice: Do you think somebody who's on their own would have to use quite a lot of will to get there, rather than inspiration?

S.: It's not so much using will, in connection with your art itself, but will to overcome obstacles and to counteract indifference or hostility. You need to be a very sturdy independent character. And you might have to develop those qualities at the expense of your sensitivity and so~on. That is also possible. I think very often you create better out of a mood of sort of mellow happiness and fulfillment, rather than out of bitterness, frustration and disappointment. If you are bitter and frustrated and disappointed, I think it cannot but affect the quality of your work. It may be~very great work butthe~re's a sort of - but it is flawed in a way. A note of bitterness creeps into it.

Gerry: What about the last symphonies that Mozart did? He did them in great pain.

S.: But do we know that he did them in great pain?

Gerry: He was ha~ving a hard time!

S.: Well, may be! Milarepa also had a hard time! (Laughter)

Gerald: It's interesting that the modern image of the artist is someone who is very much bitter, frustrated, a rebel, at odds with society.

S.: What I'm saying is that, that is not essential to the definition of the artist - that is a deformation of the artist, brought about as a result of particular cultural and historical conditions.

Gerald: It must be almost very recent, though. I was thinking, say, of the Impressionist painters, who seemd to combine both of those - the element of rebelliousness but at the same time, people who were very integrated into society and very happy people like Monet.

S.: It depends of course, how you're integrated into society - - whether you're integrated as an artist or in some other capacity. For instance, I'm thinking of Wordsworth. He was integrated into society as a minor civil servant enjoying a sinecure. He was dis- tributor of stamps for Westmoreland and employed someone to do the work for him on a much smaller salary than what he received himself, and he lived on the balance. So he was integrated into society. But was Wordsworth the poet, integrated into society in the sense that his vision of nature is an in~ral part of the culture and divilization of his time? No, certainly not. Wordsworth as a poet was an outsider. He wasn't a part of society. He lived outside society - he sort of sensed this. He stayed away from Lo~ndon. He lived in the La'ke District, which was further away from London in those days than perhaps New Zealand is from England now.

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It took several days to get there. But in Ancient times the poet as poet was integrated into society. I heard on the radio, a few weeks ago, a very interesting little program about the poet Pindar. Pindar is perhaps regarded as perhaps, the greatest of the non- epic and non-dramatic poets of Aticient Greece and his work consists entirely of what we call 'odes',

especially odes which are in connection with various games - the Olympic games, the Pithian games and so on and he wrote odes, celebrating the victory - either the contestant himself or the owner of the horses that won and so on. So, you know very well I think what an important place the games occupied in Ancient Greek life. SO after the games, the winners celebrated their victory in a really magnificent sort of way - were entertained and feted by their friends and as part of the celebrations - as the most important part of the celebrations, some great poet was hired as we would say, to compose an ode. So he composed his ode - Pindar composed his ode. He was the most popular and the most sought-after composer of odes of this sort. And he trained a chorus to recite this ode on the occasion of the victory celebration - recite the ode to the accompaniment of music. In this program - or rather the program itself dealt with a modern German musician's attempt to reconstruct the music to which the ode must have been chanted. And it gave you a general description of what happened. There would be a great feast and after the feast the poet who composed the ode would be seated in a special high chair with the chorus arranged around him and then to musical accompaniment that the poet himself, with the musicians and others joining in from time to time, would recite his victory ode and that this was the center of the whole occasion. So in this way, you can see poetry was thoroughly integrated and the poet was thoroughly integrated into the social and cultural life. So there's no question here, of the poet being an outcast, a rebel, and a lonely figure. He is very much sought after, very much admired and his poetry was fully in accordance with the highest ideals of the culture to which he belonged. Pindar's odes are well-known for their remarkable loftiness of thought and their grand eloquence and their inspiration, their mythological allusions and their beauty. They were thoroughly appreciated by people at those times and Pindar himself was highly honoured wherever he went; so much so, that when a hundred or so years later, Alexander the Great, swept down from Macedon on his way to conquer Athens, he passed through Thebes, where Pindar had been born, - well he destroyed Thebes - destroyed the whole city, but he gave orders that the house of Pindar should be spared. That should be left standing. This is the sort of reputation that Pindar enjoyed from Ancient Greece, right down to the time of Alexander. So that's a quite different picture of the poet, of the artist. That is perhaps more characteristic of history as a whole than our modern picture of the artist as young rebel or angry young man or whatever.

Gerry: Might that not be because of society itself. There was possibly something really good about Greek society, that the artist could latch on to whereas maybe....

S.: Well, yes.

Gerry: ... a lot would almost react against our society.

S.: Because if the artist is a true individual, well, if the artist finds himself out of harmony with his age, because the age itself is out of harmony with ideal of individuality and so on, of course he will react against it quite justifiably. (Laughter) That is not to say that all who react are artists. I mean, that is the modern

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fallacy. The artist reacts against his age if necessary, but ~ll those who react are not artists, even all those who react and write about the reaction are not artists! What they write might



be signs of capitulation, in fact. Signs that something is wrong but not amounting really to art.

Anyway, that was another cadenza, wasn't it? (Laughter) Let's go on. So, "Good it is to maintain harmony with one's father by right deeds, good it is to repay one's mother's kindness and bounties, good it is to act in concord with all." And here Milarepa seems to be talking more about the 'positive group' than about the spiritual community. Here father seems to be intended in a quite literal sense, because mother is also mentioned. SO, "Good it is to maintain harmony with one's father by right deeds". Why especially by 'right deeds'? Perhaps we can't take the translation here too literally - by behaving properly.

Voice: Following the precepts.

S.: Following the precepts but particularly perhaps, by behaving properly towards your father. Maintain harmony with your father by treating him properly.

Voice: Maybe also by not damaging his reputation.

S.: By not damaging his reputation and "Good it is to repay one's mother's kindness and bounties". I mean, it's a form of gratitude, but perhaps, having spoken so highly about the vertical relationship, the relationship with the spiritual teacher, Milarepa wants to make it clear that he's not denigrating one's relationship with one's

ordinary father, or with one's mother and he ends up by saying "good it is to act in concord with all".

Nowadays, in Western Europe and in North America, it is well-known that people are often out of harmony with their fathers and mothers, on account perhaps of particular cultural and historical developments. Things are changing very rapidly. Children learn things that their parents never heard about. So this tends to distance them from their parents. I mean in the old times if you got into difficulty at school - if you couldn't manage your homework, you just asked your father to help; usually he could. But nowadays at school you learn subjects that your father knows nothing about. You can't get any help from him. So if you're not careful, you start thinking that your father's an old fogey - somebody who doesn't know anything. You don't feel there's anything that you can talk to him about. You are quite remote from him and this leads to a certain degree of alienation. Or in the field of morals - moral ideas have changed very much over the last few years. I mean, your ideas on moral subjects may be very different from the father's and mother's. They may feel that you're leading a very wicked sort of a life.. You may feel that you're just leading a quite ordinary life for a young man, or a young woman as the case may be. So these different moral standards and values could lead to disharmony and discord. There have been such rapid changes over the last few years, that the generations are further apart than they were before, - it seems, in many cases. And this in a sense, leads to disharmony and discord. So it requires a special effort to maintain harmony with one's father and one's mother and - in fact with other members of the group, other members of the family. The way that standards have changed. ...

I was talking to somebody the other day, and I was referring to women wearing trousers. I can remember that before the War, when I was a boy, women just didn't wear trousers! And I remember that I had an aunt who had newly married one of my uncles, who was a source

of a great scandal in the family because she actually wore trousers - sometimes even when she went out shopping!!

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This was considered quite scandalous. And I can remember my mother expressing her indignation about it or at least her surprise. But the last time I went to see my mother and take her out, she was wearing trousers, at the age of 83. (Laughter) Sokhe doesn't think anything of it now. So this is how things have changed over the years. But of course, for some old ladies of that age, might have retained their feelings about trousers being improper wear for women and if they had daughters or granddaughters, they would have been correspondingly out of harmony with them, because of that. But probably over the last 50 years, things have changed more rapidly in Western Europe and in North America', in this respect for people, than ever before in history! Formerly very slight changes occurred from generation to generation. Now tremendous changes occur from generation to generation.

Gerry: Is this a good thing?

S.: Well, what does one mean by 'good'? It certainly creates problems; it imposes stresses - these aren't always easy to cope with. It raises the whole question of the nature of progress. Do these changes add up to real progress? That's not a question that's easy to answer. So for the fact of matter is, for these various reasons in - I'm carefully delimiting the area - in Western Europe and North America, things are rather different in certain other parts of the world - it requires a special effort on the part of children, to remain on friendly terms or positive terms with their parents and elders. But it is important psychologically as I've often mentioned, that one should remain on friendly terms with parents and elders, especially parents. -Because by virtue of the fact that you are their child there is a tie, there is a relationship. It goes very deep, because you were closely associated with them when you were young. There is a tie! The only question is whether it's going to be a positive tie or a negative tie. Unfortunately, very often it's negative or negative to some extent. You can't repudiate that tie altogether. You may not go to see your parents, but psychologically you're still connected with them. The only choice that you have is between a negative relationship with them - or a negative attitude towards them and a positive one. But what you cannot have is an attitude of real indifference. You can't actually break off your connection with them. You can discontinue your dependence, but you can only do that by really growing up and having a mature attitude towards them. But what you can't do is the behave, or to act or to live as though - you never had any parents. That's not possible, because you did have and you do have. You may not ever see them - you may not ever think about them, but you can still have a positive attitude towards them, in a sense that you're free from any resentment and you wish them well. When I say that it's necessary to have a positive relationship with one's parents, I don't mean that you should necessarily live with them or go and see them every weekend or write them long letters. You may not have any physical contact with them at all. You may never see them for years on end or ever write to them but nonetheless, your attitude can be positive. Your relationship with them can be positive. In fact it should be because if there's a residue of negativity towards your parents, that will go quite deep into your nature and it will affect things generally. I mean, if

you find that ~ou actually do hate your parents, well, clearly that is something that you have to get over. It may be, in a sense, from an ordinary human point of -view, they deserve your hatred - could be! they might have brought you up very badly - might have made a terrible mess of your childhood! your early life,

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but that is no reason for your continuing to have a negative attitude towards them. If you do that'll only hold you back~

So you have to forgive your parents, if necessary.

(End of Tape 5)

S.: So, Milarepa goes on: "One's wish can be fulfilled if he is on good terms with his brothers." It seems to me that the context has been changed slightly. I think one's back with a spiritual community, not with a family. Brothers in the spiritual sense; fellow disciples of the same teacher. So, "One's wish can be fulfilled if he's on good terms with his brothers". What does that mean? What is one's wish here in this context?

Voice: Enlightenment.

S.: Enlightenment or the spiritual growth, spiritual development. So, 'one's wish can be fulfilled if he's on good terms with his brothers'. What does this mean? How can your being on good terms with your spiritual brothers affect your spiritual growth and spiritual development?

Surata: If you're on good terms with them, you're more likely to be in communication.

S.: Yes, indeed. There is more Kalyana Mitrata and Kalyana Mitrata is highly conducive to spiritual growth and spiritual development, indeed! So, 'one's wish can be fulfilled if he's on good terms with his brothers'. To please one's Guru is to gain his blessings'. What does it mean, 'to please one's Guru'? Please him in what sort of way?

Gerry: To show that you're advancing.

S.: To show that you're advancing - so that 'to please one's Guru is to gain his blessings'. That is, if you do your bit, he will do his. In a sense, he's doing his bit all the time. It's as if the tap is constantly flowing, the water is constantly going, but you've got to put your cup underneath it. It's like that. So, if you please him, you automatically get his blessings. "To be humble is to succeed". What is this being humble? We've got the English word here. I don't know what the Tibetan word here is. But what does being humble mean? How do you succeed? By being humble? Or in fact it doesn't say that if you take it literally, to be humble is to succeed. How do you succeed by being humble?

Ratnaguna: Is it a bit like the opposite of pride and arrogance and you're not being egoistic,

you're just being (open in yourself).

S.: If you're humble it means, it means there's less of ego, there's more of patience - to that extent itself you've made spiritual progress. So to that extent, itself, you succeed. I think the word 'humble' for us has got all sorts of undesirable, even unBuddhist connotations.

Gerry: Sackcloth and ashes.

S.: Well, I suppose there's not much wrong with sackcloth and ashes necessarily (Laughs) but what about Uriah Heep - well we always think of Uriah Heep when we use the word 'humble' - "because I'm a very humble man"...

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nauna: Is that pseudo-humility in this case? He's not really humble is he?

S.: No? What is he? What is he doing? It's just a manoeuvre. It's just putting people off their guard, making out that you're very lowly and unimportant and that you don't have any power. This is just to put people off their guard so that you may all the better, take advantage of them. But that is not being really humble. But what is being really humble? Is it having a sort of low estimate of yourself?

Jyotipala: A realistic estimate.

S.: Yes, it's a realistic estimate of yourself. So really 'humble' isn't a very appropriate word, is it - actually at all. I did make the point - I'm not sure if it was in this group or the other - that the Buddha, somewhere or there said that one shouldn't think of oneself as being either superior, inferior or even equal to others. I mean, that's a real humility, when you don't think in those sort of terms at all. So if you're humble in that way, you really do succeed. You have succeeded already, because you're not egoistic, not competitive.

Gerry: Does it also go back to what you were saying yesterday, that if you're humble, then there's a greater chance that you will follow the Guru?

S.: Humble in the sense of being open and receptive, yes. Then Milarepa goes on: "A good Buddhist is one who conquers all bad dispositions". This 'bad dispositions' is not a very precise term. Perhaps it represents the Sanskrit 'Klesas' - defilements. But anyway, the good Buddhist is one who conquers all negative mental states or unskillful mental states - overcomes all unskillful mental states, which is a pretty obvious sort of thing, but perhaps we need to be reminded of it. But what one is concerned with as a Buddhist, - what one is concerned with as one who 'goes for refuge' is the transformation of your own state of mind, the transformation of your own consciousness and that means the elimination of all unskillful mental states, as well as the production of all skillful mental states and in fact the continued production of those skillful mental states in a sort of uninterrupted flow. That's the basic thing! So it's alright to circumambulate and make prostrations and chant, but the basic thing

that you're concerned with is the transformation of your mind from a stream of skilful~and unskilful, or even entirely unskilful mental states, into a stream of wholly skilful mental states - that's your basic preoccupation. That's what you're really concerned with. Not with anything else. (Pause) It's rather like what the Buddha says in the Dhammapada, where he says: 'Sabbapapassa akaranam, kusalassa upasampada' and so on - that is to say, the 'non-doing of all evil, the causing to arise of all good, the purification of the mind' - this is the teaching of all of the Buddhas.- It's as simple as that, really. That's all you really to know. That's the text, all the rest is voluntary (Laughs) So, it's all here: 'A good Buddhist is one who conquers all bad dispositions'. A good Buddhist is one who gets rid of all unskilful mental states.

Ratna una: That's not only is so far as Samatha? Isn't it a bit more than that?

S.: No. Because unskilful mental states are rooted ultimately in craving and ignorance. Aren't they?

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Ratnaguna: But you can be really positive but have no Insight.

S.: You couldn't be positive without insight indefinitely and under all circumstances. You come up against circumstances which would put an end to your positivity. Suppose someone appeared and was going to shoot you - what would happen to your skilful mental states then? Or if you just came out of a Dhyana state, the chances are that at first you wouldn't react in any way, but after a few minutes if that person was still holding the gun, you start feeling some fear. In other words, an unskilful mental state would arise. But not if your stream of consciousness was imbued with Insight. You'd just see the situation for what it was, but without any unskilful mental state arising in consequence. So you can ensure the continued and uninterrupted production of skilful mental states only by developing Insight. You do have that flow of skilful mental states in meditation, but in The Dhyanas, it's very precarious, it can be disturbed. You could say that Samatha is like the picture you draw, maybe with coloured chalks or with oil pastels. It's very delicate. It can easily be brushed off or smudged and you need to fix it by spraying it with some kind of fixative and that's like the Insight. It fixes the picture. That's not a very good analogy in a way, because there is in fact nothing fixed, it's all flowing. But the Insight is like the fixative.

John.: You were mentioning Samatha and Vipassana yesterday or the day before. Is the only way of developing Vipassana through meditation? Vipassana meditation?

S.: When you say Vipassana meditations, what do you mean?

John : presumably the only thing I really know about this is visualization that Order members practise.

S.: Visualizations are not necessarily Vipassana practices, because first of all there is the actual visualization of the Buddha or Bodhisattva that can be a purely Samatha experience.

But if you reflect upon, if you realize the significance of that figure, what that figure represents, then that represents the possibility for the development of Insight. You can develop Insight even with regards to an abstract geometrical figure that you visualize. You can, for instance, visualize a red disc and so when you visualize that red disc and concentrate upon it, that is a Samatha type experience, a Samatha type meditation. Then you can start reflecting that this red disc which I now see has arisen on dependence on certain conditions. -For instance, on the fact that I have concentrated my mind, etc. etc. Then you can go on to reflect, 'well, all mental states arise in dependence upon the appropriate conditions. - All things whatsoever arise in dependence upon conditions. There is nothing that does not arise independent of conditions'. In that way, using that red disc as a basis, you start developing insight into the conditionality of all mundane existence. You see what I mean? So in the same way you visualize the Buddha or the Bodhisattva. To the extent that it's just a visualization, it's just a pretty picture. It's something beautiful and attractive. So the experience is of Samatha - a Samatha experience but if you start reflecting, 'well, this is the Buddha, this is the high spiritual ideal, this is what I must wholly devote my life to. Nothing else is of any value' - that is all of a Vipassana nature. You see what I mean? There are other Vipassana practices - for instance the recollection of the Nidana Chain - 'in dependence upon ignorance, arises craving' and so on. And then there is the Element practice where you think of all the solid matter in your body as being given back to the earth element,

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and all that is fluid in your body being given back to the water element and so on. And this becomes the basis of understanding, even of Insight. There is nothing so solid and stable and fixed in human personality whether materially or mentally. So this gives rise to Insight. So in this way we progress, in one way or another, from the Samatha-type experience, Dhyana-type experience to the Vipassana-type experience. And there are many ways of doing this. But all Buddhist methods or systems of meditations which are in any way comprehensive, contain a Samatha element and a Vipassana element. It's generally held, at least in the Theravada, that the Metta Bhavana is a purely Samatha practice, but this can be doubted. If you practise Metta Bhavana to a considerable extent it merges with Vipassana practise, because if you develop Metta for all living beings equally, well, then you're having an equal attitude towards all and that means that you're seeing them as all essentially non-different. So you have a sort of appreciation of Sunyata and that involves the element of Vipassana. So I don't think that Metta Bhavana can be restricted to the Samatha level, in the way, that it very often is, in the Theravada. In fact the attitude of many Theravadans towards Metta Bhavana is very patronizing. Oh yes, that's a very good little practice - that's OK for the lay people" - you know as though - it's just a trifle as though any body is capable of it which is quite far from being the case.

Ratnaguna: Is that what you meant? I took John to mean is Vipassana only possible through a formal meditation practice?

John: Yeah

S.: Ah! Vipassana is something extreme~y penetrating and powerful so in order for Vipassana to be really Vipassana and not just an intellectual understanding you need behind the Vipassana the combined force of your whole being - your whole energies have to be united behind it and that sort of uniting of energies, you usually get only in connection with meditation - only the systematic practice of meditation, i.e. the Samatha - will unify and mobilize your energies to such an extent that they can give the necessary impetus to your 'intellectual understanding' so that it's transformed into Insight. But sometimes you may not necessarily be sitting and meditating in a formal way. It can be that on some other occasion, under some other circumstances your energies are all in harmony, all unified, all integrated, all flowing in the same direction and Insight may arise. You don't have to be sitting and meditating in the shrine in a formal sense. The principle is that no Insight without virtual total unification of your energies behind the intellectual activity which results in Insight. For most people that sort of integration comes only by a - the systematic practice of what we call meditation. (Pause) Alright, let's go on: "Kindness is toleration of slanderers". It could be that kindness represents the Paramita of Ksanti - patience. Because it's difficult to see how kindness in the strict sense is simply toleration of slanderers. "To be modest is to gain fame and popularity". Perhaps Milarepa is a little old-fashioned here. Do you think that if you are modest, you will gain fame and popularity? Or do gain fame and popularity? Is this any longer the case?

Voice: No!

Gerald: It could be, because you're so exceptional that you could be famous for being modest because it's a comparatively exceptional virtue. (Laughter)

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S.: Who is famous for being modest? Is it Mr. Muggeridge? Or who is it? Who is famous for being modest nowadays? Who is famous for being unwilling to appear on T.V.? (Laughter)

Gerry: Marlene Dietrich -- (Laughter) Voice: Greta Garbo

Voice: (Ian Mikardo)

S.: No, I think this is a little out of date. I don't think this really works anymore, in this way. Not in the days of the media.

Ratnaguna: Do you think it ever works?

S.: I think it could work in a very limited social environment, where everybody knew everybody else. Then in a small village where there is a few hundred people and you could become personally known to everybody. It would be possible under those circumstances for particular person to be known for his modesty. I'd say it's possible within the FWBO. You might get somebody who is well-known for his modesty, but I think not among the public at large.

Voice: What does modesty mean? It's a bit like humble, isn't it?

S.: It seems somewhat more positive than humble. What is modesty? Not overstepping the mark, not pushing yourself forward.

Jyotipala: It also has a slight connotation of - when there is an opportunity for you to step forward and others to step forward at the same time, you would actually hold yourself back so that others can go forward and have more chances. So it's more positive in that sense. It's a positive sort of denigration, in a sense, holding yourself back so that others can get there. You'd have equal chance to get these things but you'd hold yourself back so that others can have it. It's quite altruistic in a sense. S.: Yes, right. (Pause) One gets the impression of what - I call- media personalities' are nowadays anything but modest. Anyway, it goes on: "To maintain pure discipline is to do away with pretense and concealment. S1 'To do away with pretense and concealment' - this is considered as very important in the Buddha's teaching - that you should appear to be and progress to be, no other than what you actually are. It isn't an easy thing to achieve. Was it in this group that we talked about hypocrisy? Yes? If you're hypocritical, if you do indulge in pretense and concealment, the worst effect, I think, that this has upon your personality

so to speak, your character is that you're divided. It makes you even slightly, well, -I~shouldn't say perhaps schizophrenic, but

certainly schizoid, because you're behaving in two incompatible ways. One, when people are watching you and the other when people are not watching you. You're leading a double life and that can't be psychologically healthy for anybody.

Ratnaguna It suggests you should know yourself, doesn't it?

S.: Well, it suggests a degree of awareness.

Ratnaguna: If you don't know yourself, in a way, you can't help but be hypocritical

S'.: - Well, I think in hypocrisy, an element of conscious and deliber

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ate deception and pretense enters. This is why it is such a serious matter, such a terrible vice. As with the Theravada Bhikkhus, I mentioned who eat after twelve o'clock. They know that they eat after twelve o'clock. They're quite conscious of the fact that it is against the rule, so to speak, but they deliberately deny that they eat after twelve o'clock. This is hypocrisy, this is pretense and it doesn't have a very, at all positive effect on their characters, because they're leading double lives. There's the fear of being found out - there's the necessity to lie, to deceive, not to be open. So in Buddhism a great importance is attached to not concealing any thought. So if you maintain pure discipline, you do away with pretense and concealment. If you're observing the precepts, you have nothing to hide. You can be



perfectly open and being open itself is a great thing. It's a wonderful opportunity. So if one thinks over the matter, one would probably find that one is, you know, completely open, completely free from pretense and concealment in very few situations and with-very few people. You're always thinking what people will think of you - you like to appear in the best possible light and you don't wish that people should think less of you. So almost insensibly, almost without intending to, you hide certain aspects of yourself, or you play them down - you mute them or you make them out to be of less importance to you than they actually are. You make out that they occupy just a corner of the Mandala when- perhaps they occupy a place very near the center. You might say: "Oh, yes, I just have the odd drink, occasionally" - (Laughter) - but the truth might be that you're down at the pub every night of the week, and spend the whole evening there. So if, in your relationship with any particular person, you have to resort to pretense and concealment it means, that you're not being yourself with that particular person and therefore no full and complete and open relationship is possible between you. You're just not really allowing that person to know you or to see you or to experience you, as you are, and that's what happens in most relationships. Isn't it! Even, very often, in those which we consider our closest relationships.

Vimalamitra: Can you really be completely open with people, unless you really are following the precepts?

S.: Well yes, you can. Because even, supposing you break a precept, you can still be open about that. But what makes it possible for you to be open? You can be open about it, say, only with somebody who has the same ideals as you. Because what is the purpose of being open? Because you attach so much importance to being open and also you want to admit or confess that you've broken a particular precept so that by doing that, you can be helped by other people to observe it in future. So you can be open about even your non-observance of precepts with your spiritual friends, because you know that they're not going to use it as an opportunity to attack you. They're not going to think worse of you, essentially, because they recognize that even though you've broken the precept and fallen by the wayside to that extent, nonetheless you do continue to cherish the ideal - they realize that. So your admission of breaking the precept to them can be a positive thing and can help you.

So you don't necessarily have to not break the precepts in order to have that sort of open relationship with somebody, but it's obviously with someone who shares the same spiritual ideals as you. If, of course, you feel that by breaking the precept, breaking the precept you, as it were, put yourself beyond the pale completely, then you may be quite reluctant to speak about those things even to your spiritual friends.

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And that would be very unfortunate, because it would only close the avenues of communication and make it still more difficult for you to pick yourself up and- carry on again. But it is a very good-thing, a very positive thing, a very helpful thing, if you have at least, one or two friends, if not three or four, about whom you feel that you can say just anything. Whatever you say, whatever you have to tell them, they're not going to reject you. They're going to accept what you say, going to accept you and they are going to try to understand whatever it is that you are telling them. But that sort of spiritual friendship is

quite rare. So, 'to maintain pure discipline is to do away with pretense and concealment'. There's no necessity for pretense and concealment if you maintain pure discipline. But what do you think is meant by discipline? Perhaps we shouldn't take this word 'discipline' too literally. It means observing the precepts. It means adopting a lifestyle that enables you to give full expression to your ideals. And then: "To live with a sage is to gain improvement." Is it necessarily to gain improvement? Not necessarily. There is a verse in the Dhammapada which relates to this, in which the Buddha says: "The spoon does not detect the taste of the soup. It's only the tongue that can detect the taste of the soup." In the same way, a fool may live with a wise man but won't learn anything from him. It's only someone who is himself to some extent wise, who can learn from a wise man by living with him. So one doesn't necessarily gain improvement by living with a sage. Well one might not even know that one is living with a sage. You have to be a bit of a sage yourself to be able to recognize that it was in fact a sage that you were living with. So Milarepa's statement requires a little qualification here. He is of course, speaking to Rechungpa and referring presumably to Rechungpa's staying with him, which would certainly mean that Rechungpa would gain improvement. "To be indifferent is to stop all gossip". We went into this a little yesterday, didn't we? That in a sense, if there's gossip about you, rumours about you, talk about you, it's best not to say anything at all. If you try to reply or to rebut, it'll only make the whole thing more - it'll just blow it up still further. It's best just to say nothing. It'll then die down. "To be good and compassionate is to advance one's Bodhi-mind". That is to say, the Bodhicitta. I'm not sure what 'good' means here, but it's quite clear what 'compassionate' means. 'Good' perhaps means, observing the precepts. So in that case, if one observes the precepts and one develops compassion towards all living beings, that is to advance one's Bodhi-mind, one's Bodhicitta, one's aspiration towards Supreme Enlightenment for the benefit of all. This is very straight-forward Mahayana teaching doesn't really require much comment. (Pause) "These are the things a wise man should do, but a fool can never distinguish friend from foe." Why is he saying this? Why is Milarepa saying this to Rechungpa?

Jyotipala: Because that's exactly it. He can't see that Milarepa is trying to help him.

S.: Yes. He can't see that Milarepa is trying to help him. He can't see that Milarepa is his best friend. Regards him almost as an enemy, a rival. So he's certainly not in harmony with him. And then Milarepa says: "Where the (actual practice of the) Path is concerned, the Formless Dakini Dharmas do not mean too much." This in a way, is a quite extraordinary statement. What is he saying?

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The Formless Dakini Dharmas are these teachings, these precious teachings, his esoteric Tantric teachings which Rechungpa has brought from India. Surely they're concerned with the practice of the Path, but Milarepa says: "Where the actual practice of the Path is concerned, the Formless Dakini Dharmas do not mean too much." What does this mean? What is he really saying?

Voice: As far as Rechungpa is concerned, they're not the actual practice of the Dharma. They're just intellectual knowledge from books.

S.: They don't represent that step, the next step which Rechungpa needs to take. For him those Dharmas are not Dharmas! They're not relevant to him, not relevant to his needs. Perhaps they pertain to a stage of the Path far in advance of the stage that he has reached.

So far as they are concerned they are not the Path. They don't mean very much, they're just books. They're just like this Yoga of the Guhyasamaja so far as most of -you are concerned. It's not the Yoga of the Guhyasamaja, it's a book. It doesn't mean very much, doesn't mean too much. It's very important to know, to be able to know what is relevant. There is a sort of - what you might describe as 'spiritual snobbism' in some Buddhist circles, including Western Buddhist circles. People think that because they are to some extent intellectually developed that, whatever it is they are able to understand intellectually, they are qualified to practise. I mean, whether even intellectually they understand it is another question, but they think they intell- ectually understand it. They think they intellectually understand Zen or they think they understand Zen itself, so therefore they think they're qualified to practise. People don't understand to what ex- tent their intellect is divorced from their being. You can have a sort of understanding of the teaching intellectually, but not be very ready to practise it at~all. This is what people often don't understand. So they go for the highest teaching; what their intell- ect recognizes as the most abstruse and advanced teaching and they think that that's what they ought to practise. Only the best, so to speak, is good enough for them! They don't have time for element- ary things - the ABC of Buddhism: the Five Precepts, the Metta Bhavana - that's all kids stuff! They're spiritually mature people! They are capable of understanding Zen and the MahaMudra and (Bhakti) Yoga and all the rest of it! Capable of giving lectures about it, writing books on it, But their being is utterly remote from it really. They don't understand it. They become authorities on Buddhism, even!!

Robin: Was it that that Bodhi-dharma meant when he recited that verse from the Dhammapada to King ...

S.: I'm sure he did, to some extent anyway! But I think in the case of that particular king, what he was up against was extensive good works. The King thought that extensive good works, especially building monasteries and temples and allowing monks to be ordained, or allowi~g people to be ordained as monks was the real practice of the Dharma. So Bodhi-dharma disillusioned him. When I returned from India to England in 1964, some real shocks awaited me in this respect. I remember when I went along to the Buddhist Society summer school, at their invitation, I sat in on one or two of the things that were happening and there was a Zen class. So I just sat in on that rather to the consternation of the woman who has taking it - who afterwards became a friend of ours - so I used to see her occasionally - she broadcasts on Zen now, Buddhism - anyway I sat in on her little class so it was rather a shock to her. So she taught for five minutes - silent meditation

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while she adj us ted her thoughts - and then she gave her talk on Zen! And she said Zen: "well you look out of the- -window and you see the flowers and then you hear the birds singing..." and she went on and on in this way, for a few minutes. She said, "Well, it's all ONE! And that's Zen - that's what Zen is all about." So I thought, well "This is really pathetic!" (Laughter) So I talked some years later. I had a talk with her about it and she did confess that yes, it really was pathetic! She recognized that. But she has read alot of books about Zen since and she's even ~ritten about Zen and broadcast about Zen, but what she doesn't seem to

realize is that she hasn't really got any further than that. She certainly hasn't practised meditation since then - she hasn't gone any deeper. She's just got more and more information about Zen and is able to go waffling on a bit longer than before in a somewhat more sophisticated fashion. So if we're not careful that is what happens. We don't achieve a deeper understanding, a deeper realization - we just become better informed about Buddhism, which is quite another matter. So this particular woman, now apparently regards herself, is regarded by others as an authority on Zen! But she's never been to a Zen monastery or had any Zen training in her life. It's just a little bit of Zen waffle. Then Milarepa goes on to say to Rechungpa: "My relationship with you is much deeper and more important than the Tantric staff of Dipupa." Well, here is Rechungpa - he's brought back from India the staff of some special wood which belonged once upon a time to this great Dipupa.. He thinks he's done a great thing in bringing this back to Tibet, giving it to Milarepa, but Milarepa isn't at all impressed by this staff that Dipupa was alleged to have used. He says, but 'my relationship with you is much deeper and more important than' this so-called Tantric staff. He's trying to bring Rechungpa from external things to internal things. Well, yes, it's nice that Rechungpa's brought him back this present, but what is important, what is more important is his actual attitude towards Milarepa and Milarepa's attitude towards him - the relationship between the two. In other words, it must be something deep and genuine, not something superficial - a matter of formal presents and so on. He's saying he's suggesting that Rechungpa was attaching more importance to this staff than his own relationship with Rechungpa and that's the basis of everything. "Of the accomplished Mother Magi (the famous Yogini), there is no better disciple than I." 'So here you're talking about this Mother Magi that you've met well, there's no better practitioner of her particular teachings than myself! I'm Mother Magi' - he's saying as it were. 'Don't try to impress me about her! Whatever she has to teach, I've realized that, I've experienced that.'

And, "If Dakinis keep their secret teachings from me, to whom will they impart them?" - 'You are going on about this Dakini Dharma - to you they are only books, to me they are actual realizations. Why don't you realize that? Why don't you see that?' "In the golden Mandala, I have enjoyed many sacramental festivals. With the Patron Buddha, Dorje Panno, I have had much longer acquaintance than you. There is not a land of Dakinis and Bha Wos that is unfamiliar to me. Much more than yourself, I am concerned about the things you are doing." So what do you think Milarepa is really saying here? He says that Rechungpa is going away or has been in search of the very things that actually are right near at hand, available to him, in the person of Milarepa. This is rather like someone, say, who is involved in the FWBO, say, in London, who thinks they ought better go off to India, and learn about meditation, and meet some very good Buddhists, etc, etc.

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They don't realize that they've got it all there! (Laughs) But that's extraordinary sometimes that people don't realize or appreciate what they've got in their own hand, practically - immediately available to them. They want it in some far off mysterious exotic sort of form, so they go haring off to India, and of course, they don't find it and they come back.

Voice: Why do you think that is?

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Vimalamitra: The spirit is to dream, rather than to do!

S.: Is it just that?

Ratnaguna: I think it's because people identify scriptural teach- Th7Thswit the outtrappi~gs. So in London there's nobddy ~n~-robes - - there isn't the name here. It's just people and we look quite ordinary and so they probably go off to the East where people don't look ordinary. It's almost like proof that there's something spiritual there because they wear robes...

S.: It's very tangible and colourful and all the rest of it. They can't really see.

Voice: It's very hard to convince people . .who have that attit~de...

S.: Someone was saying in the other group - they mentioned that someone who had come to see them, who had been to Chithurst, is it? - where the Theravada Bhikkhus are? - and was apparently quite im- pressed by the fact that here were these people in yellow robes and was really impressed just by that fact! it seems and our friend - I forget who it was unable to really convince them that in the FWBO people did practise the Dharma seriously and did meditate. Well, if you didn't do it in a yellow robe , well apparently it didn't count so far as that particular person was concerned and that seems very unfortunate and totally opposed to the Buddha's actual teaching! Even according to the Pali Canon. I mean, in the Pali scriptures more than in any other Buddh~scriptures, if anything - insist on the real thing, not the outward trappings.

Vimalamitra: People still see the tradition as the outtrappings.

S.: As the outer trappings, yes.

Robin: Presumably also, as we were talking about it yesterday, that people expect some sort of magic to transform them, without being prepared to work on themselves. And they may try for a little while a bit of meditation. When nothing very much happens, they think 'well this must be wrong. I better go off to India where the real magic is'.

S.: Right. Where the real magic is worked. And also, of course, iwthe case of perhaps the Theravada, they avoid all the Buddhist traditions to some extent, or at least so far as many of their followers are concerned. There is this tendency to project to spiritual life onto other people and in effect expect other people to lead your spiritual life for you. And you just sort of worship and respect them. So it's easier for you to do that if these people look very different or if they wear colourful robes and shave their heads and all that sort of thing. It is easier for you to believe that they are different than you - they are superior to you. Not superior in the sense, that they are showing you what you can do, -

They are doing something that you can't do. What they are doing is not for you. You hear The'ravada lay people say, "No, I can't meditate. I'm a lay man. That's -for the' Bhikkhus. The Bhikkhus are very holy! They meditate!" You just project the spiritual life or the demands of the spiritual life onto these 'other' special people and that sort of exculpates you from the' need to practise the spiritual life. You find this pattern everywhere in the Buddhist world unfortunately, in one way or another, or almost everywhere. You support the Bhikkhus so that they can sort of follow the spiritual path as it were, for you-. This is why if the-Bhikkhus deviate, you feel very upset about it, because you're being cheated as it were, and your salvation almost is being compromised. It's just like in the Middle Ages in Europe. Lay people became very upset about 'wicked' priests because they felt, well, if the priests were wicked, well, that might interfere with the efficacy of the sacraments. If the efficacy of the sacraments was impaired, their salvation was in danger. So the Church-promulgated the teaching that the wickedness of the minister did not impair the efficacy of the sacraments. The sacraments were still fully efficacious, even though administered "by the priest who was guilty of all sorts of sins and crimes. That led to a very external conception of religion indeed, and it was eventually against that external conception of religion that Martin Luther protested.

Voic'e: So here it doesn't take into account the individual at all. It's the, group and part of the group - the priests or the

S.: Yes. They specialize in religion on behalf of the whole community. This is very much the situation in most Theravada countries. The Bhikkhus live your Buddhism for you. You just support them in that, just like you might support research scientists to do your research for you. Obviously there is an element of something genuine where sometimes you may genuinely and sincerely recognize that someone is capable of greater effort than you and you may support them while they are making that effort. But that is quite different thing from expecting somebody else to practise the Dharma for you. But the most significant thing that Milarepa says here is: "Much more than yourself, I am concerned about the things you are doing." This is to say, 'I am taking better care of you, Redh-ungpa, than you are taking care of yourself'. And this is characteristic of the spiritual friend. He has your true interests at heart more than you yourself sometimes have. So he's a better friend to you than you are to yourself. Very often-, you are your own worst enemy (Laughs) But he's your best friend\*

So, "much more than yourself, I am concerned about the things you are doing". It's as though your spiritual friends are your conscience in a positive sense. Not just conscience in the sense of 'super ego', but conscience in the sense of your own 'better self' almost, always there. Your spiritual friends represent you, yourself, in your better moments. So that they give you an objective standard against which you can measure yourself. You can be reminded of what you're like at your best, at those moments when you're not at your best. Your spiritual friends keep you in touch with you, yourself, as you are at your best. When you become miserable, or angry, or aggressive or petty, or mean, or childish, your spiritual friends as it were, say to you, "well, you're not really like that, you know. You're quite capable of being something different from that. You're not really so miserable and petty- and angry as you now appear to be. This is just a passing phase. It's not the real you." And they remind

you of -wha-t you can be\*      So this reminds us of a very important point, that people often

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don't love themselves. They aren't really good friends to them- selves. They don't have Metta for themselves. And we know that when we do the Metta Bhavana, we start off with ourselves, but this certainly shouldn't be a formality, because good will towards our- selves is really the basis of good will towards other people. But it isn't easy to be kind to yourself. Very often people are very unkind to themselves for one reason or another. They don't do what is best for themselves. It's easy-enough to blame mother or father for not doing their best by you, but what about you, yourself? You, yourself don't do the best that you can for yourself (Laughs) - how can you blame other people!? They-'re no worse than you are yourself every day of the week perhaps.- Mother and father perhaps didn't give you what you really needed, but do you give yourself what you really need? You blame mother and father for not knowin~ the best way to bri~g you up, but do yourself know the best way to bri~g yourself up now?! To a higher level of maturity? '(Pause) So, 110h, Rechungpa, do not be proud and go astray! Let us go into the mountains and meditate in solitude." Milarepa is always bringing Rechungpa back to the main point - for Rechungpa, it's definite ly meditating in solitude. That is what he really needs. Do you think there is any special reason for this advice in Rechungpa's case? Because meditation is good for everybody; meditation in solitude -is good for everybody at least from time to time. But why is Milarepa so insistent that Rechungpa should meditate in solitude? What does meditating in solitude especially represent in Rechungpa's case or for Rechungpa?

Gerry: Is it not that Rechu~gpa gets distracted very easily by external things?

S.: Yes. He seems to get distracted very easily by external things, yes. So how does meditat~on work, especially solitary meditation? So as to counteract that tendency? Why do you get distracted? What is distraction?

Voice: You're not happy within yourself.

S.: Not happy within yourself?

Voice: Not integrated.

S.: You're not integrated yes. Maybe one part of you does want t7foliow the spiritual path, lead a spiritual life - another part of you, so to speak, doesn't. It wants to do something else. So you suffer really - what you really suffer from is a lack of integ- ration. So~- meditation, ~specially meditation in so~litude counteracts that. It -u-lls you together. It pulls all the different bits of yourself t~gether. It integrates you - among the more well-known meditation practices, espe6ially the Mindfulness of Bre~thing. It really pulls youm9gether. It makes a whole, out of all the different bits and pieces. It creates a Mandala, It turns you into a Mandala. Whereas you might be just a jumble of elements and attitudes and ideals all disorganized, disarranged. But meditation creates a Mandala out of all those disorganized things. It's as though you had a j1~gsaw puzzle of a Mandala and all the bits of the jigsaw

puzzle are just heaped up any how. So meditation helps you to put all the bits of the jigsaw in the right places and you get a picture of the Mandala. In fact you get the Mandala itself. You become the Mandala. Because it was you who was originally just that heap of bits and pieces. Meditation especially, gives you a center. You can't have a Mandala unless you have a center. First you establish the center. Meditation helps you to do what. You find your center.

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You find what you really want to do - what --is really the most important thing for you. You clarify that.~And then you build or you organize all the rest of your personality, the rest of your being or your other interests around that. In that way you create the Mandala. So if Rechu~gpa goes into retreat, if he starts doing solitary meditation, then he has to ask himself, "what really is most im- portant to me? Is it collecting these religious curios - somebody's staff, somebody's hat? Is that really important? Or all these in- tellectual studies: learning, logic, travelling, meeting people, performing ceremonies for lay people? Is this what I really do? Is this the most important thing? Is this what I want to build my life around? Or is it meditation? Is it Enlightenment? What is it?" So, if he follows this line of thought, he'll sort of come to the realization of what I really want to do is to develop. To grow spiritually. All I really want to do, in traditional Buddhist lan- guage, is to gain -enlightenment. So everything has to fall into place around that. In that way the Mandala is created. You put the thing which is of greatest importance in the center of your Mandala and you group everything around that. You can't-deny the other interests completely. There is a p~ace for them, but it is a place relatively near the center of the Mandala or relatively far away. You may have an interest in music, you may have an interest in painting, you may have an inter- est in sports. Well, whereabouts in the Mandala do you put those interests? What position do you assign to them? That is what you ~ave to sort out so that your life is a Mandala - a living Man- dala, instead of your just flitting in an aimless distracted way, from one interest to another, as one aspect of your being becomes uppermost and now another.

Joti ala: You could almost in that sense, almost visualize a figure as the center of your Mandala and visualize your interests and symbolize theTh in some way. So that you could almost have it in your mind's eye.

S.: Yes, right. Well, you could sort of build up a Mandala and think, "well, alright, Tara - this is what represents enlighten- ment for me - that is the most important thing in my life - to develop those Tara-like qualities which are the qualities of en- lightenment. Alright, I put that right in the middle! What else is of importance to me? Alright, there's my friends. Alright, I put them in a circle. Well, then there's my painting. Alright, I'll put my brushes and paints there. Allright - there's my guitar - that's quite important, I'll put that there". And so on. In this way you build up the Mandala. "Travel, does it have a place? Yes, if I can make it a sort of circumambulation - even travel has its place, provided it's not aimless and purposeless. Making money, well yes, there is the Jambala Bodhisattva, right down at the bottom of the Mandala. He's squeezing this Mongoose and the jewels are popping out of this mouth. Even making money has its place provided it's for the sake of the Dharma and under conditions of right livelihood. (Laughter) This sort of image of the Mandala is quite



important because the Mandala is a rich and diverse and complex thing and concrete thing. It's not bare and abstract. It makes it clear that there's a place for everything, at least for everything in its purified and refined form. It isn't a question of excluding certain things from one's life but more a question of giving them their true place... that is to say, the place which represents their true importance. So perhaps we should start by making another kind of Mandala - let's say the Mandala you've got at the moment. Alright, right in

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the middle of the Mandala is your guitar. (Laughter) Not only that but right in the center of the Mandala is your wife's picture. Right in the center of the Mandala is maybe something you would rather not even think about. So you have to force yourself to think about it (Laughter) 'I'm afraid that's in the center of my Mandala at the moment'. (Sigh) And then group all the other things around and you might find that your Puja and meditation occupy just a little corner of the Mandala, unfortunately. You see what I mean? So maybe, depict first of all, the present Mandala - well, pseudo-Mandala, really - and then try to imagine a Mandala where everything was rearranged in accordance with its real position in the Mandala in relation to whatever you put now at the center of the Mandala.

Ratnaguna: What criterion would you use there? If your Mandala is something in the middle which isn't so good, well, that's your Mandala, isn't it? I mean, what criteria would you use to put the Buddha in the center?

S.: Well, you have to ask yourself what is really, objectively of greatest importance in human life? Even though you don't actually feel it at the moment - what is objectively of greatest importance? And what you must try to make the center of your Mandala even if it isn't at the moment? You might find that the Buddha is tucked away in a remote corner of your Mandala (Laughs), also hidden by other things, pushed out almost by other things. You might find you've got only one foot of the Buddha in the Mandala and the rest of the Buddha is right outside the Mandala (Laughs). You might even find that. He doesn't even have a real place in it at all. Maybe playing with model trains has got a much more important place in your Mandala than the Buddha (Laughter). Maybe your motorcar is in the center of your Mandala. I'm sure that there's quite a few fliers that put their motorcar or their motorbike in the center of their Mandala. Even their girlfriend would occupy only a small corner somewhere.

Thjwerr: I remember years ago, going out with this girl - she used to accuse me of compartmentalizing her. I would just see her for a time, and then go and... I didn't actually think of her all the time, and what she was trying to do was trying to do was to become the center of the Mandala.

S.: Right, this is what she was saying; "I'm only a corner of your Mandala!~. Yes, one does find this, that most women under the circumstances and conditions of our society and culture they expect to be at the center of your Mandala. In other words, they expect to be the most thing, the most important relationship in your life and most people would consider this entirely right and proper and natural, I think. An Ancient Chinese would have considered entirely right and proper and natural that your parents to be in the center of the Mandala. We wouldn't agree with that and Buddhism wouldn't agree with that. In fact when Buddhism

went to China, there was a great conflict between Buddhist attitudes and the old Confucian attitudes. The Confucianists thought it really unfilial - in other words 'irreligious' - that someone should become a monk, which meant that he led a celibate life and did not continue the family life! This was regarded almost as an insult to his parents - unfilial behaviour. It took several centuries to adjust this sort of matter. I think eventually it was accepted that by becoming a monk, you were better enabled to pray for the welfare of your parents' souls. So you showed your filial piety in that respect even if you didn't produce any descendants for them, you helped them in their 'career', so to

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speak, after their deaths, in the other world. In that way, you continued to be a good son. But you had to be ~ good son in some way, or another, according to Chinese ideas, even if you were a monk. For instance ~another problem. -was that Buddhist monks were expected to kowtow to the Emperor. Well, Indian Buddhist tradition was that monks didn't kowtow to Kings or to any lay person - only to their own teachers and so there was a great conflict. So in the end a compromise was worked out that the bhikkhu did not show respect by Kowtowing to the Emperor. He showed respect by not Kowtowing. But he showed respect! (Laughs) That was the compromise that was worked out. (laughter)

Vimalamitra: You have to have a Chinese mind to work that out! (Laughs)

S.: Another sort of attitude was that not only must - It's interesting that you're expected to put your wife or your girlfriend in the center of your Mandala, but your wife or your girlfriend also expects to be -with you all the time - that you should spend all your time together. So if she is in the center of the Mandala, in a sense, you must also be ~in the center of the Mandala. You see what I mean? So in effect, you're putting ~yourself in the center of the Mandala. That's not a very desirable-thing, is it!? You're in the center of your common Mandala together! (Laughs) And here in the different corners of the Mandala you've got the children, you've got your house with the mortgage, you've got your furniture and you've got your job.

Gerry: Also another interesting part of that is they you have your friends. Say that you're married - so you have your friends but your friends are married so you have both of them. You go and see Jill and John. It's not, I'm going to see Jill, I'm going to see John. It's to reinforce this idea of a common Mandala.

S.: Yes, yes. I think it is well-known that usually married couples are friends only with other married couples. I was reading an article about social life in the United States and apparently there are whole sort of towns which have been created especially for retired people, that is to say, couples. And couples may become friendly with couples, but if somebody dies, - if a husband or a wife dies - the couple with whom they have been friendly before, will not continue the friendship or the relationship with the surviving husband or wife. That is too threatening. They will break off the connection. Because if it's say, a woman left, the woman in the couple will be afraid that her husband will become too friendly with her or if it's a man who is left, the husband will be afraid that his wife will become too friendly with that surviving man. So couples maintain relationships only with couples. They visit as couples, go out as couples, relate as couples, certainly not as individuals. So there is the sort

of myth of doing every- thing together, which is dreadful. It's a negation of any interest which you don't share.

Gerry: There's an expression: "well, where's your better half?UW

S.: Yes. Well better or worse, it's another half, as though you cannot be a complete person, except by attaching to yourself, something or someone external to you. So of course, if you have invested half your being in another person, of course you don't want to lose that other half of your being. You don't want to lose them. So you become neurotically attached and dependent upon them. As it were, you projected onto theTh, that half or that side of yourself

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which you have not realized, which you have not developed and so long as you remain in that relationship, you will not develop that other half, you will not yourself become a whole individual human being. This is why you hear the expression: "I cannot live with- out you". Well, this is a terrible thing for a human being to say. 'I cannot live without her, -I cannot live without him'. It means 'I cannot be an individual'. 'I don't want to be an individual'. This is what it really means. One hears these dreadful wailing songs. I heard one some months ago on the radio. Someone spelled out the words: 'Tf you go away, I don't know what will happen to me. I shall collapse darling. There is no future for me without you!1 (Laughter) Wailing in this sort of way. It's so shameful. I was going to say, 'it makes one want to...' I don't know what it makes one want to do! Something quite drastic anyway.

Jyotipala: Shoot them

S.: Yes, almo~t shoot them.

Gerald: You said earlier that it's not a question of excluding things from your Mandala, rather assigning them to a certain place. But presumably there will be things that you will have to exclude from your Mandala?

S.: Oh;yes,indeed. I did mention everything finds a place in its more purified and refined form, but there are some things if you just try to purify or refine them, they just cease to exist. For instance, thi~gs like, well, not anger, le4us say, but hatred. There's no place for hatred within the Mandala. You could say that there is a place for anger which is a sort of fiery energy, which encounters and deals with obstacles and hostile forces and factors. So for hatred,' there's no place in the Mandala; for thoroughly unskilful activities, there's no placd within the Mandala. So it also requires a sorting out process because in your heap of bits and pieces of your jigsaw puzzle, there may be bits and pieces that don't belo~g to that particular jigsaw at all. They have to be thrown away, but I think the point must be emphasized that in Buddhism according to the Vajrayana, anything that is of genuinely human value and significance finds a place within the Mandala. Even the Four Elements are included within the Mandala. Don't forget that. Earth, water, fire and air . They have their place within the Mandala. The sense are included within the Mandala. There's nothing wrong with the senses - just as senses - as per- ceiving apparatuses. There's nothing wrong with

them at all. Food and drink finds a place within the Mandala. And beauty finds a place within the Mandala. You could say that there is very little that can't find a place within the Mandala. Only things which are complete perversions of human instincts and activities, which are utterly negative, only those things don't find a place within the Mandala. Only those things which are completely and essentially un- skilful.

Voice: You have to be really careful about including everything in your Mandala.

S.: Well what you have to be sure of is that you place at the center of the Mandala what really, essentially, objectively is the most important thing - not just in your life subjectively, but in human existence as such, and you really firmly establish that. Otherwise the tendency will be for other things to gravitate or to try to gravitate towards the center of the Mandala and displace that object or figure or what it is that truly deserves to be placed at the

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110 center of your Mandala. So what you really need to concentrate on is establishing at the center of the -Mandala the figure that really belongs to the center of the Mandala. You get that right and everything else will come right. - (Pause) You could say for the spiritual life in Buddhism, there are two great symbols: there is the symbol of the Path - and there is the symbol of the Palace or if you like, the Temple. The Palace is, of course, the Mandala.

The Palace is a three-dimensional Mandala. If you think of the spiritual life in terms of the Path, you are thinking of it in terms of time - the spiritual life under the image of development in time. And if you think of it as the palace, you're thinking of the spiritual life in terms of position in space. You can think of it in both ways. -- So if you have a Palace, what do you have in the center of the Palace? The throne room. - What do you have in the center of the throne room? The throne. What do you have on the throne? The King, etc. And all the other rooms, all the other chambers, all the other apartments, all the other people, they are arranged around that. A still more rarified form of the same symbol is the Pureland. We've got the Buddha seated on his Lotus throne in the middle surrounded by Arahants and Bodhisattvas, surrounded, in the Tantric version of the same symbol, by Gurus - and Dakinis and Devas and so on and all the Eight Orders of living beings. So there are advantages in both these symbols, or thinking of the Path in terms of both these symbols. If you are of a dull and sluggish temperament, well, perhaps you should think of the spiritual life in terms of following the different stages of the Path and being active and vigorous. But if you are over-active and restless and need calming down, perhaps you should think of the spiritual life, in terms, as it were, of the more static symbol, or as it were, rearranging the Contents of your Mandala.

Voice: There is quite a lot to be said for keeping one's Mandala fairly simple. I can see the practical significance of the monastic life...

S.: Yes, indeed. But there's no theoretical objection to the Mandala containing a lot of elements. But you need to keep it simple at first so that the main lines of the Mandala are preserved. The Mandala mustn't be cluttered. The objects must be arranged beautifully and harmoniously. There must be sufficient space between them. It mustn't give the impression of being crowded. That's also important. There's a lot of space in the Mandala; there's space between the things. Things don't touch usually, they're separate. They're part of the Mandala but they retain their own distinct individuality, even their own uniqueness. (Pause) Then the section closes with the comment:

11rhereu?on, the Je~tsun- and Rechung-pa -se-t out together on their 30urney.  
Thi-s-- 1~s--the- -f-irst 6ha~p-te-r ch-u"ngpa-'s 'fleeting with ~the Je~t-sfln- at Yaug  
~Rfl.~"

So it seems that Milarepa has quite a time with Rechungpa. He's not a very easy or comfortable disciple to deal with.

Gerr: He may find him-quite stimulating, rather than all these guys who come up and say, "1,yeah" and go away and get enlightened.

S.: But do you think someone like Milarepa needs stimulating from the outside? Needs stimulating from disciples?

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S.: What was he doing while--Rechungpa was away? Was he feeling rather dull and unstimulated, just meditating on his snow mountain? (Laughter) It doesn't really matter to (~ilarepa). It's the same - dull disciples, brilliant disciples. They are all the same to him. It doesn't make any difference. Good disciples, bad dis-' ciples - or disciples or no disciples~ It's all the same to him, presumably. That's the impression one gets, certainly. He'd be just as happy with&ut them, but he doesn't mind even if they do come; he doesn't mind even if~they are troublesome. It's all the same to him As far as we can tell, that's his attitude.

Robin: But would not an attitude of compassion, actively seek out people to whom to transmit its experience?

S.: Yes. It seems in Milarepa's case - after all he was instructed by his own Guru to remain in solitary places, meditating - it seems as though he attracted people by his compassion, rather than by going to them. Because they certainly do come to him. They seem to flock round him wherever he goes, however inaccessible the place that he retires to. They seem to come alon~, nonetheless. And he seems to have many disciples. It's just a question of the way you operate. Apparently in Tibet at thattime,if they heard of a Yogi med- itating alone in a mountain cave, they'd go flocking after him. That was the way to attract people in those days. Nowadays, perhaps, no one would take any notice. You could live and die there without anybody knowing about it. (Laughter) Anyway, let's leave it there for today.

(End of Tape 6)

S.: Right. Let's see what turns up today then. Would someone like to read the first of those new paragraphs on page 428:

~~As~ the Jetsun and Reehungpa proceeded along the road, Rechung~ pa again thought, "Had this been another Guru, I would have had a good reception and been most hospitably treated upon my return from India. But my Guru lives under such poor conditions himself, naturally it would be impossible for me to expect any comforts or pleasures from him! I have been in India and have learned so many of the Tantric

fidelity towards the ~u~, arose within him.

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S.: So we say yesterday, that Rechungpa has been expecting a rather magnificent reception on his return from India. He's been wondering how Milarepa is going to receive him. He's been thinking that perhaps Milarepa ought to receive him as an equal now, due to the fact that he's been to India and done so many things. But he's been disappointed. He's in a very sour and disgruntled mood. So he's reflecting on: "Had this been another Guru, I would have had a good reception and been most hospitably treated on my return from India, but my Guru lives under such poor conditions himself, naturally it would be impossible for me to expect any comforts or pleasures from him. I've been in India and have learnt so many of the Tantric teachings. A man like me should not practise his devotion as an ascetic but should practise it with pleasure and enjoyment". What sort of stick has Re~hungpa got hold of the wrong end here? In the other group we've been talking about the Vajrayana attitude towards pleasure.

Ratnaguna: It would be easier to practise the Dharma under conditions of pleasure?

S.: No, actually that it would be more difficult.

Ratnaguna: No! That's what he's saying, isn't it?

S.: Yes! He's saying that. So he's got hold of, in a sense, the 'mght' stick, but he's got hold of it by the wrong end. So what is this 'right stick'? It's really the Vajrayana attitude towards pleasure. The Buddhist teaching about pleasure is closely connected with its teaching about craving. You remember the 'Chain of Nidanas' in dependence upon Vedana - feeling, especially pleasurable feeling, arises - what arises? (Voices: craving) Craving. So

usually in our experience, pleasure and craving are closely associated. In fact, sometimes we may find that it is very difficult to distinguish between them, because it's as though craving inevitably arises whenever there is an experience of pleasure; that craving follows so quickly upon pleasure, it's as though they're one and the same thing. But actually they're two quite different things. Because pleasure is a 'vipaka' and craving is a 'karma' - a volition. Pleasure in itself is ethically neutral, but karma is ethically either skilful or unskilful or neutral. Do you see what I mean? So in the Theravada, in the Hinayana generally, even in the Mahayana to a great extent, this association between pleasure and craving is recognized to such an extent, and is considered so dangerous, that in order to get rid of craving you even disassociate yourself from pleasure. Do you see what I mean? Actually pleasure can exist without craving. But usually we find the two things go along together. So in order to be free from craving, the Theravada, the Hinayana schools generally, are even quite prepared to give up pleasure, except of course, the pleasure that comes in meditation, but certainly worldly pleasure, sensual pleasure and so on. But that is not in fact the Vajrayana view. The Vajrayana view, is that the experience of bliss, the experience of pleasure to the highest degree of intensity, is an integral part of the spiritual life, itself. So, the Vajrayana too, agrees that, yes, craving must be got rid of - craving is completely unskilful and the Vajrayana insists upon that as strongly as the Hinayana and the Mahayana, but the Vajrayana would say that it's a mistake to throw away pleasure in order to get rid of craving. The Vajrayana says, yes, get rid of craving, but continue to experience pleasure, pleasure which does not become an occasion for

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craving. The Vajrayana says, so to speak, pleasure is necessary, the experience of pleasure or bliss has to be united with the experience of illumination. This is one of the basic Tantric teachings, as I think, we've been seeing. So it's as though Rechungpa has understood this in a muddled sort of way. Do you see what I mean? He has sort of understood that the spiritual life is not just a matter of asceticism, in a sense, that it is not just a matter of getting rid of craving. It is also a matter of experiencing pleasure free from craving. But, as I've said, he's got that muddled up! He thinks that asceticism can be dispensed with altogether and the spiritual life means just having almost a good time as a famous scholar - someone who's been into India, learnt a lot of Tantric teachings. He thinks that the spiritual life is a sort of profession, which enables you to satisfy your cravings and enjoy pleasure, in that way. This is his sort of misunderstanding. Did you see the point?

Joti ala: Just now, you said something about illumination. I don't think we have that in this study. It must have been in the other one.

S.: Well, these are two important aspects of the spiritual life, -from the Vajrayana point of view: one the one hand, the experience of pleasure, and bliss, especially through the Dhyanas, and on the other, the experience of illumination or clarity. It's a little bit like the connection between Samatha and Vipassana. Do you see what I mean? So bliss represents

the more Samsaric principle, illumination represents the more spiritual, the more transcendental, the more Nirvanic principle. ~ut the Vajrayana point is that these two are not ultimate duality. These have to be brought together, blended, the bliss which is usually associated with Samsara, with the illum- ination which is usually associated with Nirvana. The Vajrayana approach is a non-dualistic approach, so its practice is non-dual- istic too. Not getting rid of pleasure in the interest of getting rid of craving, but getting rid of craving, yes, but blending that freedom from craving with a positive experience of bliss.

Vimalamitra: I always get the impression that the emotional side seems to be kind of somewhat limited. Wher~as it's the intellect- ual side which, kind of, gives you the insight?

S.: Well, it is in a manner of speaking, the intellectual side gives you the insight, but on what basis does that develop? From the Samatha/Vipassana point of view, you, first of all practise medit- ation in the Samatha sense, - you unify your energies; you become concentrated, and that unified energy you are then able to direct to the investigation of truth. You're able to reflect, in a direct- ed kind of way. And in this way, you develop insight. For instance, suppose you take the truth of impermanence, one can reflect upon that and think about that in the ordinary way, but it doesn't have any real effect. It doesn't produce any real impact, because the mind with which you are considering that truth of impermanence, is not concentrated. Its energies are not unified. But if, through the practice of meditation, Samatha, you unify your energies, you con- centrate yourself and , with that concentrated mind, with all the energies of your being behind the investigation, you start thinking about impermanence, What is impermanence? What does it really mean? What does it signify? Of what does it consist? Then you penetrate into it much more powerfully with all your energies behind the investigation, with all your energies behind that direct- ed thinking, and in this way, out of that directed thinking, inSight

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arises, with regard to impermanence. Do you see what limean? We notice, even when we just read in the ordinary way, if we read with full concentration, with full attention, if your attention is really gripped, then we understand what we read so much more, so much better, so much more clearly. But if we read with a scattered mind, well, we just get a Very slight impression indeed. But anyway, to go back to the text, Rechungpa has s~rt of gathered that the Vajrayana does not require the renunciation of pleasure, so he understands that as leading a professionally relig- ious life, and using that as a means of having a good time. He has almost completely misunderstoodi 'So a man like me', - I mean this gives the whole game away - 'A man like me' - he's thinking very highly of himself..~.I should not practise his devotion as an ascetic, but should practise it with pleasure and enjoyment'. With these arrogant and evil ideas in his mind, strong thoughts, full of in- fidelity toward the Jetsun, arose within him." You see, there's a misunderstanding about the Dharma, espec- ially the Vajrayana teaching. There's a misunderstanding about Milarepa too! He feels he isn't being appreciated. He's almost feeling that his Guru isn't on the 'right path', that he shouldn't follow him, that he's fitted for better things than his Guru.

John: Can we go back to pleasure? I mean, in what sense does the Vajrayana think of pleasure? You mention bliss, but what about other forms of pleasure?



S.: Well, as I said, the Vajrayana attitude is that pleasure in itself is not unskillful. The terms 'skillful' and 'unskillful' do not apply to pleasure as such. 'Skillful' and 'unskillful' are terms applicable to volitions. That if, for instance, you experience a sense of pleasure, in the experience of pleasure itself there is nothing ethically skillful or ethically unskillful, because you're in, so to speak, a passive state, - you're not in a state which is exercising volition. Pleasure, in this sense, is a 'vipaka'. It's a result of something that you have done. It is not the doing of that thing itself. Do you see what I mean? So supposing, you have got a sense organ. You've got an eye. And that eye exercises its faculty of seeing. It sees a visual object, it sees perhaps, a beautiful visual object. It sees something red, maybe it sees a red flower, - then, as a result of that visual perception, the sensation of pleasure arises. That sensation of pleasure or the experience of that sensation of pleasure is ethically neutral. The question of skillful or unskillful comes in at the next stage. If in dependence upon that pleasurable sensation, craving arises, then of course, the craving is unskillful, but if, in dependence upon pleasurable sensation, craving does not arise - if it does not become the occasion or basis of craving, then there is nothing wrong with it. There's nothing wrong with pleasure as such, - there's nothing wrong with the senses, as such. They're merely perceiving apparatuses. There's nothing wrong with the mind as a sense, the sixth sense, as it's called in Buddhism. The unskillful element comes in when in dependence on the pleasure there arises craving.

So the Vajrayana would say that, yes, craving is to be got rid of. It agrees with the Hinayana and the Mahayana there, but the Hinayana certainly tries to make sure that craving will not arise by eliminating pleasure. But the Vajrayana says that that is not really the way. That pleasure is an essential, an integral part of the spiritual life, but pleasure dissociated from craving and united with illumination. You see what I mean? That is the Vajrayana view. So it's a much more difficult position, in a way. It's a much more dangerous position. It's a position which is much more open to rationalization and therefore, it is important to remember

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that according to the traditional procedure, you first of all, practise the Hinayana, then the Mahayana, and then the Vajrayana. It's not something that you take up straight away. You have to prepare yourself for that.

John: So you do cut off certain pleasures to begin with?

S.: Well, this again is something we've talked about in the other group. You don't cut them off, from the Vajrayana point of view, under the impression that you're therefore automatically getting rid of cravings. But what you have to do is to learn to separate the experience of pleasure from the experience of craving. In our experience, usually, the two are sort of blended. They're indistinguishable. As soon as you experience pleasure you experience craving. We hardly ever have an experience of pleasure free from craving.

Vimalamitra: You said in aesthetic experiences we might look at a beautiful country or

scenery....

S.: Yes! I think probably we usually have that sort of craving-free pleasurable experience in connection with nature. Even there, though, it's sometimes sort of sullied. You then might see a beautiful flower but then you'd have a tendency to want to pick that flower. Maybe that is form of craving. But if you can just contemplate nature, just see it, just enjoy it for what it is, without wanting to do anything with it, or make any use of it, or appropriate it for yourself in any way, well, then this is a pleasurable experience free from craving. But there are lots of pleasures in our lives, in fact, most of them, that, you know, are pleasurable, but so intimately associated with craving that it's very difficult for us to separate the two. But the two have to be separated. So you can practise, from the Vajrayana point of view, the limited asceticism or provisional asceticism, that is to say - of giving up some thing pleasurable so that you can experience your craving apart from the pleasure. Supposing that you get a great deal of pleasure from chocolate biscuits. Maybe you're almost addicted to them. Maybe you like to have a few every day. The craving is there! So supposing you go on a solitary retreat. You don't take any chocolate biscuits with you, so you can experience the continued craving for those things, but without the pleasure of actually enjoying them, actually eating them. So you have separated the craving from the pleasure - so you've made the break between the two things. So if you can experience craving apart from the actual pleasure with which it has been connected, there's also the possibility of experiencing the pleasure without the craving, but you first have to separate the two. So this you do by means of your, so to speak, your provisional asceticism. It's a very difficult path, and this is why the Vajrayana comes after the Hinayana and the Mahayana. But the Vajrayana does make the point that, in the long run, you cannot get rid of craving simply by giving up pleasure. You have to actually really conquer craving and be able to experience pleasure, even intense pleasure, without experiencing the corresponding craving. And it's very easy to fool oneself!! I mean Rechungpa clearly has misunderstood the whole thing completely. He clearly hasn't been able to separate, yet, pleasure from craving. He's got a craving for position and recognition and social contacts and ease and comfort and a good time and he wants to use his so-called 'knowledge' of Tantric Buddhism as a means of securing these things. So that is not what the vajrayana has in mind at all, when it speaks of the importance of bliss.

YH 7 6 ll~ S.: Alright, would someone like to read the next paragraph:

At once, Milarepa read Rechungpa's mind; He then pointed to a yak's horn lying along the side of the road, saying, "Pick up this yak-horn and bring it with you." Rechungpa thought, "Sometimes my Guru wants nothing as he always claimed, but at others 'his hatred is much stronger than that of an old dog, and his greediness is greater than that of an old miser,' as the proverb says. After all, what is the use of this torn-out yak-horn?" He then said to the Jetsun, "What good can this piece of waste do us - leave it alone!" The Jetsun replied, "To take a small thing like this will not increase one's greediness, and sometimes these discarded things are very useful." Saying this he picked up the yak-horn and carried it himself.

S.: So, 'at once, Milarepa read Rechungpa's mind' as one might have expected. He then-pointed to a yak's-horn lying along the side of the road, saying, "Pick up this Yak-horn and bring it with you". Rechungpa thought: "Sometimes my guru wants nothing, as he always claimed, but at others 'his hatred is much stronger than that of an old dog, and his greediness is greater than that of an old miser', as the proverb says. After all, what is the use of this torn-out yak-horn?" So here you see he's attributing hatred and greed to Milarepa. So what is he doing here, clearly?

Voice: Projecting.

S.: You could say, he's projecting, yes. The hatred and the greed are in his own mind and he sees Milarepa in this very distorted way. He then said to the Jetsun, "What good can this piece of waste do us - leave it alone!" The Jetsun replied, "To take a small thing like this will not increase one's greediness, and sometimes these discarded things are very useful".

Well, there's quite a lot of meaning in what he says, but Rechungpa does not realize that. He's so blinded by his own hatred and greed, his own delusions, that he can't see that perhaps Milarepa is trying to say something to him, trying to teach him a lesson. Perhaps there's some significance in his asking Rechungpa to pick up this yak-horn. Rechungpa is quite-incapable of seeing that, quite incapable of thinking in those terms. So, next paragraph:

They then reached the center of the art of Balmo Baltan Plain where

o ' - Kechungpa covered his head in such haste and confusion that he completely forgot even to look at his Guru. After awhile, when

the yak-horn which had been left beside the road, he walked toward the plain and saw it was undoubtedly the same yak-horn which the Jetsun had taken recently before

Rechungpa then tried to pick it up, but it

1,      ~- an e ore, jus as - °e' re!lection 0 a a'rge image~m'ay be seen tn a small mirror,

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S.:      So~what has happened here? Clearly Milarepa is teaching Rechungpa a lesson, but how can one literally take this? A hail- storm comes on and Milarepa takes shelter within the yak-horn. Are you reminded of some other incident in the Sutra here?

Robin: The Vimalakirti Nirdesa.

S.:      It's the Vimalakirti Nirdesa, but what incident is that?

Voice: Well his house inside is very large.

S.:      Yes. What else does that all suggest?

Voice: Higher states of consciousness?

S.:      But more specifically?

Robin: It's not limited by space.

S.:      Yes! Relativity of space and time. But I don't know whether twat is exactly the sort of lesson that Milarepa is trying to teach here. I mean, you can either take it literally, - that this is actually what Milarepa did, this literally happened, or you can take it that it appeared to happen, but in either case the question re- mains - what lesson actually is Milarepa teaching? I mean, in, first of all, plain simple terms?

That he!s quite good, he's mastered quite a bit!

S.:      He, himself, Milarepa? (Gerry: Yes) Well, he!s not only mastered quite a lot, but more apparently than Rechungpa! Rechungpa apparently got wet! (Laughter) But Milarepa was quite snug inside the yak-horn. So does this suggest anything in particular?

Jyotipala: Perhaps that Rechungpa seems to think that he's equal, sometimes a bit higher than his Guru, and yet Milarepa definitely is teaching that he's nowhere near him.

S.:      Right. So you can take it literally. It's in terms of ord- T7ary magic that Milarepa can perform this sort of feat which Rech- ungpa can't. But surely it goes beyond that, even if that

did literally happen? It suggests that Milarepa is beyond space and time; that suggests that Rechungpa cannot comprehend him. Rechungpa doesn't appreciate him. He's trying to make Rechungpa aware of his own limitations in the broadest sense.

Vimalamitra: Could he perhaps be sort of teaching Rechungpa something quite specific about his conceit and pride? In that Milarepa is taking, kind of finding shelter from the storm by becoming very small and Rechungpa is unable to become small?

S.: But he's become very small in a manner of speaking, because the illustration is 'just as the reflection of a large image may be seen in a small mirror'. This, in a sense, isn't as though Milarepa has reduced his size. In a way that is part of the miracle - that he hasn't had to reduce his size in order to enter into the yak-horn. In another sense, perhaps he has. Anyway, he's in the yak-horn. But Rechungpa isn't able to get in. He's too big to get into it. Milarepa is small enough to get into it, but it isn't at the same time, as though he had changed his own size, paradoxically. And the text explains that, by saying: 'just as the reflection of a large image may be seen in a small mirror'. The large image doesn't have to become small for its reflection to be

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seen in a small mirror.

Gerry: Is it also not showing that something that Rechungpa thought was useless is in fact of great value?

S.: Yes, that is true. He didn't see the value of the yak-horn or I couldn't see it. He thought it was just a useless thing. And this also perhaps, was an expression of his pride and arrogance and conceit. But howsoever, one interprets the incident, Milarepa is baffling Rechungpa. He's forcing him to realize his own limitations. He's forcing him to realize his own arrogance. The fact that he's far from being the spiritual equal of Milarepa. Milarepa, in every sense, can do things that Rechungpa can't do, because he is what Rechungpa is not. So he heard the Jetsun singing from inside the yak-horn. Would someone like to read that song right through: It's quite a long one.

The grace of my Guru enters into my body. If one's body remains like a commoner's He is not a great yogi. Rechungpa you should pay homage to his body.

The grace of my Guru enters into my mouth. - - If one makes nonsensical remarks he is not a great yogi. All Pith-Instructions are found in my song. Rechungpa, you should bear them in your heart.

The grace of my Guru enters into my mind. If any unfaithful thought ever arises in one's mind

' - - - ' He is not a great yogi. Red~ungpa, you should pay homage to my power of - - - - telepathy.

Oh, son Rechungpa your mind is like a nimble bird' - - Now it flies high, and now it swoops low. -, - You should observe this unstable change, -  
6 Stop thinkiig so much, And devote yourself to the Repa's practice!  
~~ ~

If you think you can match your Guru, Now you may come into this horn. Conie in right now  
- - ~ Here is a spacious and comfortable house!

- Rechmigpa, your Enlightenment is like the sun and - -

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- -. 4. \_\_\_\_\_ ~--nn~~s~~~ta'~°di~aThge,

Stop thinking so much, - And devote yourself to the Repa's practice!

- ~ If you think you can match your Guru, You may come into this  
horn. -

Come iii right now -

Here is a spacious and comfortable house!

Son Rechungpa! Your behavior is like the mountain wind; Now it blows fast and violent,  
And now it blows gentle and slow. You should observe this unstable change, Stop thinking so  
much~ And devote yourself to the Repa's practice

If you think you can match your Guru, You may come into this horn. Come in right now -  
Here is a spacious and comfortable house!~--

Son Rechungpa, your accomplishments Are like crops in the field. Sometimes they grow  
badly, and sometimes You should observe this unstable change, Stop thinking so much, And  
devote yourself to the Repa's practice~

~ If you think you can match your Guru, - ' --6' You may come into his horn.

Come in right now

Here is a spacious and comfortable house!

-- ~ If one's mind can master the domain of space, He can enter this horn and enjoy it.  
-Come in right now, my son, your father is -

It wouldn't be nice If a son refuses to enter his father's house. I am a sick and worn-out old  
man

Who has never been in India in all his life? His insignificant body is frightened -By the  
dangerous road outside, Therefore inside this horn he stays! Son Rechungpa, you are young,  
and have India. Also, you have studied under many learned accomplished Gurus. You  
should now step into this horn - -- With your splendid and prominent body  
Of little value is this rotten yak-horn; '~': -- Surely it will not  
inflate one's egotism and" - - 4 Come in, Rechungpa, come and join your side!

S.: So, Milarepa sings: 'The grace of my own Guru enters into my body.

If one's body remains like a commoner's, he is not a great Yogi. Rechungpa, you should pay  
homage to my miraculous body.' So what's Milarepa saying here? Let's take it bit by bit.  
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First of all, what do you think is meant by a 'commoner' here? Let's try to get back to the  
original Sanskrit terms through this rather clumsy English translation.

Jyotipala: Maybe like the people, the non-full timers, the laity?

Ratnaguna: The non-Ariyas.

S.: The non-Ariyas, yes! It's the puthujjanas, the 'many-folk', as it's sometimes translated. So, 'the grace of my Guru enters into my body. If one's body remains like a commoner's, he is not a great Yogi!' So what is Milarepa actually saying? What's he talking about here?

Rantaguna: If you do the actions of commoners...

S.: No. I don't think it's quite that. It's more than that. What Milarepa is suggesting, is that as a result of one's spiritual practice, as the result of one's development of insight; as a result of one's experience of the Transcendental, as a result of one's experience of 'the grace of the Guru', which is of course, a transcendental influence, there is an actual change, a transformation, if you like, in one's physical body. Do you see what I mean? This is quite an important aspect of Vajrayana teaching. Vajrayana is, from one point of view, concerned with total transformation. It is not satisfied simply with transformation of the mind. It insists also on transformation of speech and even transformation of body. And the Vajrayana makes the point that if there's a great change, a great transformation in the mind, that will be reflected or if you like, echoes, in speech and body - not just in terms of the body's actions and behaviour, but in terms of the actual constitution of the body. There is something, some belief of that sort in Buddhism generally, because it's believed that if you've been a great Yogi, and you've gained enlightenment, practised meditation during your lifetime, all that sort of thing, then, when you die, you'll leave relics - not just fragments of bone but sort of pearl-like objects, which are sort of crystallizations on the physical level, so to speak, from your spiritual practice. You see what I mean? In fact, the Vajrayana believes that as a result of the most advanced spiritual practice of meditation, the body can be transformed into 'a body of light', into what is called 'the rainbow-body'. Sometimes this is taken quite literally, sometimes, again, just symbolically. But nonetheless, it is a general belief in Buddhism, especially in the Vajrayana, that if you practise meditation changes actually take place in the physical body or physical changes. I think that one can say that there is some truth in that, because we know, that there is such a thing as, for instance, psychosomatic illness. Because of a certain mental state, you can become ill. In the same way, presumably, because of a certain mental state, you can become well. So there are changes in the physical form - body, brought about by different mental states. For instance, there is this practice of Tummo - certain kinds of meditation for the generation of so-called 'psychic heat'. This psychic heat isn't just a subjective experience. There is an actual change in the temperature of the physical body, a change which can be perceived by other people. So here physical change is being brought about by a mental change. So at present, Milarepa is concerned with this change in the physical body, as the result of Yogic attainment in a purely magical sense. He's able, as it were, to shrink his physical body so that it is small enough to enter into the yak's-horn and this is

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something which Rechungpa has not yet learned to do. But whether we take that literally or not, we should not lose sight of the more general principle or the Vajrayana - that the physical body is transformed as a result of one's practice as well as the mind itself. Sometimes you find an analogy with that, in meditation practice, in a general way perhaps, because if you have a good meditation, you feel physically better, as well as mentally better. Do you see what I mean? So at least, in a very general way, we can see the truth of this, even though we may think that you can't transform your body to the extent of being able to make it bigger or smaller as you please. Perhaps that doesn't in fact, refer to the physical body. Perhaps this episode here - with Milarepa creeping into the yak-horn, is not to be taken literally in that



same way. But none- theless, the Vajrayana attaches great importance to the transform- ation of the physical body.

Robin: Is there any connection with the generation of the Kayas?

S.: The generation in what sense?

Robin: Well, I know very little about it, but they are called 'bodies', after all.

S.: No, this is 'bodies' in a somewhat different sense. There is the expression here, where is that word?. . when Milarepa says - there is a reference to the Nirmanakaya here. ...

Jyotipala: "Rechungpa, you should pay homage to my miraculous body" - is that it?

S.: Ah, yes!!

Jyotipala: it's the first verse, in fact! The very first verse.

S.: Ah yes! "Rechungpa, you should pay homage to my miraculous body" Well, this is that you should not regard my body as an ordinary body. It is the body of a Buddha. It is a Nirmanakaya. It appears to be an ordinary physical body, but actually it has been, even as a physical body, completely transformed. There's some sort of hint or reminiscence of this, even in the Theravada, in connection with something you might be familiar with, and this is the five- coloured Buddhist flag. Have you noticed this five-coloured Buddhist flag? Are you familiar with this? We've flown it outside here sometimes. So what are these five colours? There's red, white, orange or saffron, and yellow, and blue and all five colours together. So why have we got these five colours, or six colours, in the Buddhist flag?

Jyotipala: Aren't they supposed to be the colours of the Buddha's aura?

S.: No, no. Well, the Buddha's body consists principally or that is to say, not the Buddha's body, but the gross human body, consists principally of five things. It consists of blood, bones, water, flesh and marrow. Yes? So blood is red, flesh is saffron or orange-col- oured, bone is white, water is blue and marrow is yellow. Sometimes bile is put instead of marrow, but it's yellow. So the Buddha's aura is an aura of these five coloured lights, plus the sixth ~light, which blends all five, which is quite indes- cribable. So the Buddha's aura, which is made up of red, saffron, and yellow light and so on, represents the purified, and refined, and sublimated physical body. In other words, as a result of the Buddha's meditation and attainment of Enlightenment, his gross phys-

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ical body of blood, bone etc. has been transformed into a subtle body of light of those five or six colours. You see what I mean? The halo represents the transformation, the fact that the Buddha's nature, even on the physical level, the level of the phys- ical body, has been

thoroughly transformed by" the Enlightenment experience. So there's the same sort of idea there, even within the Theravada~tradition. You see what I mean? Buddhism generally speaks in terms of transformation, but usually the transformation is a transformation of mind or consciousness, which is obviously the most important and a transformation of speech and the transformation of body, in the sense of transformation of action, but not as of the body itself. You see what I mean? You may commit no unskillful action with the physical body, but it's still the same old physical body. The Vajrayana says it's not enough to transform your actions. The body itself has got to be transformed.

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S.: There's got to be a transformation of the whole being and in fact we can see the sense of that - the possibility of that in the fact that as a result of meditation experience, that subtle physical changes do occur in the body. So this is the sort of background as it were, to this little episode. We can take it literally or not, but the important principle being stressed is the transformation of the physical body. So, 'the grace of my Guru enters into my body. If one's body remains like a commoner's, he is not a great Yogi'. So, 'the grace of my Guru'.. enters not only into my mind, not only into my speech, not only into my action, but into my body itself, transforming that. 'If one's body remains like a commoner's' - if one's body remains like that of an ordinary unenlightened person, 'he is not a great Yogi'. The proof of the fact that you're a Yogi, that your mind is transformed, that your being is transformed, - the proof is that your body also is transformed or at least, that certain changes take place within your physical body itself. Some teachers go so far as to say that if you are a Yogi you'll never fall ill. If you are a great Yogi you'll never fall ill. Sometimes, of course, great Yogis do fall ill but it's usually explained by saying they have taken upon themselves the sufferings of other people, or the defilements of other people. It's very difficult to know whether that is the case or not. So, 'Rechungpa you should pay homage to my miraculous body'. I mean, your body, Rechungpa's body, as we shall see shortly, is just an ordinary body, but Milarepa's body is, as it were, 'a miraculous boy' - a Nirmanakaya - that it may appear to be an ordinary body but it's not in fact that.

Ratna una: Do you have any comment on the phrase, 'The grace of my Guru'. I remember reading, in the a Sunday review, not long ago, how this sort of concept has got hold of us in the West - the idea of grace coming from God, even, often in the West, when looking at an Eastern religion, we take this idea and somehow put a Christian view of grace on to an Eastern attitude.~~

S.: Yes. So what is this word 'grace'? Usually the word 'grace', or what we call ~'grace' in Tibetan is (Chinla?), which renders the Sanskrit adhistana. Perhaps I need not go yet into the etymology of that, - we'll look at it in more general terms. I've gone into this on some other occasions actually, - but what is 'grace'? Even in the Theravada you get the conception of 'grace' as called (Anupatha?) which can be translated as 'influence'. It's as though coming from every object whether material or mental, there is an influence - every object propagates itself in the form of an 'influence'. If you like, a vibration. You know that if someone

say, is in an angry mood, you feel that, don't you? They need not give any actual sign of anger but you can pick it up. It influences, it affects you. Sometimes you can feel it; you can sense it even if you're not in the same room as the person, even if that person is in another room, you can pick it up. You know that they are feeling angry. So in this way, every mental state is in fact perceptible, every mental state exerts an influence over other living beings. They feel it, they perceive it; they're affected by it. Animals sometimes are more sensitive to these things than are human beings. In dogs especially this is well-known. So supposing someone is in a highly positive state, a meditative state, a state of insight, well, will this not have an effect on other living beings especially upon those who are receptive to the person who is in that highly positive state? So this is what is meant by 'grace'. It comes, as it were, from above. It pertains to a vertical relationship. It comes from a mind, more highly developed than one's own, a mind with which one is in tune and to which one is receptive. So one feels that 'influence' of that mind and that is what is called 'grace'. That 'grace' of course, cannot transform you, against your will. You have to cooperate with it. It's only an influence. It is not decisive. You can resist it. You can close yourself to it. You can block it off, but if you are open to it, then you can, so to speak, allow it to have its effect on you. This is what is meant by 'grace' in the Buddhist context, especially the Tibetan Buddhist context. Whereas in Christianity, the 'Grace of God' sometimes seems arbitrary. It's as though God is like a king, God is a monarch who is endowed with tremendous power and he can just do anything he likes. If he wants to give you a title he can give it; if he wants to give you a large sum of money he can do it. That's his whim, that's his grace, you see? So if God wants to grant you salvation, yes, he can grant you salvation. If he doesn't want to, well he doesn't. So 'the Grace of God' tends to be thought of in this way, or presented in this sort of way, as the purely whimsical arbitrary act of someone with arbitrary power.

Jyotipala: The catechism definition of 'grace' that I like is: grace is the supernatural gift of God freely bestowed upon us for our sanctification and salvation. That's how it is in the catechism - we learn that off by heart! So that's the Catholic definition!

S.: So 'grace' is just something that you have not done anything to earn. It's freely bestowed but then again, why is it freely bestowed upon some and not upon others? This is where the element of arbitrariness comes in and this is carried to its logical conclusion in Calvinism, in which God predestinates some people to hell and some to heaven before they're even created.

Jyotipala: Almost a bit like caste - almost a bit like a caste system.

S.: Yes, yes. I believe there is even an expression in Christian theology, 'irresistible grace'. But there is no such thing as 'irresistible grace' in Buddhism for obvious reasons. I mean, 'grace', even in the sense that I've described it, is not irresistible - you can resist it. The freedom of the individual is fully maintained. I mean Rechungpa is being pretty resistant to Milarepa, isn't he? He's closing himself to Milarepa's influence. It's just as Devadatta closed himself to the Buddha's influence.

Gerry: Also, in Christianity, you can get - if you say certain prayers, you get 300 days of full purgatory grace and stuff like that. I used to say all these things hundreds of times! It's never done any good!!

S.: Well, how do you know? You might let yourself off so many days in purgatory!  
(Laughter) - we shall see!!

John: That sort of thinking has got quite an important application even to more mundane elements. You were saying whatever our state of being, we are influencing others. It puts quite an important light on it! I mean not only just what we do but the state of...

S.: Yes, indeed! Yes. Especially in a spiritual community. Your mental state is affecting the whole of the rest of the community - is either helping to raise the level of the community, or lower the level of the community, but cannot not affect it. You're either pumping poison into the community atmosphere or you're just pumping light and perfume into it. Then Milarepa says, 'The grace of my Guru enters into my mouth. If one makes nonsensical remarks, he is not a great Yogi.' In other words, a great Yogi's speech is thoroughly transformed. He never makes nonsensical remarks. He never indulges in meaningless talk. Whatever he says, is in terms of 'right speech'. It is truthful, it is affectionate, it is useful and it's uttered at the right time and the right place. 'All pith-Instructions are found in my song. Rechungpa, you should bear them in your heart.' I mean, Milarepa hardly~wspeaks except to instruct. His whole speech is a continual 'pith-instruction'. His speech principle is completely transformed. He doesn't engage in any nonsensical or meaningless remarks. This is quite a test in a way, a very easy test to apply. To what extent one's mind has been transformed, it will show itself in your speech. What are the things you usually talk about? We talked about putting things in the Mandala or at the centre of the Mandala yesterday. Well, you could have a sort of speech Mandala, putting right in the middle the things you actually like talking about the most. (Laughter) Some people would have to put their favourite football team, some might put the Dharma, some like talking about meditation more than anything else. Some would have to put other people in the center of the Mandala. Some people might have put their aches and pains in the centre of the Mandala! (Laughter)

Vo~ice: And some would have to put themselves!

S.: Yes, indeed!! So, 'all the Pith-Instructions are found in my song. Rechungpa, you should bear them in your heart~. The grace of my Guru enters into my mind~. If any unfaithful thought ever arises in one's mind, he is not a great yogi. Rechungpa, you should pay homage to my power of telepathy'. Because at the end of that first prose paragraph it says: 'With these arrogant and evil ideas in his mind, strong thoughts, full of infidelity toward the Jetsun, arose within him' - that is to say within Rechungpa. So Milarepa says, 'The grace of my Guru enters into my mind. If any unfaithful thought ever arises in one's mind, he is not a great yogi.' So he is, in effect, telling Rechungpa that because he has had these unfaithful thoughts towards himself, towards Milarepa, his mind has not been completely transformed. Milarepa's grace has not entered into this mind- he's been resistant to that. What do you think 'unfaithful thought' means, exactly here? Or ~~~' thoughts full of infidelity'?

Viinalamitra: Well he was thinking of going~onto another Guru~ 'who can give him more than he can get from Milarepa.

S.: He's also~thinking that Milarepa is no better than himself.

S. : ~ So the attitude of faith and devotion, that normally one should have towards someone whom one recognizes as spiritually superior, Rechungpa simply didn't have. If faith and devotion is the attitude that one naturally has towards those whom one perceives to be spiritually more developed than oneself, then, if one does not see them as spiritually more developed than oneself, as Rechungpa did not see Milarepa, then one would feel no faith and devotion. One's attitude would be one of unfaithfulness, of infidelity, and that was Rechungpa's position.

So, 'if any unfaithful thought ever arises in one's mind, he is not a great yogi~. Rechungpa, you should pay homage to my power of telepathy' - because it says, 'at once Milarepa read Rechungpa's mind'. So again Milarepa is greater than Rechungpa even though Rechungpa has not been able to realize that, has not been able to appreciate that. 'O, son Rechungpa, your mind is like a nimble bird; Now it flies high and now it swoops low. You should observe this unstable change, stop thinking so much, and devote yourself to the Repa's practice!' And that's in a way, the key-note, that Rechungpa is very unstable, he's almost sort of manic-depressive if you like! And he thinks too much. We saw that when he was approaching Milarepa. When they were about to meet he was thinking 'what's going to happen? How's Milarepa going to salute him? Is he going to return his obeisance?' So Milarepa says: 'Stop thinking so much and devote yourself to the Repa's practice'. And what is the 'Repa's practice'?

Voice: Meditation.

S.: Solitary meditation, yes! 'If you think you can match your Guru, now you may come into this horn. Come in right now - here is a spacious and comfortable house!' If you think you are as great as I am, well, you should be able to do the things that I can do. This is what Milarepa, in principle is saying: 'Rechungpa, your Enlightenment is like the sun and moon; sometimes they shine bright, but sometimes they are darkened by clouds. You should observe this unstable change, stop thinking so much and devote yourself to the Repa's practice!'. So Milarepa is saying that, yes, you've got some spiritual understanding, some spiritual realization but it isn't constant, it comes and goes. This is of course, especially true of Dhyana experiences, not true of Vipassana, not true of insight, but certainly true of Dhyana experiences. Maybe even of some what are called, (Samapatis) or higher spiritual attainments. They come and they go. So Rechungpa is like that. When they come, yes, he's a spiritual sort of personality, but when they go, he's quite different. So he needs stability; he needs to develop more insight. ~ He needs to develop more wisdom; he needs to experience something more permanent. So he oscillates in this way, between the spiritual life and the ordinary life - spiritual states and very mundane states. This is what would happen in the case of a lot of people. There used to be a famous French preacher - a Catholic priest, I think, in the 17th century, and he used to preach wonderful sermons in the morning and then used to really live it up by night. There was a little rhyme about him. I forget exactly what it was, but it went something like this: 'Preach like an angel in the morning. Live like a devil at night!' It was swinging back and forth like this. So that is the state of quite a number of people. You can experience tremendous changes

in even the course of a single day. In the morning we're really inspired by the spiritual life - 'I'm going to be a real Bodhi- sattva', sacrifice everything for the sake of the Dharma and spend all your time meditating and studying the Dharma and giving talks and lectures and working in a co-op, but, by the evening you can have completely changed; be thinking of walking out, giving it all up, not meditating anymore, going and hav~~~~ing a good time, getting drunk! (Laughter) And you can think and feel in that way the very same evening, whereas in the morning you were so inspired with such beautiful aspirations and lofty ideals and so genuine~~and devoted. It's not that you're pretending - in both cases, it's genuine, because you're genuinely split - you're genuinely divided, genuinely schizoid. (Laughter) But it is like that for a long time. I mean, you do enjoy sort of spiritual experiences but they're not lasting, and this is why William James, the great psychologist, once said that anyone can have religious experiences but a religious man is a man who makes those religious experiences the center of his existence.

Ratna~una: What does that mean? That he points himself towards thos~?

S.: Yes. He places them in the centre of his Mandala. He cherishes ~m~ He tries to preserve them, to safeguard them. He tries to ensure that he doesn't lose them.

Voice: How can we best handle these oscillations?

S.: Well, I think one important way or one useful way is that you put yourself for a time at least, in stable surroundings. In surr- oundings which will tend all the time to encourage positive mental states, and will encourage the experience of those more definitely spirit~al attainments. Also I think perhaps, you mustn't take on too much at a time. You mustn't force the pace, otherwise there will be a reaction in the opposite direction. You must proceed wisely and circumspectly. In the Pali scriptures, there are quite a number of places of Bhikkhus, that is to say, followers of the Buddha who became Bhikkhus and who were Bhikkhus for a while, then gave it all up and went back to the household life. But they got fed up with that after a while, so they came to the Buddha again, got ordained again and became Bhikkhus. After a while they got fed up with it and went back to the household life, after disrobing. So the Buddha made a rule that people should be allowed to do this not more than seven times!! (Laughter) So look at the sort of oscillation there. People giving up their roles and going forth, but then sliding back, and then giving it up again, going forth again, so many times and so many oscillat- ions. But this is in effect what often happens. As I've said, you can go forth in the morning. leave everything behind, but eat your words in the evening, go back again.

Alan: So it's not a particularly modern element by any means?

S.: By no means, a modern element. I mean at one time, maybe in the morning when you're full of faith, in the evening you can be full of doubt. In the morning you can be as completely sure about Buddhism, that that's what you want to devote your life to, but in the evening you have all sorts of doubts. You think, 'well maybe it's all a bit of a will of the wisp. Maybe it would be better to devote myself to my career, and to my wife and ~amii1y'. But again the next morning,~now it's the Dharma again. So therefore, the life in the spiritual corr~unity becomes very very important, where all the influences, all the conditions help you to maintain your genuine interest in the Dharma, encourage

you to do that; don't divert you away from that. If you are commuting between a spiritual community and a worldly job, you'll probably find yourself in a quite strange sort of state. Even if you go into town too frequently and experience 'the vibes' there, it can have quite a strange effect on you. People staying at palces like Padmaloka find this. They go into Norwich even, a quiet little town like Norwich, a quiet little city, sometimes not so quiet, but still nothing like London; just going 2,3,4 times a week, you start feeling something. You feel sort of a pull. You feel sort of disrupted, because when you're here at Padmaloka, well, you're subject to influences of a certain kind. When you're in Norwich, you're subject to influences of another kind, even an opposite kind. You can't help being influenced. So the pendulum swings back and forth. Your mind ~wings back and forth, according to the place you're in, according to circum- stances. So it's best to stay, as much as possible, under stable conditions, stable positive conditions, in order to develop a stable positive mind. If possible a degree of insight, which in fact cannot be ever overcome.

~: But when we're taught that these oscillations will decrease their magnitude or decrease after a time. ...

S.: Well, after a while you just get fed up with them, but it's perhaps 'touch and go' whether the pendulum comes to rest on this side or that side.

John: It's really as touch and go as that, is it? We've got to walk such a tight rope all the time?

S.: I think some people do, some people do.

Gerald: It can be quite useful to, at least, know that t~is is going to happen, that you're going to experience these feelings, because....

S.: Or that it is likely that you're going to and that many people do, otherwise you might think that it is just you-that there's something particularly wrong with you, and that maybe you're not suited to spiritual life. You might start thinking that, but I think it's an e~xperience that a lot of people go through - that you don't settle down all at once. I mean, The Dhammapada gives the image of a -fish floundering on the bahk~nd trying to get back into the water, or at least, just floundering, twitching, from side to side.

Surata : Why should it happen that some people need to go very s~l~owly? do you think or is it just as simple as that? I can think of..

S.: It's not really as simple as that. It depends also on the conditions. It depends on their spiritual friends, how skilfully they handle that person.

Gerry: Can it not be the case that your head tells you something like, well, 'I'm going to live in a community and I'm going into a co-op, etc. and then it maybe takes a little bit of time for

the rest of you to catch up?

S.: Well, yes! This is nearly always the case, nearly always the case, because people are mentally developed and they can see and understand quite clearly sometimes what really they ought to do; long before they're able to do it. Sometimes they may force themselves to do it, by an act of will, but perhaps they're not ready, - a greater part of their being rebels. So they backslide rather dramatically

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for a while, then after a bit pick themselves up and come back and try again. This often happens. So the ups and downs are only to be expected, so long as you press on nonetheless.

So again Milarepa sings: 'If you think you can match your Guru, you may come into this horn. Come in right now - Here is a spacious and comfortable house.' Son Rechungpa! Your behaviour is like the mountain wind; Now it blows fast and violent, and now it blows gentle and slow. You should observe this unstable change. Stop thinking so much, and devote yourself to the Repa's practice!"

So, 'your behaviour is like the mountain-wind' - you find this with some people. 'Now it blows fast and violent, and now it blows gentle and slow' - say with regards to spiritual practice. Someone can blow 'fast and violent' and try to chivy everybody along, and get them all doing lots of extra meditation, but a few days later, that same person himself has slackened off dramatically and is now just puffing 'gentle and slow'.

Qwwerr: What I think the case is that these changes, these oscillations, tend to happen much quicker when you're in a spiritual community, than outside. It's as if there's a greater inertia outside than within.

S.: Well, in the spiritual community it's as though you get a ~i~ger dose of spiritual life, so therefore, sometimes you get a stronger reaction against it, whereas supposing you are living in the world - maybe you're not living in a spiritual community - you've not started working in a co-op - you're living at home with your family and you've~got a job. You just come along to the centre, say, once a week, well, it's~ unlikely that you're going to get a strong reaction against that, because after all it's not much is it? Just coming along once a week? But if you're living in a community; you're meditating twice a day and there are no mundane distractions - no wife, no family, no T.V., maybe no newspapers, nothing but the Dharma, well, under those conditions you can start reacting very strongly and very quickly. So I think, ery often when one is living, as it were, outside in the world, ver often you don't react so much because there's not very much to react against. You've no cause, to react in a way. Your worldly life is pretty safe; it doesn't feel threatened in any way. ~ou're going along to the centre once a week or once a fortnight - it's almost just a little interest, almost like a hobby. It occupies just a corner of your life. Your worldly life isn't threatened, as a consequence. There's no violent reaction.

Gerry: It could also have to do with personal awareness. You know, you may be quite dead from outside - not much personal awareness.

S.: Yes, that's true. Bludgeoned! So again he says: 'If you think you can match your Guru,



you may come into this horn. Come in right now - Here is a spacious and comfortable house!' We've had this refrain several times, but why do you think Milarepa says 'Come in right now'?

Vimalamitra: Is he teasing? Just taunting?

S.: He is of course, teasing him, but there's another meaning possibly, that if ~he really is as great as Milarepa, whatever Mila- repa can do, well, he really ought to be able to do it on the spot. It's like if you said I you can speak ~French,'come on! Let me hear you speak it now!' See what I mean!?

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S.: So ~nother simile: - 'Son Rechungpa, your accomplishments are like the crops in the field. Sometimes they grow badly and sometimes well. You should observe this unstable change, stop thinking so much and devote yourself to the Repa's practice!'. There are a~umber of similes that Milarepa is giving but they all tell the same story; they all illustrate the same fact, that Rechungpa's spiritual life is rather a patchy affair, a rather inter- mittent affair - something that comes and goes. He's not a stable person. He's got to stabilize himself; stabilize his spiritual experience. He's got to start treading the path of regular steps. He's too clever, too gifted, too sure of himself, too conceited, too mixed up. It's almost as though for him the Dharma, though he's very gifted as regards to the Dharma, it's still one interest among many. He hasn't really solidly devoted himself, or committed himself to it. He swings back and forth too much still.

Ratnaguna: You've mentioned before that Rechungpa is spiritually gifted. Do you think some people are spiritually gifted?

S.: Well, in Buddhist terms this can only mean that as a result of ~ritual practices in previous lives, they have outstanding spir- itual qualities. Not that they've just inherited them from their parents, they've carried them over from previous lives. But in this life, they may not have fallen upon very fortunate circum- stances or circumstances that encourage those gifts.

Ratnaguna: What would you mean 'to be spiritually gifted'?

S.: Well, for instance, sometimes you find people who don't have strong cravings; who can experience pleasures in a quite detached way, in a quite healthy way,; people who are naturally kind, natur- ally helpful, naturally unselfish. I say 'naturally', in that they don't have to make much of an effort to be that. They are that, spontaneously . They don't have to do it as a discipline, whereas for other people to behave in that way is possible only after a severe struggle with themselves. Some people are naturally generous. They don't mind sharing with you whatever they've got. They don't cling onto things - they're not miserly.

Ratnagufla: Do you think some people find insight easier than others?

S.: It does seem that some people are more intelligent than others, but whether that amounts or whether that makes it easier for them to develop insight, is rather difficult to say.

Ratna~guna: Because you do hear of some people who have these sort of outstanding experiences.

S.: You can, of course, meet people who are very good scholars in Buddhism, and who've got a remarkable understanding of Buddhist doctrine on an intellectual level, but no insight.

Robin: You do get someone like perhaps Hui Neng who, if I understand the story correctly, had an insight experience, very very soon upon his first hearing of the Dharma at all.

S.: Even though he was an illiterate and he hadn't read anything. So capacity for insight is not necessarily associated with intellectual understanding.

Perhaps we should stop there for tea?

(End of Tape 7)

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S.: So N~larepa says, - 'If you think you can match your Guru, you may come into this horn. Come in right now - Here is a spacious and comfortable house!

If one's mind can master the domain of space, he can enter this horn and enjoy it. Come in right now, my son, your father is calling!~' So, 'if one's mind can master the domain of space, he can enter this horn and enjoy it'. So what does that mean? How does the mind 'master the domain of space'?

~ala: Obviously transcend it with some sort of insight.

S.: But what would be the nature of that insight?

Vimalamitra: Is that the same level of insight or is that below?

S.: I think one could say that this is the level of actual insight... In any case, to master - what is meant by 'mastering space'? How does one 'master space' or the domain of space?

Robin: I suppose at present, one's mind is limited by space - it's spatially limited. You think of it as being for example, in one particular place, occupying this particular space. If you can get beyond that idea, somehow then you've mastered the domain of space.

S.: You master space by realizing that space is in mind, not that mind is in space. That - in Abhidharma terminology - space, like time is only a concept. I mean, space is not a thing, it's only a particular way in which you perceive or experience things. So you can go beyond that because you can modify your experience - you can modify your consciousness.

Joti~ala: How does one start to come to terms with that? Realizing that space is only a concept?

S.: Well, that isn't easy. There is a sort of method described in the Sarungama Samadhi

Sutra that is to say, the one contained in the 'Buddhist Bible'. You first of all start off with the common-sense idea that the mind is inside the body, say, inside the head and looking out through the eyes. Well, just as in the same way as you see the spectacles and then you see through the spectacles to the objects outside them, in the same way you should be looking through your eyes. But actually we find - that isn't the case - we should see the inside of your eyes first, just like when you look out of a window, you see the inside of the window and then you look out. So if you are inside, your mind is inside looking out through your eyes, well, then you should, as it were, see the inside of your eyes first - even the inside of your head first and then look out through the windows of the eyes and see the external world. But that doesn't happen, so it seems that the mind isn't inside. Or is the mind outside? If the mind was outside, you ought to be able to see your own face but you can't. So is the mind then just in between the two? Well, the sutra goes on - that also is not possible. So it brings you to the conclusion that mind is not spatially related at all. The mind does not stand in any relationship to space because space is not, so to speak, a thing outside the mind. It is an idea in the mind. So this is, as it were, a more philosophical kind of approach but there are other sorts of simple approaches at least to give you some idea of relativity of time and space.

For instance, when you meditate and when you come out of the meditation or even while you are meditating, you can do a sort of

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little exercise. Keep your eyes closed and if you are meditating in London, say to yourself that you're actually in, say, Norfolk. See what I mean? Because the subjective experience is the same, whether you're meditating in London or whether you're meditating in Norfolk. And with a bit of practice, you can actually feel that well, actually you are meditating in Norfolk and so be sort of, at least doubtful - 'well, am I in Norfolk or am I in London?' And you can even sort of travel about in time, in that way and just sort of imagine to yourself, that you, you aren't in the 20th century. You're in the 6th century B.C.. You're in India and here are with your closed eyes just meditating. And you're in the forest and not far away there's the Buddha's Vihara. And you can get an actual feeling of - well, there you are in the 6th century B.C. And then of course, you can switch back to the 20th century A.D. And you start feeling that the mind can do this. It can switch back and forth; that time and space are inside the mind - not the mind inside time and space. This is a sort of simple practice.

Ratnaguna: It's quite strange when you wake up in the morning - if you're in somebody else's home and you think you're somewhere and you look around and you're not. It's quite disorientating.

S.: Yes. It takes you a few minutes to work out where you are.

Ratnaguna: Is that a Vipassana experience?

S.: So yes, this would be - well, one must proceed cautiously. At the beginning, just as it's difficult to point to the moment in which intellectual understanding passes over into actual insight, so in the same way, this sort of juggling about with space and time, at a certain point does pass over into an actual insight into the relativity of space and time, but you can have a sort of experience of it - a not very strong one - before reaching that point. So one can't say that well, if one has any sort of experience of this sort, it does amount to insight. Well, not

necessarily. It depends on how strong, how vivid the experience is and whether it does in fact, leave a permanent effect on you.

Vimalamitra: You can get a different experience of space when you're visualizing. You're kind of floating in a blue sky. You get a feeling - you feel that the sky is about you and below you.

S.: Yes... So our perception, our consciousness of things, isn't fixed as we usually think. I mean, this is what Milarepa is really saying to Rechungpa or what he's showing him. Space and time are relative. The little yak-horn can contain a man's body.

Vimalamitra: But why is it that we or I mean, I always feel my mind somewhere in there - it's always around the head?

S.: Yes - well not necessarily so because there is an exercise in which one pulls the consciousness down, as it were, to the region just below the stomach. Because you can be sitting there meditating, as it were, looking down from the head to the stomach. And you can sort of close your eyes and you can imagine yourself pulling the consciousness down so that you feel that 'I am here'. So I'm not looking down to the stomach from the head. You see what I mean? Sometimes this has a very relaxing effect. You can feel very warm and comfortable and sleepy. And it can help you in getting rid of excessive mental activity.

Vimalamitra: ~ So you can actually feel that you're in your stomach rather than....

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S.: Yes, you. In the same way that you were in your head, you now, in that same manner, are now in your stomach.

Gerry: I think it's because we've maybe been told that we live in our heads.

S.: Well, the brain is in the head and the brain is the seat of consciousness. There are some Tibetan or some Vajrayana exercises where you practise locating your consciousness in different parts of the body. Or even interchanging senses, say, and seeing with your ear or hearing with your eye. These things sometimes spontaneously occur.

Ratnaguna: Seeing with your ear?

S.: Yes. (Laughter) Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? But anyway, this all goes to show that, well, that things we think of as fixed, aren't so fixed.

Ratnaguna: Quite interesting with regards to communication - these two consciousnesses in communication. If you're having a really good communication you might ask yourself, 'well, where's the consciousness'?

S.: Right. Who am I? Which am I?

Ratanguna: Subhuti on the last retreat, gave a talk and he said you could ~try with regard to a~wareness - imagine that you're some- body else. Just look at somebody else and imagine that you're that person.

S.: Yes... It's quite a good exercise provided you're not al- ~ay alienated. Imagining that you're in fact somebody else - this would be putting yourself~ in somebody else's shoes. That can ex- pand one's consciousness or extend one's sympathies.

Ratna una: I had an experience like that on LSD. I had about eight ours w en I just blanked out and when I woke up, I thought I was somebody else. I thought I was this fellow called Pete Harvey and I was walking about for a few hours thinking I was Pete Harvey. I was even doing things that he did - like, I didn't smoke but when I was offered a cigarette,~ I actually smoked - it was really strange.

S.: Alright, then. So much for the relativity of space and time. So, Milarepa is sort of teasing Rechungpa: "It wouldn't be nice if a son refuses to enter his father's house. I am a sick and worn-out old man who has never been in India all his life; his in- significant body is frightened by the dangerous road outside, there- fore insd[de this horn he stays! Son Rechungpa, you are young, and have been in India. Also, you have studied under many learned and accomplished Gurus. You should now step into this horn with your splendid and prominent body. Of little value is this rotten yak- horn; Surely it will not inflate~~one's egotism and desire. .' - this is very ironical of course... 11Come in, Rechungpa, come and join your father inside!" So what does Rechungpa think? Someone like to read that para - graph?

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Rechungpa thought, "There seems to be plenty of room there; can I also get in?" Thinking this, he tried to enter the horn, but he could not even get his hand and head in, [let alone his whole body]. Then he thought, "The Jetsun's miracul~s power may, or may not be genu- ine, but he can surely produce ha~il.' P~~u~~tting his mouth close to the horn, Rechungpa sang in a quavering voice:

S.: Yes, alright. Let~'s look at this little paragraph. It's as ~ugh Rechungpa misses the irony - misses it completely. He thinks that Milarepa is seriously inviting him in - that is to say - he doesn't really recognize his own limitations. ~ 'Rechungpa thought, "There seems to be plenty of room there; can I also get in?" Thinking this, he tried to enter the horn, (amusement) but he could not even get his hand and head in, (let lone his whole body).1, I mean, this is -

you could say - quite symbolical, isn't it? 'He couldn't even get his hand and head in, let alone his whole body'. He wasn't really like Milarepa at all. He didn't have Milarepa's powers, didn't have Milarepa's realization, but he still doesn't completely accept the situation. 'Then he thought, "The Jetsun's miraculous power may or may not be genuine, but he can surely produce hail." Putting his mouth close to the horn, Rechungpa sang in a quavering voice:' So what does he sing:

Oh, my father Jetsun Guru, please listen to me! Whether the View, Practice, Action, and Accomplishment Of your servant and son, Rechung Dor Draug, Be high or low, bright or dim, great or small, Better or worse, it makes no difference; He shall continue to pray to you. Whether his cotton robe be dry or wet, He shall continue to pray to you. He may or may not match his father, But he shall continue to pray to him!

S.: So Rechungpa seems to be melting a little bit. He says: 'Oh, my father Jetsun Guru, please listen to me! Whether the View, Practice, Action and Accomplishment of your servant and son, Rechung Dor Draug, be high or low, bright or dim, great or small, better or worse, it makes no difference; he shall continue to pray to you~T - So he recognizes, at least, the possibility that Milarepa may in fact be more highly developed in fact than he is.

'Whether his cotton robe be dry or wet, he shall continue to pray to you~. He may or may not match his father, but he shall continue to pray to him!' So as I say, he begins to soften; he begins to realize that perhaps he isn't Milarepa's equal after all. Right. Read the next couple of paragraphs:

Milarepa came out of the horn. He gestured toward the sky, and the storm began to abate, the clouds to disperse, and the 'Iti to break through. Immediately the air became very warm, and

for a long time, Rechungpa's clothes were dried.

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S.: That makes it clear that Milarepa had brought on the hail-storm by his magical power. The whole thing was staged by him, to give himself an opportunity of slipping into the yak's horn and teaching Rechungpa a good lesson. Airight then

After a while, the Jetsun said, "Rechungpa, I knew from the beginning that your trip to India was unnecessary. Being quite satisfied with the teaching of Mahamudra and the Six Yogas, I did not go to India. I am very glad that you have now returned with the teaching you wanted."

S.: So, after resting a while the Jetsun said, "Rechungpa, I knew from the beginning that your trip to India was unnecessary. Being quite satisfied with the teaching of Mahamudra and the Six Yogas, I did not go to India." Did not go to get those Formless Dakini Dharmas which Marpa had not brought back. I mean, Milarepa felt that the teaching of Mahamudra and the Six Yogas of Naropa - these being the main teachings of the Kagyupa School - were quite sufficient for the gaining of Enlightenment. "I am very glad that you have now returned with the teaching you wanted." (Pause)

Jotiala: One point there, Bhante - about that verse at the bottom - there are capital letters? - VIEW PRACTICE ACTION AND ACCOMPLISHMENT.

S.: Ah yes. We didn't have this in this group then, did we? Must be in the other group. The VIEW is the general philosophy - either the philosophy of Buddhism itself or of a particular school, such as the Madhyamika or the Kagyupa. The PRACTICE is the general application of that philosophy. the ACTION are the particular observances in which that practice consists. The ACCOMPLISHMENTS - the spiritual attainments which result from that VIEW, PRACTICE AND ACTION. This is a standard classification.

Gerry: When Milarepa says, "I am very glad you have now returned with the teaching you wanted", is that the teaching that Milarepa has given him there and then, or is it....?

S.: No, it refers to these Formless Dakini Dharmas. There were apparently 10 of these Marpa brought back ten or brought back five of them from India but not the other five. So Milarepa, when Rechungpa insisted on going to India said, "Alright, you can go but don't go just to study science. Bring back those 5 Dakini Dharmas which Marpa did not bring back". So these are the teachings which he's referring to probably. But it may be a reference to the 'Science of Logic', to study which, Rechungpa went away. In either case, it seems that the statement is a bit ironical, because he has said that the trip to India was unnecessary, but he says anyway, "I'm glad that you returned with the teaching you wanted even though the trip was entirely unnecessary". Anyway, you've done what you wanted to do. You did get your own way in the end. So alright, never mind!" (Pause) Right, let's go on:

"Dear Lama, I am very hungry and cold," said Rechungpa, "let us go to the tents over there and beg some food." "But this is not the time to beg alms," replied Milarepa. "I do not know whether it is the time to beg alms or not, but I know that I am starving to death right now. By all means let us go." "Very well, we shall go. I think perhaps it would be better to go to the first tent." "But in begging alms one must not look only for rich people, and neglect the poor," said Rechungpa. "Therefore let us go to that smaU~ brownish tent near the lower end [of the terrace]." So they went toward the small tent. When they reached its entrance to ask the host for alms, a feeble old woman came out and said, "A yogi should stick to poverty all the time. Good yogis always; refuse our offerings, even when brought to them. But greedy people like you, never content with what they already have, always come after others' belongings. All the things that I had to spare for charity, I ~~ ready gave to some beggars this morning. Nothing is left now. Yb, had better go somewhere else to beg." Upon hearing these malicious remarks, the Jetsun said, "The sun is about to set; it makes no difference whether we get food or not this evening, so let us find a place to sleep."

S.: So Rechungpa says, "Dear Lama, I am very hungry and cold" after all he's been in this hail-storm recently. "Let us go to the tents over there and beg some food." They were probably nomad tents just in the distance. "But this is not the time to beg alms," replied Milarepa. When is the time to beg alms?

Voice: Before noon, isn't it?

S.: Yes, before noon - it's in the morning. Apparently it's late afternoon. So Rechungpa says, "I do not know whether it is the time to beg alms or not, but I know that I am starving to death right now. By all means let us go." "Very well, we shall go. I think perhaps it would be better to go to the first tent." This is what Milarepa says, but Rechungpa says, "But in begging alms one must not look only for rich people, and neglect the poor," ~said Rechungpa. "Therefore let us go to that small brownish tent near the lower end of the terrace." What do you notice about this remark of Rechungpa's?

Vimala~mitra: Well, he said he's very hungry but here he is squabbling over which tent to go to.

S.: Well, not just that. He's very keen on observing the rules. '~~~~t in begging alms one must not look only for rich people~~~ He's suggesting that Milarepa wants to avoid the small brownish tent because some~body poor lives there.~~, He wants to go to the first tent because apparently that's a bigger one and maybe the people there are richer so he's rebuking Milarepa for not observing the rule of begging from everybody equally - whether they're rich or poor. So here's Rechungpa bothering about the rules. But what happened just a minute before? Milarepa says, "But this is not the time to beg alms!" ~ Rechungpa doesn't bother about that rule because he's starving to death, he says, but he's very quick to try to trip up Milarepa about some other rule. You see what I mean?~ So it's although he's in a rather disagreeable state of mind, still.



But there's another point: he doesn't realize that perhaps Milarepa knows better. He still hasn't got complete faith in Milarepa. Milarepa says, "I think perhaps it would be better to go to the first tent". Probably Milarepa knows what sort of reception they're likely to receive at that small brown tent, but Rechungpa can't take the hint. He wants to put his Guru in the wrong. So what happens? So Milarepa just shrugs his shoulder. He just goes along with along with Rechungpa. He always does, if Rechungpa won't take the hint. "So they went toward the small tent. When they reached it entrance to ask the host for alms, a fearful old woman came out and said, "A yogi should stick to poverty all the time." Well, there are lay people like this, who are very strict with the monks and yogis - who are always advising them and always rebuking them and always saying that they're not good enough.

She says, "Good yogis always refuse our offerings, even when brought to them". This must be very convenient for the lay people that the yogis and monks won't even accept their offerings. It means that there is no expense then for the lay people. "But greedy people like you, never content with what they already have, always come after others' belongings. All the things that I had to spare for charity, I already gave to some beggars this morning." Whether she really did or not we don't know. - "Nothing is left now. You had better go somewhere else to beg." Upon hearing these malicious remarks, the Jetsun said, "The sun is about to set; it makes no difference whether we get food or not this evening, so let us find a place to sleep." Well, they've lost time going to that small brown tent. It's too late now to go to the other tents, so Milarepa doesn't mind. He says that, "it makes no difference whether we get food or not this evening, so let us find a place to sleep". You can imagine what Rechungpa thought then or how he felt. He has really a very hard time with Milarepa. So carry on:

Robin: Can I say - I just wondered if there was some sort of symbolic significance in the whole thing. That for example, Rechungpa is very aware of his physical hunger and starvation and isn't aware of his spiritual needs. (S.: Right, yes) And further on from that, he is aware of his physical needs but isn't even aware of the best way of satisfying them and goes to the wrong place there and similarly spiritually he's not really aware of where to go for his spiritual needs and goes off to India where in fact they're at home.

S.: And for the same reason that he doesn't listen to Milarepa. Milarepa gives him a hint here. He says, "I think perhaps it would be better to go to the first tent". But he's so closed to any suggestions from Milarepa that he just doesn't take any notice.

Again he wants to do things his own way, so he gets into difficulties. That's sort of typical of his whole attitude towards Milarepa. He's not very receptive to any advice or suggestion or hint or anything of that kind. So he gets into trouble. Carry on then:

One night the Jetsun and Rechungpa slept nearby. About night, they heard a noise in the tent. Then it subsided and all came quiet again. The next morning when the sun arose, the Jetsun said to Rechungpa, "Go over to the tent and take a look inside". Rechungpa did so, but he found nothing left in the tent except the corpse of the old woman who had refused to give them alms the evening before. Rechungpa then informed Milarepa of what he

seen. The Jetsun said, "The food and other things must be hidden somewhere underground" and they went over to the tent together.

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S.: So, "That night the Jetsun and Rechungpa slept nearby." Maybe they slept out in the open air. "About midnight, they heard a noise in the tent. Then it subsided and all became quiet again. The next morning when the sun arose, the Jetsun said to Rechungpa, "Go over to the tent and take a look inside," Rechungpa did so, but he found nothing left in the tent except the corpse of the old woman who had refused to give them alms the evening before. Rechungpa then informed Milarepa of what he had seen. The Jetsun said, "The food and other things must be hidden somewhere underground" and they went over to the tent together'. Well, that's pretty self-evident isn't it? Let's carry on with the story:

The fact was, that regardless of her malicious talk, though she came for the old woman - the land was full of epidemics at the time; [They found that] her food had all been stolen by the nomads.

S.: That presumably was the noise that they'd heard at 12 o'clock.

Left behind on the ground was nothing but a small bag of food; some cheese and barley flour, and a pail of yogurt. "Je-tsun Rechungpa", "Son, all things are like this. Last evening this old woman was full of stinginess and worry, but now she is dead. Oh, in the future one should give alms to those in need."

S.: So she had food to give - she said that she didn't have anything. But she had food and didn't give it. So that's a pity because now she's dead and she doesn't have the opportunity of earning merit any more.

Thereupon, Mila Rechungpa prepared a sacramental offering for the dead woman the things that were left, Rechungpa then packed up the remainder of the edible food and was about to carry it away with him, the Jetsun said, "It is not good for one to eat the food of a without benefiting

it. '1 'he proverb says, 'The old men should\~~

food and the young men should produce it.' Now, carry the corpse upon your shoulder and I'll go ahead to lead the, way!" With misgivings that he might be contaminated by the filth of the corpse, Rechungpa unhappily carried it upon his shold~er "while the Jetsun went ahead to guide them on the road. When they reached a marsh, the Jetsun said, "Now put the corpse down." He then placed the point of his staff at the heart of the corpse, and said, 4'Rechungpa, like this woman, every sentient being is destined to die, but seldom do people think of this fact. So they lose many opportunities to prac- tice the Dhanna. Both you and I should remember this incident and learn a lesson from it." Whereupon, he sang the "Song of Transiency and Delusion," having six parables:

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S.; So the old woman the previous night had had the opportunity of giving alms, of practising dana, but she hadn't realized that she was about to die and she hadn't done it. So Milarepa is saying that if one realizes that the hour of death can come at any time and after that one will not have the opportunity then for creating merit - if one realizes that, well, one will take advantage of every opport - unity that one has here and now. So in this way, the Recollection of Death, helps one in leading the spiritual life. So, "whereupon he sang the'Song of Transiency and Delusion', having six parables:" So would someone like to read that: It's quite long, or maybe we can read just a section at a time because we won't be able to go through it all this afternoon - just read that first paragraph:

Oh, the grace of the Gurus is beyond our compre- hension!

When the transiency of life strikes deeply into one sheart His thoughts and deeds will naturally accord with Dharma. If repeatedly and continuously one thinks about death, He can easily conquer the demon of laziness. No one knows when death will descend upon him - Just as this woman last night!

S.: So he beg,,i°n~by saying, "Oh, the grace of the Gurus is beyond our comprehension!" Why do you think he says that at the beginning of his song?

Robin: Is it because this event is so timely as far as Rechungpa is concerned?

S.: Yes. It's as though it's due:to~the grace of the Gurus, as it were, that ~they've just had this experience with the old woman and seen her stinginess, just before her death. It's been a good lesson to them and it's as though Milarepa was saying, 'well this good lesson that we've just received is all due to the grace of the Gurus.'.~ "The grace of the Gurus is beyond our

comprehension!" It can work in all sorts of mysterious ways. But if the Gurus themselves are beyond our comprehension, well, clearly the grace of the Gurus also will be beyond our comprehension. (Pause) So, "when the transiency of life strikes deeply into one's heart, his thoughts and deeds will naturally accord with Dharma" What is meant by 'transiency of life striking deeply into one's heart'? What happens then? What does one develop?

Ra~tna~gufla: An insight?

S.: It's insight, yes. I mean, this is really what one is talking ~ut - an actual insight. When one has an actual insight into the transiency of life, then "his thoughts and deeds will naturally accord with Dharma". There won't be any question of effort or discipline. If you realize something ; if you have a genuine in- sight, well, then that becomes part of your being - your being is transformed in accordance with that insight. So your 'thoughts and deeds naturally accord with the Dharma'. That is to say, with that insight, - I mean that is the criterion of insight - that it does actually transform you - it does actually make a difference.

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"If repeatedly and continuously one thinks about death, he can easily conquer the demon of laziness." So what does this suggest? That one has to repeatedly and continuously think about death in order to conquer the demon of laziness?

Gerry~: You must remember your insight - you must recall it.

S.: Well, it almost suggests that in order to overcome the demon of laziness, you need almost a degree of insight. It's suggesting that laziness is a very deep-rooted and terrible thing. It's not just a sort of mild superficial weakness. Laziness is a manifest- ation of the effect of the gravitational pull. It requires rather drastic treatment.

Ratna una: I imagine that he has a wider sort of conception of la iness t an we do,

S.: Yes. Well, it's a sort of inertia with regard to the spiritual ----life.

Ratnaguna: Probably he thinks that R~ch~~S~pa has been lazy in going to India.

S.: Yes, indeed! It's got nothing to do with ordinary activity. I was talking some time ago abo~ut the fact that sometimes in the evening people say,~ "Oh well, I'm too tired to meditate or too tired to do a Puja". But if a few minutes later you say, "Well, let's go and see a film!", they brighten up extraordinarily. The energy is there. They're sparkl~ing and leaping about all over the place, (Laughter) - they're ready to go out that minute. No trace of tiredness~thenl you see? So it means that the energy was there. They were just lazy.

J~oti~ ala: Do you think that if you feel like that you should actua y 0 a meditation. I mean, sometimes in the evening, I tend to get like that. I realize it's sort of psychological - alot of it - and I do go up to meditate. I yawn alot, say, doing the Puja and "~~ that. Do you think~~I~~should still?.,~I've always done that- I've always gone through

S.: I think normally, - I think very often, one will actually break through to another level of

energy, even if you do start off feeling very tired. I think it isn't really very often that you are genuinely tired and in fact are genuinely unable to meditate or do a Puja for that~reason. Well,~in fact one might say, that if you're feeling tired, well, you~ne~ed to meditate. Well, if it isn't bedtime and you're feeling tired,~well, obviously you need a bit of a re- fresher. So it's better to meditate or do Puja . (Pause) So, "if repeatedly and continuously one thinks about death, he can easily conquer the demon of laziness'~.11 Insight is required to overcome laziness - laziness in this sense! "No one knows when death will descend upon him - just as this woman last night!" You just don't know how much time you've got left. You might be young and healthy but you could have an accident tomorrow. You could fall victim to a fatal disease. You just don't know. So you should make the best use of your opportunities. Not postpone things, not delay things. (Pause) Then he says - like to read the next verse:

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Rechungpa, do not be harsh, and listen to your Guru! Behold, all manifestations in the outer world Are ephemeral like the dream last night! One feels utterly lost in sadness When he thinks of this passing dream. Rechungpa, have you completely wakened From this great puzzlement? Oh, the more I think of this, The more I aspire to Buddha and the Dharma.

S.: Alright, let's go into this next verse. "Rechungpa, do not be harsh, and listen to your Guru! Behold, all manifestations in the outer world are ephemeral like the dream last night!" Ephemeral means transitory. "One feels utterly lost in sadness when he thinks of this passing dream."

Ratnaguna: What dream are they talking about?

S.: Well, the dream of life itself. That life itself is a dream. Because if you have a dream, at the time you have the dream, it's very vivid. Your experience of it can be very intense. But when you wake up, where is it? It's gone as though it had never been. But actually, v~ery often one feels the same way about experiences you have during the waking state - even good experiences. You mi9ht, for instance, have a very good retreat one summer - really enjoyed it but only a few weeks ago, when you try and think about it - it's almost like a dream. It seemed unreal. You almost sort of ask yourself - I well did I really have it? Was I really on that retreat?' It's not just so long ago, but you're now so much sort

of out of tune with it; out of harmony with it. It's as though it had never been - it's like a dream. So all worldly experiences can be like that. Even really good ones. You sometimes wonder whether you really underwent those experiences or not. In retrospect, they seem so unreal. They've gone. So in that respect, without going into more metaphysical considerations, everything seems like a dream. It's here today, gone to - tomorrow. Today it's so vivid - you're so immersed in it - it's so intense, so, clear, so enjoyable, but a few days later, a few weeks later, you can't imagine what it was like - you can't recapture it at all. It's just very faint, very dim, very indistinct. So Milarepa says, "One feels utterly lost in sadness when he thinks of this passing dream. " Just because it's all so transitory It doesn't last. It is so vivid at the time - so intense, so important, so overwhelming, but afterwards, it's as though it had never been. It's nothing. So Milarepa says, that when one thinks in this way, - of all the experiences of one's life as a passing dream, "one feels utterly lost in sadness". It's a sort of salutary sadness, one can say. And then he asks Rechungpa: "Rechungpa, have you completely awakened from this great puzzlement?" so the suggestion is that just as you awaken from the dream into the waking state, so you waken from the dream of life itself, into the state of 'awakening' - that is the state of Enlightenment. "Rechungpa, have you completely awakened from this great puzzlement?" The puzzlement is that of transitory, worldly existence itself. "Oh, the more I think of this, the more I aspire to Buddha and the Dharma".

Ratna una: It's quite a powerful verse that, isn't it? es, indeed. (End of Side A)  
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Surata: a sort of degree of insight - you actually see the emptiness and insignificance of all his actions. But he doesn't have that vision beyond. He's got no feeling for what really goes beyond, which is quite a desperate situation to be in.

S.: Yes. He doesn't feel sad in this positive sort of way. He simply feels depressed, which is a quite different state.

Surata: Very often he...either gives up in despair or throws himself back into life in a desperate hedonistical sort of way...

S.: Yes, - eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.

Ratnagupta: I think it, is quite a common feeling - this sort of feeling of emptiness and this despair.

S.: Do you think nowadays people do feel that very much?...ordinary people. Or do you think they feel more or less happy and satisfied with their job? and home life and fun in the evening, football matches and T.V.?

Ratnagupta: I would imagine that people wouldn't have very strong experiences of this, but it would be more or less colouring their whole life - just in the background.

2. Disillusion.

S.: As you talk to people outside the Friends, do you find that there's a sort of element of disillusionment with their ordinary life?

Vo~ce: There was a chap came along to the centre . He was saying amongst alot of his friends or contemporaries, like most of us, there's a real feeling now of this sort of despair, especially with the nuclear upsurge again and the talk of nuclear weapons and nuclear power.

S.: But couldn't that then be disgruntlement rather than disillusionment? That is to say, thinking you won't get back what you want? Rather than not really wanting it even if you could get it?

Surata: I think it's more of a sort of pessimism and feeling of helplessness and hopelessness and really not knowing what to do.

Jotiala: The working class people that I worked with and know aoto, won't allow themselves to think like that because if they allow themselves to think about it, they would see that for them, there was no way out of it. I think most people in the world today will not allow themselves to even consider this emptiness. They have to say that this everything, otherwise - because there's no other medicine for them - no way out for them. They've only got the pub and betting shops and the Pools. There's absolutely nothing else.

Vimalamitra: So they have to keep active.

Jyotpala: Yes. They must never allow themselves to feel this - it's really terrible actually - that's why alot of them won't talk about it - won't get upset about politics or religion because of that - because it gets a bit near the bone and they'd have to start asking themselves questions.

S.: There was something in the paper the other day that - someone, I think he was a writer or a journalist - he was about 60 and his

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children were quite young. I think of university age and he thought that they were not taking their careers sufficiently seriously, so he had a heart to heart talk with them one evening and he said: 'Look - take it seriously - what are you going to do with your lives? Plan out your careers', he said, 'otherwise, where do you think you'll be when you're my age?' So they said: 'But we don't expect that we're going to live that long'. They had in mind, of course, the possibility of nuclear war. So he said he realized that they saw things in a completely different way from what he did. They genuinely felt this sort of threat hanging over them and therefore, they felt what was the use of planning out your whole life and your whole career if you're not going to live that long. And he said he realized that the attitude of the younger generation was very different from his own.

Ratnaguna: That can be quite different from the feeling that's here?

S.: Yes, indeed. That's disgruntlement, rather than disillusionment. You'd like to be able to live as long as that, to enjoy the good things of life, but you think that you probably

won't. You don't see really through things in that way. It could of course, lead to that but the two things are nonetheless quite distinct.

Andy: From among my friends actually, it seems that a few have actually experienced a sharp feeling of disillusionment, perhaps a vague unease but there's a lot to cover it up - there's a lot of distractions.

S.: Yes. Well, there is in fact quite a lot that they do - that people do - that they find quite enjoyable, quite pleasurable.

Gerr : I had quite a long chat with a friend of mine one time and she was saying that she feels this incredible disillusionment, because a lot of her friends have done the things like getting married and getting a mortgage, etc. etc. and she's held back for a long time but she realizes that there is no real option left open to her and that she must get into this at some point. And it really was very depressing.

S.: Well, she didn't consider any sort of spiritual life as an option

Gerry: No.

S.: I think quite a lot of people do find it difficult to believe that there is an alternative - that there is some other way, even when it is presented to them. They've become too set in their ways, so convinced almost - that life is just something with which they just have to sort of put up. You enjoy it when you can but you mustn't expect to enjoy it all the time and there's no alternative to it. That's your life. You're just lumbered with it so to speak. That I think is so with a lot of people in England. It may well be different in other countries and other cultures.

Gerald: Do you think this prevalent disgruntlement is any better a basis for encouraging people into the spiritual life rather than if things were much more hedonistic or generally optimistic?

S.: I don't think it's easy to go from disgruntlement into the spiritual life. I think you have to develop a genuine disillusionment first. I think people who find worldly life satisfactory - who are successful and reasonably happy - I think they find it usually very difficult to make the transition. It seems as though it's very difficult to go from the samsara - the world of the Gods -

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onto the spiritual path. But on the other hand, if life has been too painful and you've become too disgruntled and too bitter, too resentful - then also you may find it very difficult. So it's rather as tradition says, that it's very difficult to find a path from the world of the Gods and it's difficult to find it from the Hell state. It's easiest to find it from the human state, where pleasure and pain are mixed. So perhaps if someone has had a reasonable experience of life, - he's not experienced so little of happiness that he's bitter and resentful, but on the other hand, he's experienced enough of suffering to make him think, perhaps, that sort of person most easily makes the transition to the spiritual path.



Gerald: But from the basis of disgruntlement, one should aim towards achieving a happy human state first?

S.: Or to develop real disillusionment, if one possibly can.

Voice: Actually could you say what really does separate the two -?

S.: Well, if you're merely disgruntled, for instance, perhaps you would like to be successful - you're not successful. You're disgruntled because you're not successful. You'd like to be successful. You believe that if you could be successful, you would be happy! So you want to be successful so that you may be happy. But being disillusioned means that you realize that even if you were successful, or even though you are successful, now! - that doesn't give you happiness. That is disillusionment.

Gerry: That is something to do with values then!?

S.: Yes. That is something to do with values, even insight to a degree.... Right, would you like to read the next paragraph:

The pleasure-yearning human body is an ungrateful creditor. Whatever good you do to it, It always plants the seeds of pain. This human body is a bag of filth and dirt; Never be proud of it, Rechungpa, But listen to my song!

When I look back at my body, I see it as a mirage-city; Though I may sustain it for a while, It is doomed to extinction. When I think of this, My heart is filled with grief! Rechungpa, would you not cut off Samsara? Oh, the more I think of this, The more I think of Buddha and the Dharma!

S.: So, "the pleasure-yearning human body is an ungrateful creditor. Whatever good you do to it, it always plants the seeds of pain". Perhaps 'yearning' should be understood in the sense of craving. But does the body itself actually crave for pleasure?

Gerald: No, it doesn't seem to - not really.

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S.: Doesn't seem to - it's really the mind. I think one probably has to be careful to make that distinction. It's the mind that uses the body in this way. So one must bear that in mind when going through this verse. So, 'the pleasure-yearning' or pleasure-craving 'human body is an ungrateful creditor. Whatever good you do to it, it always plants the seeds of pain'. So how is this?

Ratnaguna: The fact that everything is transitory - you're going to end up. ...

S.: Well, but pain always come to you through the body. To be associated with the ~body is to be associated with the permanent possibility of pain. You may look after your~tody - you may bathe it and wash it and smooth it and perfume it, but what happens? The body gets a stomach ache or headache and you, so to speak, suffer. because you, atleast--to a certain extent are identified with the body. It's your bo~dy; your mind in some inysterious way is bound up with it. So, 'the pleasure-yearning human body is an ungrateful cred- itor. Whatever good you do to it, it always plants the seeds of pain'. You do good to the body, paradoxically - looking after it, and pampering it and caring for it but it only does harm to you because it brings about the~ possibility -of suffering. In fact, it does suffer which means in fact that ou suffer. This is of course, iTit of, as it were, 'special pleading - it's a bit of a one-sided view for a particular purpose-, - rather like Santideva's special plead- ings in the Bodhi~carayavata. But of course, the body ~also plants--the seeds of pleasure, you could say - through the body, comes ple-a~s-urable sensation, but that's not the side of the matter that Milarepa wants Rechungpa to see. "This human body is a bog of filth and dirt; never be proud of it, Rechungpa, but listen to my song." Because after all, don't forget that Rechungpa is humping along the corpse of the old woman on his back or has been humping it along, so he's in a position to appreciate-what Milarepa is saying. This is one aspect of the human body, but is it the whole story?

Jyotipala: ~ No, but it's through this body that you gain enlighten- ment.

S.: That's true - that is also a Vajrayana emphasis. But if you are attached to the bo~dy - if you are misusing the body - if you are trying to make use of it for selfish egoistic purposes, well, then you need to be reminded of the other side of the picture; reminded that the human body is a heap of- filth and dirt. Well, what is that you are attached to? What is it that you crave for? WeTh, it's something which can very easily be~ -the corpse of an old woman and not a ver~y attractive object at all. So this sort of reflection, this sort of contemplation, is generally used to counteract craving and attachment - especially craving and attachment to the physical body whether one's own or the bodies of other people or both. (Pause) So Milarepa says, "When I look back at my body, I see it as a mirage-city; though I may sustain it for a while, it is doomed to extinc~tion". In the previous verse, Milarepa has spoken of the man- ifestations in the outer world as being like dreams, but now he's comparing his body itself to~~a 'magic-city'. What is this 'magic city'? or this 1mirage-city', rather? Well, it's a city that you see but it isn't there. It's a sort of optical illusion. It's a sort of refl~ction, du to the particular condition of the atmosphere. You see a city there~, but it isn't really there! So one moment, it's there - the next moment it's gone. Just like a dream, or even more dramatically than a dreain, because you see the 'mirage city' in your waking state.

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So you look at it and maybe you apprec~ate it - look at the towers and the spires and the walls - it's all there. But the next instant, it's disappeared. So Milarepa is saying that the body is also like that, w~hen I look back on it. It's not just ex- periences in the world that are transitory, dream-like, it's the human body itself. It's not only dream-like, it's like a 'mirage-city'. One moment I've got it, the next moment, I haven't got it - I'm dead! The body comes and goes -- bodies come and go in the whole process of birth-death and rebirth. So this is the way in which Milarepa is asking Rechungpa to see things so that he may not be attached as he is at the present - so that he may not be full of craving. "When I think of this, my heart is

filled with grief Rechungpa, would you not cut off Samsara?" - because Samsara is just the succession of these dream experiences and mirage-city-like bodies, one after the other - constantly coming, constantly going. So he says, 'Rechungpa, would you not~~cut off Samsara?' Would you not like to end this process? Wake up. "Oh, the more I think of this, the-more I think of Buddha and the Dharma!" (Pause) Alright, next verse.

A vicious person can never attain happiness. Errant thoughts are the cause of all regrets, Bad dispositions are the cause of all miseries. Never be voracious, oh Rechungpa, But listen to my song!

S.: So, I 'a vicious person can never attain happiness'. Why do you think this is? ... a vicious person meaning - a person with many unskilful mental states and who acts in accordance with those un- skilful mental states. Such a person can never attain happiness.

Ranta~guna: Well, unskilful mental states are painful.

S.: They're painful. They lead--to painful experiences. One only torments oneself in the long run. And "errant thoughts" - wandering thoughts, that is - "are the cause of all regrets". In what way are 'errant thoughts' the 'cause of all regrets'?

Robin: Through lost opportunities.

S.: Through lost opportunities, yes. --Your wandering thoughts just carry you away from your true interest. You miss what really matters, what is really important and that's a cause of regret. The old woman was the victim of errant thoughts - thoughts of greed and miserliness - so if she knew it, she'd have cause for regret because due to those errant thoughts she lost or depr~ived herself of the opportunity of practising dana and in that way, or to that extent, leading--a spiritual life. SO, "bad dispositions are the cause of all miseries." 'Bad dispositions' - probably this means; 'klesas' - defilements and so on. "Never be voracious, Oh Rechungpa" - voracious means greedy, particularly perhaps, with reference to food. Don't forget that Rechungpa's been very hungry and very concerned about getting food, about getting alms. --He still hasn't eaten apparently - oh yes, he has, hasn't he - yes, they did eat something but he had to go sup~er less to-bed the previous night. Right, just look back over what we've done today for a minute and then we'll just revise it before we close: - (Pause) Right. Any further point about what we've gone throu~h today? (Pause)

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S.: It's as though Milarepa is trying really hard to bring Rechungpa to a genuinely serious

state of mind and really to confront him, so to speak, with the facts of life, and try to induce some genuine insights to arise in his mind. He's giving him a very serious object lesson. I mean, if you consider what Rechungpa has been through, first of all, the hail-storm, and then this strange happening with the yak-horn and then being hungry and being refused food by the old woman and then going back into the tent in the morning and finding the old woman's dead body. Then having something to eat but then what does Milarepa do? He makes Rechungpa shoulder the corpse of the old woman and carry it quite a distance. Then they find themselves in the middle of a marsh and there Rechungpa puts the corpse down. Milarepa points his staff at the heart of the old woman and he sings Rechungpa this song.

Ratnaguna: It's got quite a weird feel about it, hasn't it?

S.: Yes. As though the treatment is very drastic indeed.

Ratnaguna: Reminds me of a surrealist film

Gerald: It seems sort of appropriate because in a sense, Rechungpa's been immersing himself in the world - the material world, but in a one-sided way; and it looks like Milarepa is presenting just the other side of worldly existence.

S.: He's seen as it were, the good, colourful side of religious life. You know, travelling and meeting famous teachers and collecting mementoes and being welcomed everywhere, performing Tantric rites and mingling with the lay people. It's as though that has been religious life so far as he was concerned to a great extent. And anyway, he says earlier on in fact, doesn't he? that "my Guru lives under such poor conditions himself, naturally it would be impossible for me to expect any comforts or pleasure from him. I've been in India and have learned so many of the Tantric teachings. A man like me should not practise this devotion as an ascetic - one should practise it with pleasure and enjoyment". Well (Laughs), he's not getting much pleasure and enjoyment now is he? You know - with a corpse on his back or having been on his back, in the middle of a marsh and Milarepa giving him these sort of really drastic teachings. Rechungpa is a good person, he has some genuine spiritual aspiration and genuine devotion to Milarepa, but there's a lot of worldliness still mixed up with it and that has to be purged away - and that is what Milarepa is doing in this quite drastic manner.

Robin: I think it's marvelous the way Milarepa manages to make the most of every opportunity (S: Yes, indeed - laughing) and after spending days or whatever it was and trying to convince Rechungpa what is wrong with him - at last this marvelous opportunity comes up and he produces this fantastic song really - I think it's very impressive, this particular song.

S.: Also, it's as though Milarepa starts with advice and exhortations but it's as though those don't do the trick. They're just words so far as Rechungpa is concerned. He has to be involved, as it were, in actual happenings and to some extent, - perhaps, according to the story, Milarepa creates those happenings. If he doesn't create them - he foresees what is going to happen - or what has happened and makes the fullest use of it. So he starts involving Rechungpa in certain situations. He realizes that words are not going to do the trick with Rechungpa. It's, as it were, life itself that's got to teach him.

It's as - when you get a bit interested in Buddhism and you read books about Buddhism and yes, you can quite appreciate a good lecture on transitoriness and maybe give one yourself, but it doesn't really strike home. Maybe someone who is near and dear to you dies suddenly or is killed - then it strikes home. That's quite a different matter. I mean, life itself has started teaching you. So something like that you know, through Milarepa's agency or with the help of Milarepa, has started happening to Rechungpa. He had almost a sort of 'Playboy' conception of religion apparently, even though mixed up with a great deal that was genuine. We mustn't overlook that! He is still quite a spiritually well-endowed person, a spiritually gifted person, but a very uneven personality, a very unstable personality, who needs really stabilizing, who needs to get right down to the bedrock of things, spiritually speaking; who needs to develop some real insight. He needs to develop some constancy in his spiritual life - not to be oscillating and gyrating in the way that he usually does.

Gerald: He does seem particularly susceptible to worldly conditions - to material conditions.

S.: Yes. He seems to be a 'greed type' in terms of the usual classification, hence probably all this emphasis on transitoriness and impermanence, death and decay and the filthiness of the body. That kind of emphasis is meant for that kind of temperament. It's not the whole truth of the matter, but it's that particular aspect of the matter which the attention of people like Rechungpa needs to be drawn to, because they're inclined to overlook that aspect of things. In the 'Life of Milarepa', there's an exchange between Milarepa and his rather worldly minded sister, who sort of says in effect: 'well, religion is OK but after all you ought to make something out of it. I don't mind you being a Yogi or a hermit or a Guru, but you should be like these other Yogis and hermits and Gurus who've got lots of disciples and fine temples and palatial apartments where they can put up their relations'. She's saying that sort of thing. But Milarepa says: 'well, your brother could have these things if he wanted - I too could have the beautiful temple and the choir of little choristers. I too, could be surrounded by disciples and I, too, could be drinking tea and wine all the time but I do not choose to have those things. So Rechungpa hitherto to some extent, had had Milarepa's sister's conception of what was the spiritual life. It was a successful 'ecclesiastical career'. But Milarepa's not having any of that! He doesn't think of spiritual life in those sort of terms.

I mean, in the Buddhist East, still, what is a successful monk? Well, he's one who manages to establish his own Vihara, who is well-known to all the local nobility and gentry; received with respect everywhere; who has a seat of honour on all public occasions; has a number of disciples and prominent lay supporters and who is well-to-do; has beautiful silk monastic robes. That is a successful monk!! Not that many people still don't know the difference between ecclesiastical success and spiritual attainment - they do, but still, there's still far too much of confusion. Or very often nowadays a successful monk in Theravada countries is one who has become a professor of Pali in a University, who has got his doctorate in Pali. So Milarepa sees the spiritual life in very different terms.

Jyotipala: Yes, I suppose that even the present Kagyupas would find it a little uncomfortable ~if Milarepa were to come back.

S.: Yes, indeed, right. (Pause) Well, you find analogues w~th that even ~n the Christian tradition. I was reading how what -happene~d when St. Francis Xavier, who Was~n't of course, Saint Francis Xavier then - just Francis Xavier - arrived at Goa. ~nd the local ecciesiastics and administrators had laid on a splendid reception and were going to lead him to the Governor's Palace or the Archbishop's Palace or some- where like that, but he just wouldn't go. He went straight off to the nearest Leper Colony (Laughs) and started looking after the lepers and they were really quite scandalized. Well, they were scandalized when they saw him because he-was dressed practically in rags - not looking at all like a ~ctable monk or a respectable priest. So they had one idea about the religious life and he had qu~ite another; even within the Christian context. And I had a small experience of my own which I relate sometimes in my very early days, when I went down from Kalimpong to Calcutta to stay at the MahaBodhi Society. I was wearing an old robe which was perfectly clean but it was~ -an old robe - a bit faded maybe, with a patch or two, here and there. And the head monk or 'high priest' as he called himself, of the MahaBodhi Society headquarters was quite scandalized! He said, "Haven't you got a better robe than that to wear?" So I said, 1.No, it's alright"(Laughter) - it was quite alright, as far as I was concerned. So he said, "Oh you shouldn't wear robes like that! Old and patched - what will people think of us?" (Laughter) So he promptly gave me a new robe and insisted I wear it. Otherwise what will people think?! They'll think we're beggars!! (Loud laughter) They'll think we're poor!! People won't respect Buddhistmonks anymore!! But this is what can happen. It's veryeasy to do this - to evaluate people, even from an ostensibly spiritual point of view, really, in quite worldly terms! You know, whether they're well- dressed, whether they're educated, whether they're well-spoken, whether they're attractive in appearance. It's very easy to be influenced by these sort of factors.

Gerry: Lenny Bruce once said that whenever he's seen these big Catholic Churches in~New York, they were really ornate and opulent and he hated them ane he thought this was really wrong - but then after a while, he realized that that is what attracts people - this richness and opulence - that would get people to ~o. So in a way, he could condone it.

S.: But if they go for the richness - well, that isn't much good. Twey might as well go to the Bank. (Laughter) Anyway, let's leave it there for today.

(End of Tape 8)

S.: Alright then. Page 434 - we have come to the third verse down:

When I look back at my clinging mind, It appears like a short-lived sparrow in the woods - Homeless, and with nowhere to sleep; When I think of this, my heart is filled with grief. Kechungpa will you let yourself Indulge in ill-will? Oh, the more I think of this The more I aspire to Buddha and the Dharmai

S.: So here Milarepa is comparing his clinging mind, the mind that has a natural tendency to attach itself to objects and to cling on to them - compares this clinging mind to the short-lived sparrow in the woods. 'Homeless and with nowhere to sleep'. So in what sense is the clinging mind homeless? In what sense has it nowhere to sleep?

Jyotipala: Nowhere permanent to stay.

S.: It has no fixed abode. It has nowhere it can settle down, safely and comfortably. To begin with, the sparrow is short-lived, and in the second place it has nowhere to settle down, anyway. It's as though he is saying, mental states are not of very long duration. Even while they do last, they don't manage to settle down on anything.

Ratnaguna: There is no unifying factor

S.: No unifying factor. But why does he say, "When I look back at my clinging mind"?

Jyotipala: Presumably he hasn't got a clinging mind anymore.

S.: presumably he hasn't got it anymore, but Rechungpa still has. But of course, often the clinging mind thinks it has found its home, its true home -- it settles down in something; settles down in particular interests or attachments but before long it discovers that it is not able to settle down in those things. It has, in fact, nowhere to sleep. So, "when I think of this, my heart is filled with grief. Rechungpa, will you let yourself indulge in ill-will? Oh, the more I think of this the more I aspire to Buddha and the Dharmai" Why is he asking Rechungpa, if having understood that, he will let himself indulge in ill-will? What is the connection?

Gare: The particular state that he is in at the moment is ill-will trying to be happy in a way that it, to dwell in it.

S.: Yes. There is perhaps a sort of reminiscence of a verse in 'E-te Dhammapada where the Buddha says that recollecting that one is bound for death, that one is heading for death, one will compose one's quarrels with other people. It's as though Milarepa is saying, 'well, life is so short, one's mind is of such a nature, that it's unable really to settle down in anything. The mind itself is short-lived. it isn't worth cherishing ill-will or continuing to quarrel with people'.

Voice: Most religions would seem to offer the mind a fixed abode.

S.: Yes. Yes. That is why one must be careful not to think of the refuges' as a sort of 'home'. Even the translation 'refuge' has the wrong kind of connotation. If the refuges are a refuge, it is in much the same way that the top of a mountain is a refuge for the man who is trying to climb the mountain.

Ratnaguna: Where did the term 'refuge' come from?

S.: It's 'sharana' in Pali and Sanskrit or 'Sarana', and that does Tuterally mean 'refuge'.

Ratnaguna: Is that pre-Buddhistic? A sort of pre-Buddhistic concept?

S.: It is a word in general use as it were. It isn't a specifically religious term. Just as our word 'refuge' - as you can see - I found 'refuge' from the storm under the tree - in exactly the same way that the word 'sarana' is used in Pall and Sanskrit.

Ratna una: How did it come to be used in this sort of way in Budism?

S.: Well, - as far as we ~can tell from the Pali scriptures - when someone was deeply impressed by somethjn~that the Buddha had said, and he felt complete confidence in the Buddha and wanted to follow his teaching and join his community~, he said 'Buddham Saranam Gacchami' 'To the Buddha for refuge I~ go'. So be~cause people took refuge in the Buddha, took refuge in the Dharma, took refuge in the Sangha - the Three Jewels, as we call them - came to be called refuges. In other words, they are objects of people's commitment. In the Friends, we tend to use the word 'commitment' rather than the term 'refuge' We tend to speak rather, 6f committing yourself to the Three Jewels, rather than taking refuge in them. Because the term 'commitment' seems closer to the real me7ning of Sarana. 'Refuge' is a much more literal translation but 'commitment' gives much more of the spirit of the term.

Gerr~: It seems refuge is a passive state, in comparison with commitment.

S.: Actually it isn't, especially when one says, 'I~ for refuge'!. It does also suggest, when you speak in terms of going for refuge, it's an act which is performed once and for all. But if you speak in terms of commitment, the term itself makes it quite clear that it is an on-going process. If you say, "I commit myself to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha'~, it doesn~t suggest it's something that you do, once and for all and then it's finished. It's much clearer that it is, in fact, an on-going process. (Pause) But there is this inveterate tendency on the part of the mind to try and settle down somewhere. To try to find some permanent satisfaction. It usually tries to find it in some kind of mundane object or mundane activity - which means that it doesn't really find it. It may find it for a short while - it may start thinking, "well this satisfaction is going to last forever". But it doesn't. It very quickly comes to an end - circumstances change. Anyway, it's a search for security, for home,~ for somewhere to sleep where you can forget your cares and troubles. So, "when I think of this, my heart is filled with grief". Why should Milarepa's heart be filled with grief? What is that grief?



Robin: An eYperience of Dukkha.

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S.: It could be an experience of Dukkha - in a sense perhaps even an insight into Dukkha.

Gerald:         It seems to be more compassion, doesn't it?

S.: Yes! There is also a suggestion of compassion for those who are still deluded in this way, and especially Rechungpa. (Pause)    Alright, then in the next verse, he says:

Human life is as precarious As a single slim hair of a horse's tail Hanging on the verge of breaking; It may be snuffed out at any time Like this old woman" ~as last night! 1)0 not cling to this life, Rechungpa, But listen to my song!

S.: So this is a very vivid image, a very vivid comparison - that "an life is as precarious as a single slim hair of a horse's tail hanging on the (very) verge of breaking". You could imagine that a horse has long coarse hairs in its tail but as they rub against one another, they become a bit frayed, a bit thin in places. So it is only a matter of time before a particular hair just detaches itself from the tail - just because of one or two more rubs or flicks of the horse's tail and that hair just falls out, falls off. Sp Milarepa is saying that human life is just like that - it is hanging by a thread all the time or less than a thread. Almost everything you come into contact with could kill you. You could trip over a stone; you could choke when eating your lunch -- not to speak of being knocked down by a car or bitten by a mad dog - all sorts of possibilities. So human life is very frail, very precarious. It is hanging all the time like this slim hair of a horse's tail, hanging on the verge of breaking and sooner or later, of course, it will break. It's not a question of if - it's only a question of when, and how.         So Milarepa is asking Rechungpa just to be aware of the precariousness of human life. He is reminding him about the old woman who in the evening was so obstreperous and malicious, but who by the next morning was dead - was a corpse and now she is going to be buried in the middle of the marsh.         So, as we mentioned yesterday, Milarepa is really trying to bring Rechungpa up against the facts of life, in the deepest sense. So he continues in the same way:

When I observe inwardly my breathings I see they are transient, like the fog; They may vanish any moment into nought. When I think of this, my heart is filled with grief. Rechungpa, do you not want to conquer That insecurity now? Oh, the mote I think of this The more I aspire to Buddha and the Dharma.

S.: So Milarepa says, if he observes his breathings - observes them inwardly, he sees they're transient like the fog. ~ His breath

comes in, it goes~ out, it ~omes in, it goes out so any moment you could breathe out and not breathe in again.

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His whole life just depends upon this breath - this breathing process. It's as frail as that. It's as insubstantial as that! For this reason too, he says his heart is 'filled with grief. Rech- ungpa, do you not want to conquer ~th~at insecurity now?' What insecurity is ~ilarepa referring to?

~~ala: It's the insecurity that's born from realizing the fact there is nothing to cling to.

S.: Yes. The insecurity of life itself. "Do you not want to conquer that" - to overcome that? - to transcend that? by realizing Nirvana, by becoming enlightened? "Oh, the more I think of this - the more I aspire to Buddha and the Dharma." You notice that when Milarepa speaks or sings in this simple but quite profound sort of way, there is very little to discuss, compared with some of the songs we have already gone through. It's as though it is very simple, very straight-forward, very obvious, - there is not even very much of Buddhism in the technical sense, in it! All you can do with it is to remember it and to practise it. There's not very much to talk about!

Jyotipala: Almost like a symbol in words, isn't it?

S.: Yes. So sometimes one finds that Milarepa can sing almost in a Hinayana type way - I am using the word 'Hina'afila' in a purely descriptive way. He can really speak of very fundamental things like impermanence or transience and suffering,~ in the same straight-forward way that the Hinayana very often does. There is nothing - there is~~really very little of the Mahayana here, nothing about the Vajrayana. It's plain straight-forward basic Buddhism, as one might call it. Well, it's hardly Buddhism! It's common-sense! Because Buddhism, after all, doesn't have a monopoly of transience or transitoriness, it just sees more deeply into it. Then he goes on:

To be close to wicked kinsmen only causes hatred. V

The case of this old woman is a very good lesson. Rechungpa, stop your wishful-thinking  
And listen to my song!

S.: Why does he say, "To be close to wicked kinsmen only causes ha~~tred"? Why has he  
taken up this topic now, do you think?

¼werr: He has seen now the reason why this old woman is wicked - is because she  
lives in mundane existence or whatever...

S.: But is there any actual reference to Rechungpa, living with wicked kinsmen'? Well,  
perhaps he is~after all, singing or speaking to Rechungpa about very basic things. He's  
reminded him about the transiency of life; he's reminded him that life is like a dream. He has  
reminded him that the human body is a bag of dirt and filth - that it is like a 'mirage-city',  
doomed to extinction. He has reminded him that a vicious person can never attain happiness;  
that the clinging mind is short-lived and homeless and with nowhere to sleep. He has

reminded him that human life is precarious. He has reminded him that human life depends  
upon the breath. So now he is speaking about wicke~d kinsmen. In other words, he is  
bringing in another quite basic, another

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quite fundamental principle - that is to say, attachment to those who are near and dear to you.  
Even when they are wicked. So, "To be close to wicked kinsmen only causes hatred". You  
may be so attached to your father and mother and your brothers and sisters -but they may not  
be following the Dharma. They may be just like that old woman. So if one lives, even with  
those who are supposedly near and dear to you - if they are not following the Dharma, what is  
the good of that!? It only causes hatred in the end! So the case of this old woman is a very  
good lesson. In a way, she is a typical worldly person. So, "Rechungpa, stop your  
wishful thinking and listen to my song!" What is this wishful thinking, do you think?

Gerald: He wants to go practise the Dharma, in pleasure and enjoyment.

S.: Yes, yes. He thinks you can practise the Dharma, without really and truly detaching yourself from the world. He is still thinking you can practise the Dharma in a happy go lucky sort of way. So he has spoken about kinsmen, so now he goes on to talk about friends and consorts. 'Consorts' doesn't seem to be a very good translation. Perhaps it should be more: 'friends and companions'. One doesn't usually have more than one 'consort'.

When I look at friends and consorts They appear as passers-by in the bazaar; Meeting with them is only temporary, But separation - forever! When I think of this, my heart is filled with grief. Rechungpa, do you not want to cast aside All worldly associations? Oh, the more I think of this, The more I think of Buddha and the Dharma.

S.: SO "When I look at friends and (companions), they appear as passers-by in the bazaar - this is a sort of very typical Eastern scene, not only in Tibet but in India. You go to the bazaar - that means the shopping centre of the town where people set up their stalls on market days and everybody goes in there, once or twice a week; as you wander from stall to stall, you can meet people, you can meet friends. So usually you just stop and just have a chat for a minute or two and then you just pass on - maybe you just sort of say 'hello', and then nothing more. So Milarepa is saying that your friends, even your companions are really just like that. He is saying that the world itself is just like a bazaar, or in Western terms, it's a sort of 'vanity fair'. You just go there, buying and selling, exchanging this for that and you just happen to meet people, but it's only for a minute or two and then you don't see them again. So life is like that. While you're with people, you tend to think, well, it's forever, - you are going to be with them all the time. But really it isn't. Sooner or later you just part and it's as though you've been together a very short time - just like a few minutes, as it were, in retrospect. So Milarepa asks Rechungpa: "Do you not want to cast aside all worldly associations?" It's no use getting attached to people and trying to settle down with them. You can be with them for only a very short time and then after that, you never see them again.

They may die, or they may go away or whatever. "Oh, the more I think of this, the more I think of Buddha and the Dharma."

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Vimalamitra: Isn't it for us, more of a question of developing friendships?

S.: He does speak of worldly associations, but you can apply the same thing even to spiritual friends. But in a different way. You can think, that well, I don't know how long I have my spiritual friend for - it may be for only a very short time, so let me- make the best use of the opportunity. Let me make sure my communication with my spiritual friends is really good, really clear, really honest. Let me make sure that we--develop as positive a relationship as possible, because who knows - we may be parted at any time. But one shouldn't think, well, one has got a spiritual friend and he is going to be around forever, so there is no need to hurry. If you haven't seen him for a few weeks, well, never mind. You will see him sometime. Well, before you know what's happened, he may have gone away to some other country, or he may have died or whatever! So one can apply this to spiritual friends in that sort of way. With regard to worldly friends, one reflects, well, why be so attached, because you aren't going to have them forever. When you lose them - if you have been very attached, you are certainly going to suffer. Quite apart from the fact that if you are attached to worldly friends, they may influence you in a way that may hinder your own growth and development. But as regards even spiritual friends, well, they're not going to be friends forever, in the sense that they may die or they may go away or you may be separated in some way or other.. So one should make the best use of the time that you are able to spend with them. You don't know whether you will ever have the opportunity again. So what a pity to just waste the time just talking about trivial things. It's better to try to deepen one's communication and have a genuine contact with them. So in this case also, Milarepa says: "The more I think of this, the more I think of Buddha and the Dharma." And then,

A rich man seldom enjoys The wealth that he has earned;  
This is the mockery of Karma and Samsara. Money and jewels gained through stinginess and toil  
Are like this old woman's bag of food. - Do not be covetous, Rechungpa, But listen to my song!

So, "A rich man seldom enjoys the wealth that he has earned" - a man may be very rich, but there's a limit to what he can eat. He can only drive around in one car at a time. He can only live in one house at a time. He can only swim in one swimming pool at a time. So, 'a rich man seldom enjoys the wealth that he has earned' - it's more often than not, enjoyed by other people - enjoyed by those who depend on him, enjoyed by those he employs, those who serve him. "This is the mockery of Karma and Samsara. Money and jewels gained through stinginess and toil, are like this old woman's bag of food." It's as though in the world one devotes so much time and energy to accumulating wealth in this case, or getting on in various ways - getting on in one's career. You might succeed. But even when you get there, you find that it's not really what you wanted. It's not like you thought it would be - it's not so good, not so great. It's as though you've been cheated. And maybe you get to the position that you've been aiming at for many many years, but after you get, it's after so much effort, and worry and trouble~, you are not in the position to enjoy that position. So~ in this way, you're sort of cheated. ~ "This is the mockery of Karma and Samsara." "Money and jewels gained through stinginess and toil are like

this old woman's bag of food". She kept that bag of food. She

denied that she had any food. She was going to enjoy it herself, perhaps, but she died before~~~what could do that. So, "Do not be covetous, Rechungpa, but listen to my song! In what way has Rechungpa shown himself to be covetous?

Robin: He seems to regard the things he went to India for, as possessions, rather than as opportunities for practice.

~S.: Yes, right.

When I look at the fortunes of the rich, They appear to me like honey to the bees - Hard work, serving only for others' enjoyment, Is the fruit of their labor. When I think of this, my heart is filled with grief. Rechungpa, do you not want to open The treasury within your mind? Oh, the more I think of this The more I aspire to Buddha and His teachings.

S.: So, I, When I look at the fortunes of the rich, they appear to me like honey to the bees - Hard work serving only for others' enjoyment, is~~~the fruit of their labor." Perhaps this was much more the case, under a relatively simple economy. Perhaps like that of ancient Tibet. Perhaps it isn't like that now. Perhaps some people might say that nowadays, you can work very hard, if say, you are a business man, or if you've got a very good job and you can earn a lot of money, but who takes the greater part of that?

Voice: Income tax man.

S.: Yes, income tax man. So you're working for somebody else, not for yourself. You're just like the bee. You work hard all day, flying back and forth, collecting pollen, making honey, but in the end somebody comes along and robs your hive or, at least you think it's robbery and he calls it taxation. So what's the use of it, so to speak? But you notice that Milarepa says, "Rechungpa, do you not want to open the treasury within your mind?" This is a quite different note, as it were, that Milarepa is sounding now. This is almost a slightly Mahayanistic note and it comes in the verse which follows - the verse in which Milarepa has advised Rechungpa not to be covetous. You see what I mean? It's coming in the course of a couple of verses, in which he is speaking about riches, about gains, about acquisitions; that usually one thinks in terms of looking outside, gaining external things, external riches, external wealth. Milarepa is reminding Rechungpa that there is a treasury within your own mind. He asks him if he doesn't want to open that. So what is that treasury? in Rechungpa's own mind?

Ratnaguna: His unfulfilled potential.

S.: His unfulfilled potential - all the possibilities of spiritual development. It's really strange you might think - that people think in terms of developing land, investing their money, even

decorating their own house, but they don't think in terms of developing themselves. They don't think in terms of making the most of their own potential. They're quite concerned about getting the highest possible rate of interest for their money, but what about their own potential? They don't think so much in terms of that. In fact, you might say that very often people aren't even aware that they've got a potential!!

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In a truly human sense - this whole idea of potential for development despite the propaganda of the 'growth movement', is still quite new to a lot of people.

Ratnaguna: I think you can only really feel you've got potential once you're in touch with the ideal. Otherwise it's just an idea.

S.: Yes, but it has to be an ideal that is an ideal - in other words, a possibility for you. Something that is possible for you as a human being, actually to achieve, actually to realize.

Ratnaguna: Could it be an ideal if it wasn't?

S.: It would be an ideal, but only theoretically. You could say well, enlightenment is an ideal, but if you don't really feel that enlightenment is something that you can develop, then it isn't really an ideal for you. It's more like an abstract idea. It's a theoretical idea, which is really a contradiction in terms.

Robin: Do you think there is any basic difference, at least in the initial stages, between the sort of ideal of growth, if you like, of the 'growth movement' - talks about - and the ideal of growth in Buddhism?

S.: Well, the growth movement is quite a big thing. It's also a question of where Buddhism is considered to start. I mean people come along to the FWBO and sometimes before they can really get into their meditation, or before they're fit to live in a community, they have to sort themselves out in various ways. And they may have recourse to some of the sort of methods or techniques or approaches that the growth movement uses. But that is as though that's to get them ready for starting on Buddhism in a serious way. I think the horizons of the growth movement are really very limited. In fact I would even go so far as to say in some respects they inhibit genuine growth. I remember a few years ago, I went over to Holland to lead a retreat. On that retreat there were a lot of people that Vajra-yogini had invited along and persuaded to attend. People that were involved with Gestalt therapy work or even group leaders. But I was really astonished at that attitude, because there was such strong self-assertion and such a strong sense or feeling of competitiveness or almost egocentricity. And it all seemed from their point of view, almost the right sort of thing to do, almost the right sort of attitude to adopt.

Ratnaguna: That's the ideal of the growth movement, isn't it? to be self-assertive?

Dave: Part of the disillusionment, that is disgruntlement that we were talking about

yesterday,~actually extends to people's disappoint- ment in spiritual movements and in growth movements. People have actually have their ideals fired, that there are ~~ther ~ possibilities and then over months, years, they have felt let down. So~you actually find a reaction against the FWBO - that it's just another of these! Another possibility for disappointment.

S.: Yes, right, indeed.

Dave: And somebody sort of says, "Oh, yes, I think growth is possible!! And you say, "Oh, you're a~Buddhist!" and immediately they think you're putting something on them - they don't like that

either. You're just another

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S.: Afterwards - Vajray9gini told me an interesting thing, she said that she was running, under the auspices of her institute - special courses for group leaders and she had a lot of applications from people who wanted to take these courses, but who wanted to train to be group leaders before they'd ever been in a group; they wanted to start off by~being~group leaders!! Because if they train- ed to be group leaders, well, they could then run their own courses and that would be a livelihood for them. And so she said that many of them weren't really interested in growth at all. They'd just cottoned on to the fact that this was a good business, a good way of earning a living. So they came along with the intention of being group leaders, and this in fact was some of the people who came along to the retreat were of this type. They wanted to show that they were 'group leaders' - they weren't just ordinary rank and file followers. They wanted to establish the fact that they were group leaders! and to have that sort of~ recognition, as though they had to establish their position. So I think though, perhaps the growth movement in one or another of its~ forms, can certainly shake people up a bit and loosen up people who are a bit conventional or a bit restricted, but nonetheless, it does have its limitations and can perhaps~ even result in, can perha~ps even inadvertently close off the possibility of further growth for people. For instance, there is this well-known attitude that you must let it all 'hang-out', you must always express it. Well people spend years not just~ getting it off their chests but almost sort of manufacturing something to get off their chests. They just go round and round in the same old circle. (Pause) Would you like to read that prose conclusion:

f~e corpse of the old woman was buried in the swamp], and her "ti! was delivered to the Dharmadhatu. Thereupon the Jetsun and. i~cc!ungpa took the edible food with them and set out for Betze !ti'~undzon.

l~tis is the second chapter, the story of the yak-horn.



S.: So, the corpse of the old woman was buried in the swamp, and her soul was delivered to the Dharmadhatu. How is one to understand that?

Robin: Presumably it means her consciousness, rather than her soul.

S.: Yes, but even so, her consciousness delivered to the Dharmadhatu, what does that mean, do you think? What is it referring to?

Gerald: Is it a particular ceremony that they would have used over the body?

S.: It could refer to their performing the Tibetan funeral rites, so to speak. As described in the Tibetan Book of the Dead - as we call it - Milarepa perhaps by his spiritual powers could have guided her through the Bardo. Because there is one thing we shouldn't overlook - that she has come in contact with Milarepa. One might say, well, yes, she was a very wicked old woman. She was angry and malicious and she was mean, but she did come in contact with Milarepa! So a Tibetan Buddhist might say, well, she had tucked away somewhere, some good Karma, on account of which she came in contact with, even though she didn't make the best use of the opportunity. She has come in contact with Milarepa. Also, by her death, she's been the means of teaching Rechungpa a good lesson, a means of enabling Milarepa to teach Rechungpa a good lesson. So perhaps in a way, she's

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earned some merit. Buddhism, especially Mahayana Buddhism, takes a charitable view of such cases (Laughs)

Ratnaguna: I thought the idea behind merit was that it had to be - it was your attitude behind the action that was important?

S.: That is true.

Ratnaguna: Her attitude wasn't very positive.

S.: But she has come into contact with Milarepa so that must be due to something. I mean, Milarepa is a highly developed Yogi, maybe even he's an enlightened person. So she has come into contact with him.

Ratnaguna: But she wasn't receptive to him

S.: She wasn't receptive, that's true.

Joti ala: It would be like saying a tree was coming into contact with him. It doesn't mean to say a tree coming into contact was going to develop?

S.: Ah, but what is contact? But in some way, if you take it literally,~~~it seems quite unjust. Here's this wicked old woman - she~~does seem a quite dreadful character, but she's been delivered to~the Dharmadhatu. Well, I don't know whether we can take this literally or whether it is just a sort of pious hope on the part of the compiler. Well, she has come into contact with Milarepa and he has performed her funeral ceremony, perhaps, or the equivalent. Let us hope, that even the consciousness of even a wicked old woman such as she was, has been guided in the direction of the Dharmadhatu.

Vimalamitra: You never~know, she might actually have been a Bodhisattva I

S.: You never know! But in that case sbe wouldn't need delivering to the Dharmadhatu(Laughter).

Jyotipala;      So 'delivering to the Dharmadhatu' means enlightened in a way, does it?

S.: There is that suggestion - according to the Tibetan Book of ~Dead, that after death, one has an experience of the clear light of the void and if you can.~recognize it and so to speak, merge with it, then you are delivered, yoi gain enlightenment. It's a sort of crucial opportunity, a crucial moment and the purpose of the Lama who performs the ceremony is just to speak to you~as it were, td re- mind you of things you perhaps learned in your lifetime, or perhaps which were new to you; to point out to you the meaning of the exper- ience that you are now undergoing - that this clear light that you are experiencing is the clear light of one's own true mind. One should not be afraid of it, not shrink back from it, should allow oneself to enter into it.      So under the guidance of the Lama in this way, one is able at the time of death or after death, that is to say, perhaps even to achieve enlightenment. This is a part of the Tibetan teaching conn- ected with the Tibetan~Book bf the Dead.      So it is possible, that here is this old woman's consciousness liberated from the physical body - and everybody, according to the Tibetan tradition does have this e~perience - when the physical body is removed. It's instantaneous in the case of most people, and they can't do anything abo~iat it, recoil from it and forget it, but sub-

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sequently, there are experiences of lower degrees of"intensity, symbolized by the different Buddhas and their families or their mandalas, a~nd if one is abl~e to, as it were, to stay with the experience, and not shrink back from it. well, one can then be united with whatever those forms or symbols represent.

(End of Side A)

S.: So it is possible, or at least it would be possible, according to this teaching, for Milarepa to have guided the old woman's con- sciousness in this way. Perhaps it was due to past merits, that she had met Milarepa ~~ died under these circumstances and been able to be guided by him. Whether one can take it that she gained final deliverance, well, that is another

matter, or whether she did just have a very positive experience with Milarepa's help, which helped her in her next incarnation,~ so to speak. But anyway, this is the general background of belief. So, "thereupon the Jetsun and Rechungpa took the edible food with them and set out for Betze Duyundzon. This is the second chapter, the story of the yak-born". The second chapter, that is to say, of the story of Rechungpa's meeting with Milarepa at Yaug Ru.

But let us go on then:

!..lter, while the father Jetsun and the son Rechungpa were resid- :?~t: .~tt Betze, Rechungpa gained great improvement in his meditation.

til l;xperience of great joy, numewus thoughts appeared in his ""t(I. Being aware of this, the Jetsun said, '~Rechungpa, what have

you experienced in your meditation lately?" In relating his Exp~~ri- ences, Rechungpa sang:

Living with my Gu'u, I had An Experience powerful like a sharp knife; With it I have cut inner and outer deceptions. Because of this I am happy and gay!

In the midst of many manifestations, I felt as if I were a radiant lamp; All instructions thr's became clearer than ever before. Because of this, I am happy and gay!

When I sat on the peak of a snow mountain, I felt like a white lioness, Predominating and surpassing all others in the world. Because of this, I feel happy and gay!

When I dwelt on the hillside of Red Rock, I felt as if I were a majestic eagle; Forever have I conquered The fearful expanse of the sea. Because of this, I am happy and gay!

When I roamed~from country to country I felt as if I were a tiger cub, or a bee - Non-attached to all and utterly free. Because of this, I am happy and gay!

When I mingled with people in the street, I felt as if I were an immaculate lotus

Standing above all filth and mud. Because of this, I am happy and gay!

When I sat among crowds in the town, I felt as if I were like rolling merejiry - It touches all but adheres to nought. Because of this, I feel happy and gay!

r            When I sat among faithful disciples,            I felt as if I were the Jetsun Mila;

With cheer and ease I gave instructions through songs! It is the blessing of my Guru That brings me this joy. It is through resting one's mind at ease That Buddhahood is realized.

S.: So, "Later while the father Jetsun and the son Rechungpa were residing at Betze, Rechungpa gained great improvement in his meditation." It's as though the lesson given to him by Milarepa has really sunk in... -- .~" "In an Experience of great joy, numerous thoughts appeared in his mind. Being aware of this, the Jetsun said, "Rechungpa, what have you experienced in your meditation lately? I' So what does this mean? - "In an experience of great joy, numerous thoughts appeared in his mind." What does this suggest? What sort of experience does Rechungpa seem to be having?

Jyotipala: Some Dhyanic experience.

Voice: Insight experience.

S.: But with thoughts? Perhaps insight ~experience. The word 'Thoughts' may not be very accurate here. But it may be a question

of whether they are just thoughts or whether they are actual insight experiences. Milarepa raises this question, indirectly, subsequently. But clearly there is an experience of great joy and a sort of exuberance. As a result of this experience of exuberance, there are all sorts of reflections, ideas, possibly insights. It's not quite clear, what exactly they are. There's a great rush, so to speak, of intuitions, you could say, which may be just discursive thoughts of a more refined kind or they may be insights. But in any case, Milarepa asks Rechungpa to tell him about them. So Rechungpa sang: "Living with my Guru, I had an Experience like a sharp knife; With it I have cut inner and outer deceptions. Because of this I am happy and gay!" So "living with my Guru I had an Experience like a sharp knife". So why do you think he compares the powerful experiences to a sharp knife?

Gerry: It's like wisdom. He's able to differentiate, he's able to see through things.

Jyotipala: It sometimes hurts like a knife.

S.: You could say that.

Vimalamitra: It cuts through, doesn't it?

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S.: It cuts through.

Ratnaguna: That suggests that it is insight, doesn't it?

S.: It does suggest - well, he is, as it were, claiming that it is insight, so to speak. So to describe it as being powerful like a sharp knife, suggests a very definite experience, a very tangible experience, a very clear cut experience - we might even say a very sharp experience, an unmistakable experience. Some experiences are sort of vague, hazy, dream-like, misty, - this one is very sharp, very clear, very definite, very cutting. There can be no mistake about it. So therefore he says, "Living with my Guru, I had an Experience powerful and sharp like a knife; with it I have cut inner and outer deceptions. Because of this I am happy and gay". What are these inner and outer deceptions?

Vimalamitra: Klesa and Jneya.

S.: One could say that, yes. One could say that the inner deceptions are all sorts of unskilful mental attitudes, in the sense of unskilful passions, whereas the outer deceptions are the deceptions of so-called external objects; where as when you think of external objects as ultimately real, fixed, unchanging and so on. So, "because of this I am happy and gay". I am not deluded any longer by either the inner or the outer deceptions. Perhaps one could say that Rechungpa is saying that he has realized that there is no permanent unchanging soul within, and no permanent unchanging thing without

~WGere~OuterMaybe he is also saying something about his attachment to

S.: Yes, indeed - the inner and the outer. Then in the next verse he says: "In the midst of many manifestations, I felt as if I were a radiant lamp; all instructions thus became clearer than ever before. Because of this I am happy and gay!" So, "in the midst of many manifestations, I felt as if I were a radiant lamp". What do you think these many manifestations are?

Virflalamitra: The rest of the world.

S.: Yes, the rest of the world, all forms.

S.: So, "I felt as if I were a radiant lamp". What sort of experience do you think this is describing?

Ratnagufla: His clear mind.

S.: His clear mind. It's not just clear it's also bright. He says: "I felt as if I were a radiant lamp". What does this remind you of in the Pali scriptures?

Voice: Isn't it a state of mind which is radiating - isn't it after 'absorptions'?

S.: Yes, it's a bit like that - the Fourth Dhyana. In the fourth ~ana, you are insulated from all outside influences. ~ou are influencing external things; external things are not influencing you.

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S.: Our usual state is that we are bombarded by all sorts of ~luences, all sorts of impres~sion~s, usually which have an unfort-unate effect upon us. B~ut~when we meditate,~we are generating very powerful, very positive,~ Ver~y skilful-states, so it's as though we start taking the offensive. We become active, rather than passive. Do you see ~what I mean? We- not only become positive, we become bright; not only become brig~ht, w~e become clear. So~ it's as though,~ We are no longer under the influence of the things that surround us, that they in a manner of speaking, are under our influence. We are like the radiant lamp dispelling the darkness. In the ~light of that radiant lamp, "all instructions thus became clearer than ever before. There is an increased, a heightened positivity. There is in a sense, a stronger experience of individuality. You don't feel so crushed and overwhelmed by the world, by your surroundings. You feel more powerful than your surroundings. The lamp not being overwhelmed by the darkness. Do you understand the sort of state that he's describing?

Vi~alamitra: Is it possible to keep a Fourth Dhyana state in the wm77-rl?

S.: What does one mean by 'in the world'? One experiences the Fourth Dhyana state in the world. ~It is a worldly experience - actually it's a mundane thing.

Ratnaguna: Can you function in the world while in the Fourth Dhyana'~.

S.: By functioning one means walking about and talking with other people, no. That is not possible.~ - YYou may not even be conscious of the physical body in that state. But what you have to do, in the Fourth Dhyana, on the basis of your Samatha, your experience of the Dhyanas - you need to develop insight. Insight is something which do~s not coine and go - insi~ht is permanent. So with that insi9hf, you can move about in the world.

Vimalami~tra: Once you've got the~insight, does that mean that you can retain the fourth Dhyana state?

S.: No! It's not necessary. You don't need to. What is import-ant is that you develop~insight. If you have the insight, you can move about in the world, without being affected by the world. But not only if you have Dhyanic experience, even though it is quite a high one - that is dependent upon favourable conditions.

Vimalamitra: What kind of a state are you in, when you have got insight? You are not in a Dhyanic state?

S.: Well, you are in a state of - to use the expression - 'partial enlightenment'. What does Vipassana do? Vipassana permanently destroys unskilful mental states, whereas the Dhyanas only temporarily suspend them. That is the difference. The Vipassana insight cuts at the root of greed, and hatred and ignorance, but in the case of the Dhyana states, you have temporarily removed yourself from those things. But when very powerful stimuli, or when you are again in contact with very powerful stimuli, those things can return. So therefore, one uses the Dhyanas as a basis for developing insight.

Vimala-mitra: When you've got insight, you must be in 'a Dhyanic state'?

S.: No, no. (pause), (Laughter) -

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S.: It's another kind of state. You could say it's a higher state, and that insight remains permanent and affects your character, regardless of the experiences that befall you.

Supposing you have insight, but a painful experience may still happen to you. You may experience pain, if you are in the body consciousness, but if you have insight, you will not react to that experience of pain with anger or hatred or impatience and so on. So to that extent you will remain in - well, one could call it, in another sense, a higher state of consciousness. You experience the pain or suffering, but you're not moved by it - you're not disturbed by it.

Vimalamitra:~ You see it as it is.

S.: Well, Yes. You see it as it is - you experience it. Not that you don't feel it - you do feel it, but it doesn't affect you. It's quite peripheral, because you are so strongly centred, it can't throw you off balance.

Gerald: Does it operate through the recollection of the Dhyana state in any sense, or not, or is it totally unconnected?

S.: You could say, it's totally unconnected. So you can for instance, escape from pain by withdrawing into a Dhyana state, where you are not conscious of the physical body, but when you return to consciousness of the physical body, again, you will experience the pain and your mind may be overwhelmed by that, and give rise to unskilful mental states. But if you have insight, then the experience of the pain and suffering will not give rise to unskilful mental states, even though you are not in a Dhyana state - even though you are in the ordinary consciousness and experiencing the pain and the suffering.

Vimalamitra: ~ But you have to experience Dhyanic states to gain enlightenment? S.: To develop insight, yes. In other words, you can have insight

and yet be subject to suffering and it doesn't matter then.

Ratna-guna: Why not? Why doesn't it?

S.: Because the experience of suffering, will not give rise to unskilful mental states and that is all you are really concerned with. In a way, if the insight is sufficiently developed, you become incapable of giving rise to unskilful mental states. The root has been entirely destroyed. So therefore~, coming back to the original question, it's not possible to move about in the world in a Dhyanic state, a high Dhyanic state. The two things are quite incompatible. But you can move about in the world with insight, having developed on the basis of the Dhyanic state. Moving about in the world is incompatible with the Dhyanic state, but not with the insight. So if you want to be able to move about in the-world without succumbing to its various temptations and stimuli, you need to develop insight. Just Dhyana states, not not enough, because they will help you and protect you only so long as you are living under those conditions, which enable you to develop the Dhyanas.

Vimala: So in that sense, we're kind of vulnerable to....

S.: Yes, indeed, yes...

Gerry: The greater one's insight, doesn't it then make it easier to get into the Dhyanic states?

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S.: Oh~ yes, because what prevents you going into Dhyanic states is basically - according to~ general Buddhist tradition - the Five Hindrances: craving and aversion.. so that the more insight you have, the less craving-and aversion you have,~ the more they~have been permanently destroyed. ~ So when you have the opportunity, when you're not having to concern yourself with practical matters or talk to other people, well, then when you are just quiet and by yourself, you can very easily go into the~ Dhyana states. In fact, you might say that someone who is enlightened, like the Buddha or Milarepa, - if they don't have anything to do and no one to talk to, well they automatically, in a manner~of speaking, or spontaneously, rather, just go into a Dhyana state. There's nothing to prevent them. Even in a quite ordinary way, if you've nothing to do and no one to see and you are in a calm~peaceful state of mind, well, as soon as~ you are left to yourself, --as it were, you just enjoy that calm, peaceful state of mind. So, it's as though insight is the fundamental thing. Dhyana states are secondary. They are, in any case, mundane. But if one has developed insight, then as I have said, the Dhyana states will come naturally when conditions permit, almost, without your making an effort.

Ratna-guna: You've spoken about a serious ideal for every Buddhist, would be to become a Stream Entrant. Is a Stream Entrant someone who has just had an experience of insight?

S.: Well,~yes, a Stream Entrant is one who has had an experience of insight, sufficiently strong to break the first Three Fetters.



Ratna una: So you could have an experience of insight and not break t efirs t Three Fetters?

S.: Yes. You could ~ -you have to build up your experience of ~ight depending on the s~trength of the meditation behind the insight yes.

John: But once you've actually started to develop insight, you never lose ~it again?

S.: You never lose it a~gain. Not like the Dhyanas, in that sense.

John: Even if you're reborn.

S.: Even if- you are reborn, yes. If you (lie a Stream Entrant, you wTi be reborn a Stream Entrant.

Ratna una: What are the chances of gaining insight, in the Dhyanas? Wouls ome people find it easier, having some experiences? With some people, would it be quite harmful...?

S.: The question is what enables one to have insight? In what-way does insight differ from ordinary intellectual understanding? The main difference, in fact, the only difference is, that in the case of insight, there is the whole of one's being behind it! All the energies of one's being. So that suggests that those energies have been unified - they have all been brought together - the energies of the whole being, and that sort of unific~ation takes place only in connection with meditation. In fact, meditation, in the sense of Samatha, is in fact the bringing together of all the energies~ the complete unification of the mundane energies - the mundane conscious- ness - so that- then, when you start reflecting upon something, - reflecting say, upon~impermanence, you understand it, in a manner of speaking, with your whole being! And because you understand it with your whole being, your whole being is transformed.

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It has a permanent effect. That is what is meant by saying that insight cannot be lost.

Ratnaqflna: You would think that it would be a matter of course, for someone who could get into the Dhy~anas to gain insight?

S.: No, it wouldn't be a matter of course. For instance, they may not kn~ow that there was such a stage~to be developed. But within the Buddhist tradition, of course, this is very well-known indeed. So it is said, having experienced the Dhyanas even up to the Fourth Dhyana, you then apply your mind to the development of in- sight, by reflecting upon such topics as impermanence or no-self or Sunyata, dr the Buddha which provide, as it were, a base, an object, for the development of insight. In order to do that, you have to come down a bit. You come down to the First Dhyana, where mental activity~~is possible. But the mental activity that you take up in that way, is of a quite different nature from that which is not preceded by an -experience of the Dhyanas. It's not scattered, it's not undirected.

¾7i-atflauna: Is it necessary then to go right through the four D yanas and then back?

S~.: Well, it isn't necessary, but that is the best way. Usually in a complete practice of meditation, you alternate between trying to develop wV~~ipassana - insight- - and experiencing the Dhyanas. You~ experience the ~Dhyanas, say, for a while - at least, say, you have a good meditation - then you reflect say, on impermanence, on no-self or on the~nidanas - and you try to develop insight. But after a while, the mind may become as it were, a bit tired or you may feel it's becoming a bit just intellectual - the Dhyana exper- ience is fading away - your attention is becoming a bit scattered. So you then go back to the practice of Samatha, then having estab- lished the Samatha again, you go back to the Vipassana. This is the usual procedure.

Ratna una: Would there be a resistance for someone who is in a higher D yanic state to come ba~ck and....?

S.: Yes. There might be a resistance. He might not want to, as it were, start up the mental activity which becomes a basis for the development~ of insight, because the Dhyana experiences are very pleasurable. So one can become attached to them. So a teacher like Milarepa would point out to someone like Rechungpa, 'Don~t ~linger in the Dhyanas. If you have achieved the Dhyana experience, gone quite far, well1 it's time you started dev- eloping insight.' Even though it means, as it were, coming down a little in the Dhyanic scale, in order to be able to do that.

Ratnaguna: Would you say that greed types find it harder to gain insight? (Laughter)

S.: It does seem like that because it is said that hate types have an affinity with wisdom - wisdom being more or less the same thing as insight. Yes. A greed type i~ore inclined to linger over or become attached to~~any pleasurable experience, including that of the Dhyanas. Of course, the difficulty with the hate type is that they might not be able to get into the~ Dhyanas at all. (Laughter) Their minds may be so disturbed by hate.

Vimalanitra: What about the deluded type?

S.: Well, they sometimes behave like the greed type and sometimes Utie the hate type -- that's why they're deluded -they're not fixed.

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In some ways they have th~e best of both worlds, in some ways, they~have the worst of both worlds. They find it difficult to et into the Dhyanas ~and once they~ get into them, they find it ifficult to get out. ~ CLaughter~) There are insight-type reflections to~be applied to the Dhyanas themselves. One -starts ~reflecting, well, these Dhyanas are not the ultimate attainment.-- They arise in dependence on cond- itions. They cease whe~ri those conditions are no longer there. Therefore, they are mundane. They~ are- conditioned. This is not the Dhyana experiences that I am after. I am concerned with En- lighten~ment. In order to achieve ~Enli~~ghtenment, I have to develop insi~~ght. In that way one makes the transition from the Dhyanas to in- sight by reflecting upon the Dhyanas themselves and their limitations.

Vimalamitra: So presumably there must be something else there even in the high Dhyanic

states to kind of....?

S.: To start you up again, VOU could say that. On the other hand you may need some-external help in the sense of the Guru reminding you or as it were, the tradition reminding you. It may be before entering into the Dhyanic state, you understood very clearly that Dhyana states are not the be-all~ and the end-all of spiritual life. So after you've been in the Dhyana state for a while, the thought may occur to you, based on your previous reading and study and understanding, w-ell, perhaps I should now be developing insight - Vipassana. So from the point of view of the Dhyana experience, there is a sort of interruption, a positive distraction - if one can use that expression - do you see the general procedure? the general pattern?

Surata: You said that a Stream Entrant is someone who as broken ~first Three ~Fetters thorough insight?

S.: Yes, we say 'broken them through insight', but it's different aspects of the same exper~ience.

Surata: Yeah, yea~h Does tha#ean tha~t up until you have broken all Three Fe~tters you could still lose insight? You could still lose that exper~ience?

S.: No. I wouldn't say you could lose insight, but the insight I7not powerful enough to breat the first Three Fetters. It's- like- for instance, when you start saving money - you're saving up, say, a th6usand pounds to buy a new car or more like five thousand pounds to buy ~a new car (Laughter) - so you're collecting th~oney toge~the~r. But even though it isn't enough to buy the car for you, you do have the money. You see what I mean? The money is there. It's not lost. So in the same way, the insi~ht may not yet be powerful enough ~to break through the Three Fetters, but some degree of insight is there. It is building up. The time will come when it will be strong enough to have that sort of effect. Or rather you can't imagine it as having no effect at all. It's rather like~ sawing through a~branch of a tree. You may have sawn through just a few inches and nothing happens - the branch doesn't fall, but after a while, after you've sawn just 3/4 the way through, well, then the branch starts falling because of its own weight. It's rather like~ that.

Ratna un~a: So even though you've had an experience of insight, you av~~en~t yet broke~ the first Th~ree Fetters, you can then fall back

S.: You cannot fall back from that limited experience of insight.

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S.: Even if you don't add to it for the time being, it's still there and you can add to it in the future.

Vimalamitra: Can you lose it over lives?

S.: No, insight cannot be lost. There is quite a discussion in medieval Buddhism, - I think it's the Sarvastavadian school - about this intermediate state as it were. You're not a complete worldling, but on the other hand, you're not definitely an Arya - the technical term is (Gotrabhū) (Laughter) - because you have to some extent determined your spiritual clan, your spiritual family. You are definitely going to be a Stream Entrant because you have already accumulated some insight but it isn't yet fully operative to the extent of breaking those first Three Fetters, so as actually to make you a Stream Entrant. But the general position is that insight, once developed cannot even be lost, even though it hasn't been developed to the point where it can break those first Three Fetters.

Robin: So what does one mean when one says, before becoming a Stream Entrant, one can still 'fall back'? In what does this 'falling back' consist?

S.: Well, it consists in the fact that to the extent that unskillful mental states have not been permanently eliminated, they can come and go at any time.

Ratnaguna: For somebody who has broken the Three Fetters, surely he can have unskillful mental states?

S.: Oh yes! Because there are still the subtle unskillful mental states to be removed, oh yes - It's as though, once you've developed some insight, even though you haven't broken the first Three Fetters, your unskillfulness will not go beyond a certain point. You have already started limiting the unskillfulness.

John: So you're unlikely to find yourself in the hell realm?

S.: Yes, you are unlikely to find yourself in the hell realm.

Ratnaguna: Why is it that you can't fall back afterwards?

S.: Because the permanent change in your being - the comparison which is given sometimes, is that once the banana plant has been cut, it just doesn't sprout again. Once you've cut the root of craving, craving doesn't spring up again.

Ratnaguna: But what does that mean 'cut the root of craving'? Is that because you've seen through....?

S.: You've just seen through it. You've seen through it so clearly and definitely, You can't be fooled any longer. It's like for instance, you might, say, have a girlfriend and you might be very attached to her. And one day you might hear that she's been unfaithful to you. Your attachment is disturbed a bit, but any way she tells you some story and you believe her, so the attachment and the relationship persist. But one day, you may catch her misbehaving with somebody, so then you see through - then your attachment to her ceases; your relationship comes to an end. It is cut off. You've seen through all her deceit, lies and pretense of affection and so. So having seen through it, you can't be affected by her in the way you used to be. It's rather like that.

S.: So insight in~ a seeing-through. Literally we say 'in-sight', which is more like seeing into, but perhaps it is more like e~x- pressive of, s~o to ~spea~k, s~einq ~thru~h~something. Seeing through something so clearly ~nd completeyt~you~ can no longer be taken in by it. And we know ~that that does sometimes happen, even in worldly life, does~~n't it? Or in the example I have given. Quite °often~in social-life, you see through people in all sorts of ways. ~aybe you believe someone is honest and he cheats you a few times and then you start seeing through him. After that you never trust him again! Y9u've ~completely seen through him! So it's like that with existence. You've seen through it. You've seen that it-might appear to be permanent, but really it's impermanent. You've seen through existence in that respect - you've had insight into the truth ~of impe~rmanence. You're not fooled by it in th~at way any more!~~ ~You don't place your trust in it anymore as though it was permanent. ~~ Because you've seen through it and you've seen that it is not permanent. Therefore, you can't behave as though it was permanent and you don't behave in that~ ~way any more! In that way, you being is transformed by your insight.

Alan: Is it reasonable to see insight as a definite thing higher than intellectual inquiry - there's~~a gradation moving away from it? In as much as you are so integrated, then so much of your energy will be behind your inquiry. (S.: Yes) I was thinking perhaps, what would finally make somebody take definite steps towards joining a spiritual community, might be a degree of insight on some level?

S.: Clearly, as regards its expression, insight is continuous with Twtellectual activity. ~And sometimes it does happen that if your energies are naturally unified, even apart from formal meditation, you do have ~a h~igh. de4ree of concentration behind your intellectual activity, to tha~t extent you will be more likely to see things as they rea~lly are - have a ~genuine under~standing of things. It is possible, ~yes~, that you come into the spiritual life as a result of your ~understanding of that sort, almost amounting to a degree of insight. You see that the spiritual life is the only way. Other pe6ple might be just driven in by the experience of suffering, but blindly, without any understanding or intellectual sense of direction at all!

Gerry: Someb6dy - I think it was Devamitra, gave a very good picture or image for this. And that was there is Samsara and Nirvana and there is a path between the two and some people walk away from Samsara and then they bump into Nirvana, and other people walk towards Nirvana.

S.: Yes~! That was in a lecture somewhere - of mine ~believe!! (Laughter) I expect them to quote me in their lectures. It's only right and proper (La~ghter) I remember it quite vividly because it occurred to me ~quite spontaneously on the spot! It could have been a senjinar.

Ratnaguna: It was on the Going for Refuge seminar.

S.: Was it? Has tha~t bee~ transcribed and edited and published yet~

RG: I think it has. Jyotipala: It was in a Mitrata.

S.: Yes, that is wh~at happens. ... I think I was speaking among others, that there is the

'faith type', who is attracted by the beauty of the ideal especially embodied in the Buddha, rather than repelled by the ugliness of the Samsara. He turns his back on the Samsara and is attracted by the Ideal. He hardly realizes he is leaving the Samsara behind.

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Somebody else is trying very hard to get away from the Samsara - has his fact turned from the Samsara, and is trying to get back further and further from it and sort of bumps into the Ideal behind and then turns around and recognizes it.

Gerry: Is that to say then that if somebody dislikes or hates Samsara like I do, I feel like I am moving away from it - that insight is difficult?

S.: No, I wouldn't say so, because one could say that the 'type' that is attracted to the Unconditioned is the greed type - the type that is repelled by the Samsara is the hate type. But you're repelled by the Samsara, because you see the imperfections of the Samsara. You see through it and that is insight.

Robin: I am not sure I heard you correctly earlier on - did you say that it's a definite thing, that true insight can only arise during meditation?

S.: One must be careful here. During meditation - true insight only arises when, or in consequence of, all one's energies being united. And this usually happens in the course of which we call meditation. One must be very careful to distinguish the reality from the flame. When all your energies are united, you are meditating. You may not have adopted the formal meditation posture or sitting with closed eyes in the shrine. You could be just sitting under a tree somewhere, and not even thinking of meditating, but you could be very concentrated. In a sense all your energies are unified and flowing together. And then you just start thinking about something seriously. Under those conditions, insight can develop. Do you see what I mean?

Dave: "There are all those stories from the Zen tradition.

S.: Yes, yes, indeed.

Vimalamitra: Also of the young Buddha.

S.: Yes, a quite Spontaneous experience. This was the Dhyana, not of insight.

(End of Tape 9)

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"In the midst of many manifestations, I felt as if I were a radiant lamp; All instructions thus became clearer than ever before."

S.: When one is immersed in the Dhyanas, one's experience is of intense positivity, even intense clarity, intense awareness and on account of that awareness, one understands the Dharma, understands all instructions better and more clearly than before. It's as though a sort of Vipassana-like element starts entering into the experience. "Because of this I am happy and gay!"

When I sat on the peak of a snow mountain, I felt like a white lioness,  
Predominating and surpassing all others in the world. Because of this, I feel happy and gay!"  
What do you think ~abo~ut thi~~aspect of Rechungpa's experience?

Ratnagufila: Do you think he's had a spiritual experience and he's now sort of - his ego is grabbing onto it?

S'~~: It does seem a bit like that, because he's conscious that Wres predominating and surpassing all others in the world.

Ratnaguna: He's comparing himself with all these....

S.: Wkien he says, "I felt as if I were a radiant lamp..", well that does seem to be a completely genuine experience. There doesn't seem to be anything of ego there, not in an obvious way, at least. But when he says, "I felt like a white lioness, predominating and surpassing all others in the world.", well that does suggest a kind of ego. In a way, it's natural; perhaps he can't help feeling, well, yes, his mind is clearer than people's minds usually are. He has developed something which people don't usually develop. He can't help being conscious of that but a sort of subtle ego-scent does attach to it, to the experience. Anyway, we'll find Milarepa having something to say about that a little later on. It's a sort of general thing that if your experience is very positive, if you become very -exuberant,; if you become very happy and joyful, then even if you develop all sorts of brilliant ideas, there is a tendency to become sort of intoxicated, to get carried away by that and then you start losing your mindfulness. This is something that one sees in very general terms with people: they're either sort of blocked or they're sort of.. what's the expression?

Jyo~tipala: Hysterical.

S.: Almost hysterical, yes. I remember we used to notice this on the early retreats. Sometimes, when people would arrive quite sort of stiff and blocked and then in the course of a few days, they would start relaxing, become more at ease, more open, more communicative, more talkative; and then if you weren't careful, things would get a bit out of hand,~~especially at mealtimes, wh~n you would find people becoming, well, too noisy and talkative. And you'd get a lot of shouting and lou~onversation and then you'd get a lot of general hilarity and fooling around - and then you'd get people racing up and down the corridors. We used to get that sort of thing. And then you'd have to im- pose silence for a day or two, so then things would calm down. But if you weren't care, they tended to go back to their original blocked state (Laughter). So you'd have to maintain a very careful balance [171] - they get out of their blocked state - they freed their energies but their energies didn't get out of hand. So again you do find that when people get emotionally positive and happy, and cheerful, for some of them it's such a new experience, it rather goes to their

heads. They get carried away. They get sort of intoxicated and their mindfulness starts slipping. So one has to watch this very carefully and it can happen with regard to, more specifically, spiritual experiences. Even in the case of meditation, you can get carried away by your own meditative experience: "Oh, what good meditations I'm having! I'm really happy!. I'm really blissful today and life is so good!". and you can, you know, make too much of it and you can start thinking, well, "I'm in this state and other people aren't. I'm really doing better than they are doing. I'm really much more positive, and all these people - they haven't got much energy. They're low-energy people, and look at me, I'm able to do this and do that and how positive I am, and look at all the energy I've got...." So you know, Rechungpa seems to have got into a rather refined form of this kind of egoistically tinged experience. "When I sat on the peak of a snow mountain, I felt like white lioness, predominating and surpassing all others in the world. Because of this I am happy and gay!" His-happiness and gaiety have taken on a not exactly hysterical note, but an over-emphatic note, shall we say. So, one has to watch that. One has to remain calm, remain sober, not to allow even these highly positive blissful experiences to 'lay hold on one's mind', as the Buddha puts it. Don't let them throw you off balance. It's the same with very negative states. If you're not careful, they'll throw you off balance; - you don't feel very well, you don't feel very cheerful - you feel a bit depressed - you start feeling it's the end of the world. On the other hand, you feel positive and elated, you feel, well, "I'm really there practically. In both cases, you're exaggerating - you're over-dramatizing.

Ratnaguna: Is that a temperamental thing?

S.: I don't think so. I think that most people go through these sort of experiences, in different ways. (Long Pause) If your normal experience of life has been that life is rather miserable and you feel rather miserable then, when you start feeling happy and cheerful, the happiness and cheerfulness will tend to go to your head. If you're the sort of person who usually experiences himself as rather weak and powerless then, when as a result of practicing meditation, you start feeling more energy and more strength and more power, that sort of experience will go to your head. Or if you have been someone who is rather hateful, not liking other people, then you start feeling metta, - then that might go to your head and you might start feeling sentimental and lovey-dovey (Laughter) and almost swamping people with your love - that will go rather to your head. Then: "When I dwelt on the hillside of Red Rock, I felt as if I were a majestic eagle; Forever have I conquered The fearful expanse of the sea. Because of this I am happy and gay!"

S.: "The fearful expanse of the sea." What sea do you think that Rechungpa was referring to?

Voice: Samsara.

S.: It's probably Samsara - the sea of birth and death and rebirth. "Forever have I conquered the fearful expanse of the sea." Well,

to have done that what would he have to do?



S.: Enlightened, yes. SO, dhe may be or he may not be: we shall see what Milarepa has to say. Perhaps it's an overstatement on his part. He is beginning to get on top of things, perhaps, but probably not quite tMthat extent. Again, this is a common experience. You overcome one obstacle or two obstacles and you feel, well, you've overcome them all; but there may be further obstacles awaiting you on your path. "When I roamed from country to country I felt as if I were a tiger cub, or a bee - Non-attached to all and utterly free. Because of this, I am happy and gay!" So is this how Rechungpa really roamed from country to country, feeling as if he were a tiger cub or a bee - 'non-attached to all and utterly free.'?

Apparently not, from what we've gathered from this and other chapters. He's painting a rosier picture of his spiritual life to-date than is really justified, it seems.

Jyotipala: I suppose this is how you would feel if you'd had the experience.

S.: Mmm. But he's sort of antedating the experience.

Robin: He does only say, "Id feel as if...", - he's not necess- arily convinced by it, perhaps.

Sd.: No. I don't think we can take that quite literally. I think

~just means, 'I feel like a tiger cub or a bee'. And then he goes even further:

"When I mingled with people in the street, I felt as if I were an immaculate lotus Standing above all filth and mud. Because of this, I am happy and gay!"

Well this can be an actual experience can't it? You sometimes find when you come off a retreat and you go back into the city, that this is very much how you feel. You feel quite insulated - you feel quite apart, quite separate, quite different in quite positive sort of way. Unfortunately, it doesn't last very long, usually, because it's based on a sort of Dhyanic experience, or a diffused Dhyanic experience as I sometimes call it. Not on actual insight. But it lasts for a while. With some people, it lasts some days, - with others even a few weeks.

Dave: It is notable for the lack of the element of compassion.

S.: Yes, yes. The simile of the lotus blooming in the midst of the mire - this you find even in the Dhammapada. But this is, to some extent, one's experience sometimes. One has to be careful how one views it and one has to be careful not to start looking down on other people who are the 'filth and mud'.

Dave: Yes. I almost get the feeling that - he doesn't actually say it, but the 'filth and the mud' are actually the same as the people he's talkindg about.

S.: Mmm. So: "When I sat among crowds in the town, I felt as if I were like rolling mnercury -

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- That is to say, quicksilver, that forms into little balls - "It touches all but adheres to nought. Because of this, I feel happy and gay!" I would think this probably wasn'td

altogether Rechungpa's behaviour when he was among crowds in the town, but anyway, that's how he feels now. Of course, not that he's actually in the town. He's on his mountain peak, in his cave, and as I said before, he sort of antedates the experience. So from these verses, we do get the impression that yes, he is experiencing something, there's no doubt about that; but he's tending to be somewhat taken over by it - a bit intoxicated with his own experience.

"When I sat among faithful disciples, I felt as if I were the Jetsun Mila; With cheer and ease I gave instructions through songs! It is the blessing of my Guru That brings me this joy. It is through resting one's mind at ease That Buddhahood is realized." So, in the last few lines he's almost clanning - at least suggesting - that he's pretty near Buddhahood. He feels as though he's like Milarepa himself; he's attained whatever Milarepa has attained, practically.

Gerrr~: Is it important that he says here, "resting one's mind at ease", as if it's not struggle, as if it's not a fight?

S.: Yes. This is an important aspect of the Maha Mudra teaching or practice - that one, so to speak, relaxes completely, which is a very difficult thing to do at this level. It's as though analogous to the 'just sitting' practice. You don't try - you don't make any effort, because in a sense, there's nothing to be made an effort for. It's all there, - you have it already.

Jyotipala: How do you mean, Bhante?

S.: People are so far from even the ordinary experience of relaxation - it's very difficult to talk about ultimate spiritual experience in terms of relaxation - it becomes almost meaningless. We cannot but think of following the Path in terms of struggle and effort and overcoming obstacles. But all those similes hold good; all those comparisons hold good, but only to the extent that we take time as real. All effort takes place within time. There's also the point made from the standpoint of the MahaMudra: it is said that all craving is of the nature of tension and non-craving is of the nature of relaxation. So as you get rid of craving you get rid of tension - you relax. So you could speak not so much in terms of getting rid of craving, as of just relaxing. I mean, don't go in pursuit of anything - don't go in pursuit of pleasure; don't go in pursuit of gain; don't go in pursuit of ambition. Don't go in pursuit of anything for yourself, relax! Do you see what I mean? This is very much the approach of the Maha Mudra.

Ratnaguna: Sounds very Taoist.

S.: It does, yes.

Ratnaguna: Why don't we, or why don't you emphasize this in the Movement?

S.: Because I don't think it's an emphasis that people need. I think

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the emphasis in the past has been to get people's energies moving, - to get them stirring, to get them working, because people are in a sluggish state, mostly. And had you spoken in the

early days of relaxing, well, this would have been the very thing that people really wanted to hear! Because they would have relaxed in the sense, well, just subsiding into sloth and torpor and laziness. I can remember the days when I walked into the Pundarika Centre in Balmore St. and I had to step over the bodies of people lying around on the floor! ~Laughter)

Voice: Lokamitra and Subhuti were there....? (Laughter)

S.: Well, I don't remember whose bodies were there - there were sometimes 15 or 20 of them lying around in various comas as it seemed...(Laughter) Sd when Idfeeldthat people are making an incredible effort, you know . . well, then maybe it'll be the time to emphasize relaxation, but not before.

Gderr : I took it as mean~ngd that he had that attitude, like, Pasuc enka?) - we're all enlightened.

S.: Yes, it could be. There was that Hippy attitude of that kind in those days. Many of our Friends were sort of Hippies, and many people thought that drugsd dWere the quick and easy way. You didn't have to bother meditating. Somed of the people who were lying around on the floor at the centre having been tripping earlier in the day or something of that sort. (Pause) Incredible, isn't it! (Laughter) But one does need a balance. That's why I have also spoken in tderms of the Mandala as welldas the Path. I said that one can think of the spiritual life in terms of two great images: the Path, whichd implies time, or the Mandala, which implies space. So it's good to think of it in b6th these ways.

Ratnaguna: How important do you think the 'just sitting' practice is in that respect? Do you think we should do it more. ~

S.: I think it's very important if you can do it! It's very ~icult to do it, for most people. Most people when they're supposed to be 'just~sitting', fall back on some particular kind of meditation practice. They know that if they try to 'just sit' - well, of course you can't try - their minds just go wandering, so very often they fall back on the Mindfulness of Breathing or the Mantra recitation. d d dl have said in the past that you should try 'just sitting' after a couple of sessions of some actual meditation practice. You can't justdgo straight into the shrine and 'just sit' - that isn't really dpossible

Vimalamitra: It's also very good after work, sometimes, 'just sitting' You seem to have quite a lot of energy there.

S.: Yes, well, if you are perhaps in a sense exhausted or there's no mental activity, sometimes, you can 'just sit'.

Gerry: What I find you can do is that - it can help make you aware of your own consciousness. We were talking yesterday about trying to move the~eat of consciousness, but I fdind that's quite difficult - so first of all, getting an awareness of where your consciousness is, to actually feel it like putty.

S.: Well, it is quite good to do that, but then that is not the 'just 5~ttin~~d practice, because you are still doing something. It is a practice.

S.: It just shows you how difficult it is to sit and do nothing. Hardly anybody can do it.  
(Pause) Anyway, Rechungpa is getting on, isn't he? The introduction before the song says that "Rechungpa gained great improvement in his meditation. (He had) an experience of great joy(in which) numerous thoughts appeared in his mind." So Milarepa<sup>4</sup>asked him about these and it is in response to Milarepa's enquiry that he has sung this song. I can certainly see that he has been making great progress, but there are some unskilful elements nonetheless. So therefore, Milarepa comments something:

The Jetsun commented, "If not brought out by pride, these Experiences are fine; and you have truly received your Guru's blessings. To ward such Experiences, however, one needs certain understandings, in which you still seem to be lacking. Now listen to my song":

S.: Milarepa's 5 comment is interesting. "If not brought out by pride, these experiences are fine; and you have truly received your Guru's blessing". There is the possibility~that these Experiences are subtle developments of ego, or pride; but if they are not, then the experiences are fine and you have truly received your Guru's blessing. "Towards such Experiences, however, one needs certain understandings, in which you still seem to be lacking." What do you think Milarepa means by these 'certain understandings'?

Gerald: Is it that he's had these Dhyanic experiences but hasn't really gone beyond to the development of Insight?

S.: Yes. He's really suggesting that there's no real Insight, certainly no depth of insight, and it is that that Rechungpa needs; to develop. Would someone like to read Milarepa's song straight through? It's a very important song. We'll probably take it slowly and do it bit by bit.

From the depths of my heart, when the great Compassion arose, I felt that all beings in the Three Realms Were enslaved in a prison of fire.

When the Instructions of the Lineage Were imbibed in my heart, As the dissolving of salt into water, I experienced thorough absorption.

When the Wisdom shone bright from within, I felt as if awakened from a great dream - I was awakened from both the main and ensuing Samadhis; I was awakened from both "yes" and "no" ideas.

When one secures the great bliss through Viewing, He feels all Dharmas spontaneously freed As mists of rain vanish into air.

When one comes to the Essence of Being, The shining Wisdom of Reality illumines all like the cloudless sky.

When both pure and impure thoughts are cleared, As in a silver mirror,

The immanent bright Wisdom shines forth.

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'When the Alaya consciousness dissolves into the Dharmakaya, - I feel my body and soul break forth

Like the crushing of an egg when stamped upon.

When the rope-of-clinging is cut loose, I feel the existence of Bardo disappear Like the uncoiling of a snake.

When I act without taking or leaving, My mind is always at ease and non-doing. I feel as if I were a lion, With the power of the Three Perfections.

The Illuminating Voidness, the Illuminating Wisdom, And the Illuminating Manifestations Are my three inseparable friends; Like the sun shining from a cloudless sky, I am always in the Great Illumination. Like dividing the horses from the yaks, The [outer] world and the senses are clearly distinct [from the inner]. The string of mind and Skandhas is forever cut! Having fully utilized this human form, I have now completed all Yoga matters. Rechungpa, do you also have these Experiences? Oh, my son, do not be proud and presumptuous!

S.: Mmm. So alright. Milarepa says, "Now listen to my song":

"From the Depths of my heart, when the great Compassion arose, I felt that all beings in the Three Realms were enslaved in a prison of fire." What's the difference already between Milarepa's song and Rechungpa's song?

Ratna una: Rechungpa is speaking in terms of himself and Milarepa is speaking in terms of

others.

S.: Yes. So Rechungpa was also thinking in terms of, so to speak. or experiencing, perhaps just Samatha, whereas Milarepa is speaking in terms of or is concerned with Insight. But how does compassion enter into it if it is a matter of Insight?

Ratri~agufla: Well, isn't it spontaneous upon Insight, compassion? It's the other side of the coin, isn't it?

S.: Yes, one could say that, but in that connection, is Insight the term that is generally used?

Gerry: No, wisdom.

S.: Wisdom is the term that is generally used. And you notice also that the term 'great Compassion' is used.

YH 10            8            i77 Gerry: It's a capital 'C' as well.

S.: And it's a capital 'C' as well. So this is Compassion - not just in the sense of the compassion one feels in the ordinary sense, which is a mundane mental state, but Compassion in the transcendental sense. Compassion which is united with Wisdom or which is inseparable from Wisdom. In other words, Compassion which is the emotional equivalent or emotional counterpart of Insight. or of Wisdom. I remember that in the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight-Thousand Lines one of the questions which is raised is 'how to know an irreversible Bodhisattva?' - On the Mahayana path - the Bodhisattva path - irreversibility is equivalent to 'stream-entry' on the Hinayana path. We won't go into that now, but in order to become an irreversible Bodhisattva, you have to develop Wisdom in the distinctively Mahayana sense. So the question is raised: how is one to know or to recognize an irreversible Bodhisattva? Various answers are given, but one of the answers is that if an irreversible Bodhisattva is asked a question about the Dharma, if he is asked a question about Nirvana, if he is asked a question about the Unconditioned, in his reply he would always bring Compassion in. Do you see what I mean? Because if he left Compassion out, it would indicate that his Wisdom is one-sided - that it was not true Wisdom, that it was not Wisdom in the Mahayana sense, that he was not in fact, an irreversible Bodhisattva. - -

So from the Mahayana point of view, Compassion must be there all along the way. To the extent that there is Wisdom, there will be Compassion. The one is the counterpart of the other. Putting the matter, so to speak, in conceptual terms, one speaks in terms of Wisdom; putting the same matter as it were, in emotive terms, one speaks in terms of Compassion, as one and the same thing but looked at from different points of view. Therefore, Milarepa says, "From the depths of my heart, when the great Compassion arose, I felt that all beings in the Three Realms were enslaved in a prison of fire." What particular Sutra does that remind one of?

Robin: The White Lotus.

S.: The White Lotus. But you notice it's not only a house on fire, it's a prison of fire. So Milarepa sees, in the light of his Wisdom and Compassion all beings in the Three Realms as

unfree, as enslaved, as in a pitiable state.

Gerry: Which Three Realms are these?

S.: The Three Realms are the Kama-loka or Kama-dhatu, the Rupaloka and the Arupaloka. That is to say, the world or plane of sensuous desire; of form, and the Formless world or Formless plane.

Vimalamitta: Why should he see the other two worlds as also worlds of fire? I mean, they're comparatively refined?

S.: This is true, but in relation to or in-comparison with Enlightenment, they're well, they're positively painful. Do you see what I mean? They are conditioned.

Ratnaguna: Does that mean that they are potentially painful, i.e. you can fall out of them?

S.: They can be potentially painful in that sense, but while you are actually experiencing them they are pleasurable, blissful in fact, but in comparison with the bliss, of Enlightenment, that bliss

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Ratnaguna: Do you think that's true?

S.: (Laughs) Well! (Laughter) Well, why not? I mean.

Ratnaguna: Well, in a Dhyana state - it lacks all negative emotion.

S.: But.. put it this way, if you are a child and you're playing with your toys - it can be an intensely blissful experience, but if a grown man is made to go back and play with those toys, how will he feel?

Ratnaguna: Yes. But somebody in a Dhyana state wouldn't be in that position. He'd still be a child playing with his toys.

S.: Yes. It's just the same way with someone who is Enlightened. Every comparison has its limitations, obviously, but if he - if it was at all possible - was to go back and just play around with the Dhyanas, that would be quite a painful and limiting experience for him because he has experienced so much more. So any conditioned experience in comparison with the Unconditioned is unsatisfactory. Perhaps 'unsatisfactory' is a better term in this connection than 'painful' - at least it's more acceptable to us in this connection. You can even get tired of Dhyana experiences after a while.

Voice: It sounds as if the Buddha experienced them quite freely before he became Enlightened and was quite... fed up with them.

S.: Well, even in an ordinary way, you can get a bit bored even with quite pleasant worldly experiences, can't you? After a while they start palling and they're not so attractive as

they were before.

Gerry: After the 10th Mars bar, it gets a wee bit. ... (Laughter)

S.: Well, it's good to go by one's own experience! (Laughter) Don't let anyone persuade you into giving up Mars bars before you've even tasted them. (Laughter) But, you see, Milarepa hits the nail on the head, straight- away. He brings in Compassion and by implication he brings in Wisdom. There's a reference to the whole of conditioned existence in its unsatisfactory nature; there's a reference to all sentient beings and their unsatisfactory condition; there's an implied reference to the Bodhisattva ideal. There's a lot in this little verse. "From the depths of my heart, when the great Compassion arose, I felt that all beings in the Three Realms were enslaved in a prison of fire."

It's as though Milarepa is referring to the arising of the Bodhicitta, because when one actually sees being suffering in this way, and sees with Compassion, obviously one will want to do something about it - one will want to help. It's as though he's speaking in terms of the Bodhicitta - the Bodhisattva Ideal. That's the real experience, the real realization. (Pause)

One can say that unless one has something of that sort of feeling, one won't really want to do anything to help people. You won't be very likely to try to bring the Dharma to people's notice unless you see and unless you feel they really do need it. If you see or if you feel or if you think - "Well, they're

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getting on alright without it. It would be a pleasant optional extra," - you're not going to be very strongly motivated to bring the Dharma to them or to bring it to their attention. There's another song of Milarepa's in another chapter somewhere about: 'all men need the Dharma' - do you remember that? 'Young men need the Dharma, old men need the Dharma, young women need the Dharma, old women need it, children need it, etc.' Everybody needs the Dharma. They need the Dharma because they're in a very difficult existential position, as it were. Their lives are very cramped, very mean, very unrewarding, without possibility of development. So people need the Dharma very badly, whether they themselves know it or realize it or not. If one does really feel that people need the Dharma, then one will do everything that one possibly can to make it available to them.

Gerald: Is it always automatic that when Wisdom and Compassion arise. . . isn't it possible to see all beings as living in a 'prison of fire', but then no Compassion arising?

S.: Well, it depends on what does one mean by 'seeing'? There can be just a purely pseudo-objective alienated 'seeing', but this is not a real seeing.- You can open your paper any day of the week almost and see: so many people killed in a plane crash, so many people killed in an earthquake, so many people killed in a flood. Whereas you are aware of it, but that can't be described as real seeing, that all those people have died in that way - so there's no question of Compassion arising. I think if you really see, you really feel. In fact the two things are inseparable - it's just you, acknowledging, recognizing, experiencing or realizing



what is going on. And that's got an intellectual aspect, so to speak, and also an emotional aspect - a prajna aspect, in the case of the Transcendental, and a Compassion aspect.

~: Perhaps 'seeing' is not too good a word because 'seeing' is associated with the eyes, but seeing is like you really feel it. Milarepa here says, "I felt that all beings...

S.: Yes! And he says, "from the depths of my heart", which makes it even clearer. He didn't even say that "I saw that all beings in the Three Realms were enslaved in a prison~of fire", he says or sings: "I felt that all beings..." It's not just an objective understanding, it's something very much more than that. By using the expression, "From the depths of my heart...", he suggests that his whole being is involved in the experience. (Pause) The expression also, "the great Compassion" - there is a distinction usually made between great Compassion and com- passion, or great Love, great Maitri and just maitri. The 'great' indicating an experience of Sunyata, of the Void or of Reality or Insight, you could say; Wisdom along with the emotional experience of Compassion. This is where 'great Compassion' differs from compassion, in the ordinary sense. But there is an element of Insight there as well, - in fact one can't even 'speak in those terms. But what one speaks of as 'great Compassion from another point of view is the great Wisdom.

Ratnaguna: Isn't it said that a Bodhisattva feels Compassion but at the same time he realizes there's no-one to feel compassion towards? (S.: Mmm) So what does that Compassion consist in? He doesn't actually feel compassionate towards beings if he sees that they don't actually exist?

S.: It's not that beings are not actually there. He sees

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beings, - but how is one to describe the Bodhisattva's experience? We've only got the words we have developed from purely mundane experience. I mean, you could say, that a Bodhisattva sees beings, but he doesn't see them in the way that we see them. Or you could say that he doesn't see beings at all. Both statements would be equally true. If you want to put it more positively, you could say that, well, he sees them but not as we see them- or if you put it more negatively, you could say we see beings but the Bodhisattva doesn't see beings at all.

Ratnaguna: Would you say that he saw suffering but didn't attribute it to any beings, but just saw suffering?

S.: Well, one could say that, but suffering is something felt, or experienced and from our point of view at least, there can't be an experience without someone who experiences the experience. A little while ago we were talking about the 'growth movement', but one can see here, just in this little verse where in principle the 'growth movement' differs from Buddhism. The 'growth movement' is concerned with just one's own development. There isn't that consciousness of other people's need - there isn't that element of compassion - as opposed to great Compassion - that's not there at all. If one thinks of other people at all, they're

customers or clients, they're not sentient beings needing help. Perhaps among some people involved in the 'growth movement' there is some feeling of warmth, or sympathy towards others, but it doesn't seem to go very far. It's more like a sort of animal warmth or herd feeling or gregariousness or sociability or something of that sort, but not anything that rises out of real understanding of the human predicament.

(End of Side A)

S.: You get so many people just setting up their own little ~with groups or encounter groups that they just want to be a sort of leader, have a circle of people around them. They want to be important - they want to dominate - they want to feel like Rechungpa: "When I sat on the peak of a snow mountain, I felt like a white lioness, predominating and surpassing all others in the world". Well, m~ybe they're not as ambitious as that, but they want to predominate and surpass their own particular circle of people.

~auna: They want to have people dependent on them.

S.: They want to have people dependent on them, even. But Milarepa completely does away with all that by bringing in this element or aspect of Compassion. This also of course, raises the whole question of one's motive for engaging in, as it were, Dharma activities. From the Mahayana point of view, even probably from the general Buddhist point of view, there can really be only one motivation and that is compassion - just a desire to help, a desire to make the Dharma available to those who actually need it.

Ra~tflaguna: Do you think that is the main reason people do start centres and so on?

S.: Well, it should be. But sometimes one even hears people say, 'I think one day I'll start up a centre. I think it would be good for me! I think it would be good for me to have the experience of the responsibility of starting up a centre. I think it would stretch me to start up a centre. I think it would help me in my personal development to start up a centre.'

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This is unfortunately sometimes the attitude. That is very very one-sided. So even your helping- others is really a way of helping yourself. You're not really concerned with others at all. But there has to be both. You have to, of course, have a genuine concern for yourself and do the best you can for yourself. On the other hand, you have to be other-oriented as well, and think in terms of helping others, and see the two as inter-connected, as inseparable. You must help yourself for your own sake, and so that you can help others, and help others for their own sake - not just so that by helping others you can be helped.

Ratnaguna: What do you think of helping others so that you can help yourself?

S.: Well, it's a way of getting you started.. I think actually it's as though you can't even really help others unless you, in a sense, make others an end in themselves. For instance, supposing someone was really upset - they really need to be talked to. You need to spend time with them. Perhaps it's late at night and you think, 'if I stay up talking to this person very late, I won't get my proper night's rest. I won't be able to get up for meditation in the morning - alright, I just can't talk to them tonight.' But you can't really help people if you're going to think so exclusively in terms of your personal inter-ests, even the interests of your own

personal development, in that sort of way. If you really want to help people you have to commit yourself to them, commit yourself to helping them.

Vimalamitra: Isn't it actually helping yourself - getting over the....?

S.: It will help you, but you mustn't think, as it were, deliberately in those terms. So long as you are within the subject/object framework, the object - the other person is as real as the subject - that is to say, you!

Vimalamitra: So the more you forget about yourself, the better!

S.: Yes, yes. One could say that.

Dave: There is of course, the danger, if you've got a Christian background - my idea of martyrdom, of self-sacrifice - I think it's quite easy for us to latch onto.

S.: Yes. Or even of 'do-gooding' - even of 'do-gooding'. So I think that you cannot help others as a substitute for helping yourself. But when you do help others, you must help others, not do it just for your sake. That, I think, is the main point. That when you help others, you really do help others. It's not an indirect way of helping yourself. At least for the time being, you completely forget about yourself. You're solely concerned with helping that person! But you're not helping others in order to avoid having to help yourself, avoid having to work on yourself and develop yourself. So I think that within the Friends as a whole, we are probably still too growth-oriented and not sufficiently other-oriented. In the Friends I don't think we think sufficiently yet, in terms of going out and helping others, especially in the sense of making the Dharma available to them, by setting up more centres, by bringing out more publications, by organizing more lectures. People think in terms of doing these things usually provided they fit in with the things they find agreeable or useful to them.

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Gerry: But surely some people think that they can only really help other people from a solid base.

S.: This is very true - you do need a solid base, but then if you really do think that, well are you working on, creating that solid base? If you are not careful, say, within the FWBO, you'll tend to just settle down in a reasonably comfortable community, working for a not particularly demanding co-op, and in your spare time engaging in some agreeable cultural activities: going to see films, concerts, but not really either working on yourself in a very radical way, nor committing yourself to helping others in a very radical way.

Dave: Back in the T.M. Movement, they've got a movement that's actually very outward going, always trying to reach other people, but in a very self, and- growth- and inward-looking way. So they're actually expanding - you know, outward-looking, but in a

very inward- looking way. Obviously there is a danger there.

Gerald: Do you think it~, -could be useful then- sometimes to just suspend feelings-about y~ur own growth, your own development and just try and objectively put~yo\lrsel at the (disposal of others or think along those lines?

S.: I think for a lot of people at least within the Friends, this ~ld be a useful practice, provided you were genuinely doing that and not simply seeking to escape from the demands of self-development. I think not many people think in those terms- - of making themselves available, of givin~g themsel ves to the situation. Sometimes it's even difficult for instance, to find Order members to attend a part- ictilar meeting or class or to-circulate and talk~ to new people. Sometimes there aren't enough, sometimes they'd--rather just spend the evening quietly somewhere, and go and see a film and so on. The feel- ing for the need of others is not sufficiently strong. If they are instead, just spending the evening getting on with their meditation then that's different. But very often, it isn't that. Or sometimes even, provided, you're a regular meditator or course, it might be that you could well, in a manner of speaking, sacrifice your extra med- itation for the sake of making contact with new people who could be helped.

Gerald: I find it quite difficult to know when one would be escaping t-romone' s self--development -- whether you were kidding yourself or not.

S.: Well, then of course, you should rely on one's spiritual ~ends. If your spirituai~ friends know you well, know what medit- ation and other spiritual practice you are doing, and say, "Look, it would be really useful if you could spend the evening doing such and such" . that sort of thing one can accept and follow. If it's the suggestion of your own mind, well one is rightly a bit suspicious. (Laughter) So we mustn't be too growth-oriented in a one-sided kind of way or in a subjective or precious kind of way, so that one doesn't think in terms of helping others. You can become precious about your own development. It can even become a bit of a rationalization: "Oh, I don't think I want-to do that - it'll come in the way of my devel- opment." In the end, your development comes to mean something like: whatever you find agreeable. I don't know if it was in this study group or in the other one - but we talked about people saying that holidays abroad or cult- ural expeditions to museums and art galleries were all part of their spir~itual development, and in that way sort of justified it. Well, sometimes perhaps it is, but one still has to watch it. It may not be!

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It may just be your rationalization for a holiday abroad.- One has heard in the past - not recently - people even speakin~g of relation- ships as all part of their individual development; that was so clear- ly a rationalization that that one pretty quickly disappeared. So the Growth movement, though useful in some ways, has also been responsible for a lot of intellectual confusion, I -think, and some very one-sided emphases. And again I must

emphasize there must be a genuine concern for others, not just a wish to enrol others in your group or have more clients, or more customers to build up your business, as it were! - Your encounter group business, for instance. One is not necessarily genuinely altruistic in the Mahayana sense just because you are concerned with other people. You might think that a doctor was a very altruistic person - doctors very often are - but in India, nowadays, becoming a doctor is regarded just like entering into any other kind of business in many cases, because if you're a doctor, you can earn money, so you become a doctor to earn money! That's what you're mainly concerned with. You're not concerned with relieving human suffering.

Jyotipala: In the States, it's the highest paid profession and people want to go into that - higher than Law even, in many cases. (Pause)

~S~.: So if people have this very strong sense of the needs of others; they have this strong sense that there are so many people around who haven't, say, heard of the Dharma, who haven't heard of the FWBO and could be really benefitted by it, or from it, they'll be really motivated to try to bring it - to - their attention, to try to make it available to them, and in that way the movement spreads very rapidly. So if it isn't spreading as rapidly as it would do, it's a sign among other things, that people aren't sufficiently strongly motivated in this sort of way. If we think, well, there are thousands of people, almost on your doorstep, who could benefit from contact with Buddhism as presented by the Friends. So why isn't one making it available to them? One has time for so many things, why not for this?!

Dave: -Even on the -level of the class, one has to be quite discriminating as well or. ... I find, people come along whom you can feel quite sorry for or feel as though they've got a really great need, but it's actually more than, -you know....at this time anyway, the Movement or oneself is really able to sort of reach out to their need. In time, you could imagine hostels actually helping people who may even be psychologically disturbed. It's as if one actually has to hold back from giving to them at times.

~S~.: Yes, that's true. It is a question of whether what people need is the Dharma. People have a lot of needs and perhaps one would like to supply them all, but at present we aren't geared for that. Supposing there are people who are even starving - maybe not in Britain but in other countries - well, we'd like to supply that need but we can't. We're not geared to that; we don't have the resources. So sometimes people might come along - to a centre who need, say, psychological help, even psychiatric help, even hospitalization perhaps-. We're not in a position to provide that, so we have to be able to, since we have a limited amount of time and energy, invest it, so to speak, where it will be really useful, and really do some - good - not fritter it away, trying to help people that are beyond our power to help.

Robin: You've said in the past that it's the strong who really need help - or something like that.

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S.: Yes. This is a question of the best investment of one's energy. For instance, though it may sound a bit harsh - but if say, there's a very old person coming along and a very young person, both equally interested, well, if you've only got time to deal with one of them,

it's better to deal with the younger person, because they've got more time ahead - they're freer - they're more-able to get into the Dharma. So your energy will be better invested in helping them. You'd like to be able to help everybody but you can't, so you have to help those who, quite soon, will be able to help others.

Robin: So you say, that's an even more efficient way of acting, 77rater than maybe helping even more people with just food parcels or something?

S.: Oh yes, yes. It's like on the one hand, you can help people wTbt food parcels or on the other hand you can help them with seeds and farming equipment. Do you see what I mean?

Dave: So a feeling of compassion has to be tempered by wisdom even - to turning them down?

S.: Yes, yes, indeed. For instance, it has been pointed out that some developing countries are producing less food than they were ten years ago because- -they've got so accustomed to being supplied with food- by the West. So in the long run you're not really helping very much. One should aim not so much at handing out 'spiritual food parcels' as one should aim at creating 'spiritual farmers'! (Laughter) If you heard me speaking about Order members - I've been saying that if every Order member had one person, one mitra on whom he or she worked intensiv'ely, -spending two hours with them at least every day, every two years the Order would double, wouldn't it? If you work intensively on a selected mitra for two years, well, then he's bound to be ready for ordination at the end of that time.

Ratnaguna: Do you think 'we should do that then?

S.: Well, that is one way of looking at it. Some people might not feel able to work intensively in that, sort of way. On the average, I thi,nk it should work out like that, That the Order doubles every two years! It's not doub-ling every two years now, so what does that su9gest?

Ratna'guna: Recently I've been finding a conflict between going out tQ more people-and intensifying my communication with one or two. And I must say, I find it more satisfying to intensify communication.

S.: I think one must do both. One has to keep up some contact, some friendly contact with a larger number of people, but I think at the same time, if one has that sort of temperament and is able to enter into that sort of responsibility, one should have a much more intensive contact with one or two, or at the most, three people. I think the sort of contact I have in mind, probably one would be enou9h at a time. You see that person's potential and you go all out to make sure tha't they develop that as quickly as possible. If a ~onably receptive person comes along into contact with the FWBO and he's seized hold of by an Order member,- and gets this sort of contact over a per~iod of two years, he's certain to be ready for Ordination'! Assuming that in the first place, he's a reasonable healthy, open person with a genuine interest in what the Friends have to offer. So there's at present in the world practically 150 Order mem- bers. If each one does this, every two years you'd have, well, after two years you'd have 300 Order members, after another two years you'd

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have 600! So it's- as though, at present, the individual Order member is not even doing as much as this! Do you see what I mean? Don't leave it just to the few more senior, more experienced people. Perhaps you can't keep operating in this way, immediately after your ordination, that would be too much to expect - but pretty soon after, at least two years after, I think one should start - one should be able to start - operating in this sort of way; giving a new person a progressively more and more intensive contact and communication. I think perhaps it isn't generally realized what a lot of hard work is necessary even to bring about a small change. Do you see what I mean. Old habits die very hard. I think ever-new person really needs, in a sense deserves that really intensive contact and communication --to have someone really working with them and on them. Otherwise they won't-change very quickly; not as quickly as they could. And when you're young, very young, you can change very quickly. In a year you can go through this whole process, even with- in six months under favourable conditions. So perhaps people - aren't sufficiently convinced that change is possible, that they can have a positive- effect on other people through their own personal conviction and greater positivity and clarity and so on.

Ratnaguna: It assumes that an Order member is positive quite a lot ~ime, because what I find is that I can keep an intensive communication with a person as long as I'm Positive, but when I'm negative, I don't particularly want to carry on communicating with them.

S.: Well, then obviously, one has to ask oneself why one is in ~t negative state. Maybe one still needs oneself a bit of working on by somebody. The fact\That you are working with somebody doesn't mean that nobody's working with y~ou. It goes all\The way along the line - right the way up, as it were.

Ratna~una: But what do you think you should do if you find yourself in quite a bad state and-you've got this person, say, a mitra, that you've got an intensive communication with. Do you think you~~hould just try not to see them at that point? Do you think it would be bad for them to see you in a negative state?

S.: Well, I think it would depend on how close the relationship ~een you, was. They might have an all round appreciation of you and quite accept that though you were on the whole a pretty good sort of -person, pretty positive, sometimes you did have your down periods. They might be able to accept that. On the other hand, they might be verynew, they might over-idealize you and it might really shock them to see that you were capable of being a bit neg- ative oneday, and in that case it would be better not to see them or try to communicate with the, during that time, but hastily seek out some Order member more experienced than yourself and try to sort it out with him before you see your own Mitra again. Until you've -established a de~ree of Insight, you will go up and down! (Laughs) (Pause)  
Perhaps, we~d better leave it there for this morning on that practical note

(End of Tape 10)

S.: We've dealt with that first verse. We'll come on now to the ----second: "When the Instructions of the Lineage were imbibed in my heart, as the dissolving of salt into water, I experienced- thorough absorpti'on." The instructions of the Lineage are, of course, the pith instructions of the Kagyup~tradition. Therefore, the instructions which Milarepa is referring to, are instructions given to him by the Guru personally. He's saying in effect, the words of -the Guru were imbibed in my heart. 'The dissolving of salt into water'. What does that suggest? What happens when you put salt into water?

Voice: The salt disappears-.

S.: The salt disappears.

Voice: Becomes part of the water.

S.: Becomes part of the water. So the water and salt are mingled, are blended. And another thing you notice, that the salt, because it consists of tiny granules, is dissolved instantly, isn't it? It's not like putting great big lumps of something into the water which take time to dissolve. The salt is dissolved instantly. So what does that suggest about the way in which Milarepa imbibed the Guru's instructions?

Voice: Receptive?

S.: He must have been very receptive. He must have been very open. As soon as he heard the Guru's instructions he receives them into his heart. The instructions became one with his heart or his heart became at one with the instructions. He assimilated them instantly, and that is quite an extraordinary thing really! Because- usually you offer up initial resistance that might last for some time. Then you mull things over. You turn them over in your mind. You think about the teachings and gradually you absorb them, gradually you assimilate them; gradually you imbibe them. Milarepa's experience seems to have been quite different. Milarepa was a quite extraordinary sort of man, even as a disciple. So when he says, 'the Instructions of the Lineage were imbibed in my heart, as the dissolving of salt into water, I experienced thorough absorption' - probably absorption does stand here for the dhyana. This isn't clear though. It isn't made explicit. Perhaps there's a touch of Insight experience here, but whatever it is, Milarepa was so receptive to the guru, that he assimilated them instantly and as a result of that instant assimilation of the teachings, he experienced a powerful spiritual state.

Gerry: Also the water now tastes differently.

S.: Also the water now tastes differently. Yes. It rather reminds one of the 'taste of freedom'. So now the salt is really part of the water. The water isn't just water, it's saline. So in the same way, Milarepa's whole being has been transformed by the instructions which have been imbibed in his heart and he has experienced thorough absorption. His whole state of consciousness and being has been changed - has been transformed. So here Milarepa appears as almost the 'ideal disciple'. He's completely open to the-guru's instructions. As



soon as the guru gives the instructions, he imbibes them in his heart. Just like salt being dissolved in water, and he apparently instantly experienced a very deep meditative or contemplative state. Then he goes on to -say- "When the Wisdom shone bright from within, felt as if awakened from a great dream -

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"I was awakened from both the main and ensuing Samadhis; I was awakened from both 'yes' and 'no' ideas."            What are these main and ensuing Samadhis?

Voice: The main Samadhi is-the actual Samadhi you experience in Medi'tation - then when you come~out of it, and goi~g about your daily life, it's the sort of after effects.

S.:     Yes, right! These are the -main and ensuing Samadhis. So M~arepa says, "When the Wisdom-shone bright fr6m within, (he) felt as if awakened from a great dream - (-and) was awakened from both the main and ensuing Samadhis". What does that suggest? What does it state quite openly?

Gerry: He experienced Reality.

S.:     Yes. But about the Samadhis, but what is he in effect saying?

Voice: But even they are a state of sleep.

S.:     Even they are part of the great dream. Because even Samadhi states in the sense of dhyana,- even dhyana states are still mundane. Samatha is still a mundane experience even though incredibly refined.     So, 'when Wisdom shines- brig~ht from within1 - you awaken from conditioned existence as such. Even in its most refined form, you awaken therefore, everi~~from -the Samadhis, even the Samadhis - lofty states though they are, from the mundane point of view - in com- parison with Wis-dom, seem no more than dreams. Though Samadhi, dhyana is immensely important -- is indispensable, is the basis for the development of Insight, basis for the development of Wisdom, nonetheless, Wisdom infinitet~~y transcends it. "I was awakened from both 'yes1 and 'no1 ideas". What does that mean?

Voice: Duality.

S.:     Duality. Awakened really from the duality of existence and non- 7rxistence, Being and non-being. Affirmation and negation. Awakened from all intellectual limitations. Awakened from all conceptual limitations, - Awakened from the taken of concepts as ends in them- selves. In other words, all limitations - whether intellectual or emotional, were removed by the experience of Wisdom.

Voice: I didn't quite understand about the 'ensuing Samadhis'.

S.: The 'ensuing Samadhi' is the Samadhi which you continue to experience after the cessation of your main meditation practice, in the midst of the activities of daily life. It's not just an after-effect because you do try to keep it up. Even though it's now under more difficult conditions. This in a way, is a regular or standard procedure that you, say, practise. It may be the Mindfulness of Breathing, say for an hour - you practise sitting cross-legged in the shrine and you do the Mindfulness of Breathing practice. So perhaps you have an experience of a dhyana state. So when the period of meditation comes (to an end), when you get up from your meditation cushion and you perhaps take up some other work - maybe you're chopping wood; even though you're chopping wood, there is some trace of that dhyana experience which you had sitting on your cushion persisting still and you may even try to prolong that - even while you're chopping wood, still try to keep in contact with that experience. So the experience of Samadhi, the experience of dhyana you have sitting on your cushion, is called the main Samadhi. The experience

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of Sa'nadh that you have the experience of the trace of samadhi that you have as a result, while you're chopping wood, is called the 'ensuing Samadhi'. So the purpose of the ensuing Samadhi is to link up different samadhis - if you're practising meditation seriously, you have periods of practice, sitting on your cushion and in-between you're doing other things - but during the intermediate period, you try to prolong or maintain the Samadhi or dhyana experience, you have while sitting on the cushion - as long as you possibly can. When you have another period of sitting meditation - when you go back into the shrine again sitting on your cushion, you're not starting entirely from scratch, because you haven't completely lost the benefits from last time. Do you see what I mean? So if you're taking meditation seriously, even when you're not actually meditating - in between sessions of meditation, you're very careful to see you don't stray too far, stray too much away from the Samadhi of dhyana experience that you had sitting on your cushion in the shrine. This is only at places like Tyn-y-ddol, that you'll be able to practise seriously in this sort of way. Otherwise if you're living in a community and working in a co-op, you might have a good meditation in the morning, but even if you stay positive during the day, you probably won't have any trace left of the specific dhyana consciousness. You probably have to start all over again. But if you have a number of sittings during the day, and you're very mindful about what you do in between, especially if you're just engaged in very simple physical activity, and aren't talking or aren't talking very much, you can keep the dhyana experience practically the whole day. You just sort of fluctuate. It goes up a bit when you sit and down a bit when you don't sit, up again when you sit and down a bit when you don't sit. Whereas our usual experience is, well, we get up there in the morning and then it goes like that - right down till the evening and then again you have to start and you go up. Do you see what I mean? That is the difference. It doesn't have to be like that, but usually it is - depending on what you're actually doing in between your two sittings. It can probably make quite a difference if you can introduce a third sit, halfway through, just before lunch, or just before tea. It means your sagging sort of dhyana line is given a hoist in the middle of the day. Maybe it doesn't go down quite so far, you know, in the evening.

Voice: I've heard it said that you can function in first and second dhyanas in the outside world?

S.: You can function in, certainly in the first dhyana. I'm not even so sure about the second. In the first dhyana, the discursive mental activity is still continuing, but it is quite difficult, even so.

Voice: Do you think it is even desirable?

S.: You shouldn't try to sort of stay in two worlds or two mental states at the same time. If you try that, you'll get splitting headaches.

Voice: So, for instance, if you're working in a co-op, where you have to use your head a bit, if would be pointless to try and stay in a dhyana state?

S.: Well, in the sense of staying in a state where you were not engaged in discursive mental activity - if it's a very simple repetitive physical movement, you can keep that up while remaining in a dhyanic state. If you have to think things out, then it becomes virtually impossible. I think you can chop wood in a dhyanic state but if you have to think in terms of selling the wood, and calculating the price and finding a buyer and making arrangements for transport

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- I think then it's quite difficult to stay, well, impossible to stay in the dhyanic state.

Voice: Can you get into dhyanas through communication? for instance, the first dhyana?

S.: I think you can. I won't be completely sure about this, but I think on some occasions people might even get into second dhyana, because some, through intense communication - that ordinary mental activity just stops.

Voice: That would be presumably.. you're not actually talking but....?

S.: -- Yes, you wouldn't be talking. You wouldn't even be saying, you know, 'the sky is blue today'. You may be just looking at each other. Well, even in the course of fairly ordinary communication, sometimes you feel, well, enough has been said - you don't need to say anymore. You understand each other without words. I don't want to romanticize or sentimentalize that sort of thing too much, but yes, that can happen. Then if the communication has been very intense, then when you've stopped talking and even stopped thinking, you can enter, at least, momentarily, a dhyanic state - even perhaps, as far as the second dhyana. Perhaps, when listening to music or when you have listened to music - when the sounds have died away and you're still completely absorbed in the music, you can almost hear the echo in your mind, but you're not thinking about anything else. Your mind hasn't started functioning again, just as after meditation. So even though one has these sort of experiences, dhyana experiences, usually within the framework of formal meditation

practise, one should not suppose that such experiences are confined, necessarily to that framework - they do overlap that framework - though one has to be quite careful not to claim that one can have meditation experiences without meditating, in a very general sort of way. One sort of experiences those dh~ana states outside the framework of formal meditation only at one's very best moments. Maybe one has heard a wonderful symphony concert or watching a wonderful sunset or had particularly good communication with somebody. You might not get such experiences more than say, two or three times a year. We don't even perhaps have dhyana experiences very often within the framework of meditation. But one mustn't be rigid; one must see the actual experience and realize the experience is the thing, not the conditions under which it takes place, even though in this case, normally the experience will take place under a particular set of conditions, i.e. will take place in the shrine while you are meditating sitting on your cushion. But it's not confined to that. It can take place at least occasionally, on other occasions too. So, 'when the Wisdom shone bright from within, I felt as if awakened from a great dream - I was awakened from both the main and ensuing Samadhis; I was awakened from both 'yes' and 'no' ideas.~V And then he goes on to say: "When one secures the great bliss through Viewing, He feels all Dharmas spontaneously freed As mists of rain vanish into air It's a little bit like the simile in the first two verses before - 'when one secures the great bliss through Viewing'. What is this great bliss?

Voice: The Maha Sukkha

S.: Yes, it is the Maha Sukkha in presumably in Sanskrit. It's a

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Tantric, a Vajrayana way of looking at the Goal. The Vjarayana thinks of the Goal in terms of great bliss, or thinks of the Ultimate Experience in terms-of -Great Bliss, which of course is Transcendental Bliss. So one secures the great bliss through viewing - viewing in the sense of 'seeing things as they really are'. °1Seeing things as they really are' is the last but one of the positive Nidanas, isn't it? Yatha~bhuta~jnana-darsana - 'seeing things as they really are'. So one secures the great bliss through viewing. One awakens to the Great Bliss, to Transcendental Bliss, as a result of one1 S seeing things as they really are. So when one has that experience,"when one secures the ~reat bliss through Viewing, feels all Dharmas spontaneously freed as mists of rain vanish into air." Now what is happen~ing here? What is meant first of all by all-Dharmas? By 'all Dharmas spontaneously freed'?

Voice: Is that the Theravada way of looking at existence? Splitting T7T7rto Dharmas?

S.: Yes, in terms of Dharmas. Well, it was that way of looking at ~stence - was taken over by the Mahayana, though it didn't regard it as Ultimate or as expressing Ultimate Truth. The Theravadists, the Hinayanists generally, believed that the so-called 'person' could be analyze~d into a number of different material and mental factors - into a number of material and mental factors and these were called Dharmas or ultimate phenomena. But the Mahayana maintained that these Dharmas were not in fact ultimate. They were really, in the last anaiy.sis, conceptual constructions and that they too should be dissolved. So the Mahayana maintained that in the same way that the so-called 'person' was dissolved into the Dharmas,

the Dharmas had to be dissolved into the Void. That Reality could no more be explained in terms of a fixed number of irreducible dharmas than it could be explained in terms of fixed ego-entities or fixed unchanging ego-entities. So therefore after resolving the so-called 'person' into dharmas, one resolved the so-called 'dharmas' into Void. In other words, one recognized the limitations - the purely relative validity of all conceptual constructions, even those of the Abhidharma. So therefore, "he feels- all Dharmas spontaneously freed as mists of rain vanish into air". When one has the realization of Sunyata and that is implied in the realization of the great bliss, because great bliss is bliss which has been thoroughly purified by the experience of Sunyata. So when one has that experience, one sees all intellectual constructions just dissolving, just melting away. Even those of the Abhidharma, even those of Buddhism itself.

Ratnaguna: What were these dharmas? Can you give a couple of examples?

S.: Well, different schools have got different lists. For instance, the 'eleven positive mental states'. These are regarded as dharmas. And then on the material side, 'the great elements': Earth, Water, Fire and Air. These are regarded as dharmas. Some schools of course, regard all dharmas as manifestations of Mind. So it regards all dharmas--as ultimately mental - recognizes so to speak, only mental dharmas. But the Theravada and the Sarvastivada at least, they recognize the existence of dharmas which are material as well as mental. The Sarvastivadins had a list of 100 Dharmas most of which were conditioned dharmas, which made up- conditioned existence and three of which were Unconditioned dharmas. So you had a small list of Unconditioned dharmas, usually - that is to say, the two kinds of Nirvana, for instance. And a long list of conditioned dharmas. This list of dharmas, both conditioned and Unconditioned was held to exhaust the whole content of Reality.

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But the Mahayana maintained as a last resort, that existence could not in fact be broken down in this way - that the so-called 'dharmas' were not things in themselves. They were not ultimate entities, but they were- only intellectual constructions like say, in modern Physics when one talks in terms of particles and waves. Is there really a particle or is there really a wave? It is used to behave- it is- 'a wave' or 'a particle' or real ultimate waves. A purpose to him in terms of particles, one shouldn't think that there are such things as particles actually existing out there or such things as waves, ultimately existing out there. In the same way the Mahayana says: 'Yes it's useful to think of the mind, useful to think of existence in this way, as consisting of permutations of different numbers of dharmas but that is just a useful way of thinking, - it doesn't represent the nature of Reality itself. It is beyond thought, beyond expression. It is Sunyata. So therefore, Milarepa says: "When one secures the great bliss through Viewing, he feels all Dharmas spontaneously freed as mists of rain vanish into air". Why spontaneously freed?

Voice: They go away by themselves.

S.: They go away by themselves. You don't have to take any further steps. When you see the Nature of Reality, you're freed from the limitations of all provisional, relatively valid constructions about Reality. Then he says, "When one comes to the Essence of Being, The

shining Wisdom of Reality Illumines all like the cloudless sky." I'm not sure what Sanskrit term 'essence of being' represents, but 'Wisdom of Reality' is the wisdom of the Dharmadhatu or the Knowledge of the Dharmadhatu. You know that there are Five Wisdoms or Five Knowledges? According to the Mahayana, especially the Yogacharya teaching. No? You know that there are five-Buddhas? You're familiar with the Mandala of the Five Buddhas? Well, each Buddha is associated with or is the embodiment of a particular Wisdom. You may remember the centre of the Mandala usually - that is to say, the centre of the standard Mandala - you have the figure of Vairocana. So Vairocana represents knowledge itself. Wisdom itself. It's the Wisdom of Reality. The Wisdom of the Dharmadhatu, as it is called. So the other four Buddhas, at the four points of the compass - that is to say, starting in the East - Aksobhya, in the South - Ratnasambhava, in the West - Amitabha, in the North Amoghasiddhi. These represent the four main aspects of that one central Wisdom of the Dharmadhatu. Do you see what I mean? So let's just see quickly what these five Wisdoms are: First of all, you've got Aksobhya and his 'Mirror-like Wisdom'. What is 'Mirror-like' Wisdom? What does it mean? That Wisdom is like a mirror? Well, what is the function of a mirror? What does it do?

Voice: It reflects.

S.: It reflects. So the 'Mirror-like Wisdom' is the Wisdom that reflects. That simply reflects. So what does that suggest? After all one is dealing with images here, not with definitions. One is dealing with symbols.

Voice: It doesn't do anything to them, It just reflects. It doesn't put anything on to them.

S.: It's as it were, purely objective. It doesn't distort. It reproduces things, so to speak, just as they are. If there's a red object in front of the mirror, we'll, the mirror reflects it red.

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If it's green, it reflects it green - if it's square, it reflects it square. That is if it is a flat mirror. Most people's minds are distorting mirrors, you could say. So the Mirror-like Wisdom is the mirror that reflects or that sees things just as they are. It is in a manner of speaking, completely objective. There is no element of subjective distortions. And not only that, there's another very important feature of the Mirror which is relevant here. It reflects things. It reflects them just as they are without any element of distortion. But what else does it do? With regard to those reflections?

Voice: Throws them back.

S.: Throws them back, but in what sense?

Voice: Completely - doesn't break them down at all - there's no sort of...

S.: Yes. Well, that's all an aspect of the objectivity, so to speak.

Voice: They're the opposite way around, aren't they? Is that any- more to do with it?

S.: Mmm. They are the opposite way around, it is true.

Ratnaguna: What was the question again, Bhante?

S.: What other characteristic of the mirror is there? Of the mirror, which is relevant here, with regard to the reflections?

Ratnaguna: You can see things in the mirror that you can't see without using the mirror.

S.: Yes.

Gerry: You see yourself.

S.: Yes. (Laughter) Well, it's really quite obvious. It's probably so obvious that one can't think of it.

Voice: Oh! That things don't stick to the mirror!

S.: That things don't stick to the mirror. When the things move away, what happens?-- The reflections move away. So the mind which is Enlightened, which has developed this mirror-like wisdom, isn't attached to anything, anymore than the mirror is attached to the reflections.- When the object is in front of the mirror, the mirror reflects it. When the object is no longer there, the mirror doesn't reflect it. The reflection doesn't leave any trace on the mirror, does it? Doesn't stick to the mirror. So in the same way, you see a beautiful sunset - your mind reflects that but when the sunset has gone, well, you don't think about it any more. You're not attached to it. The image of the sunset doesn't stick to your mind. Do you see what I mean? That the Mirror-like Wisdom resembles the mirror mainly in these two respects that it reflects with complete faithfulness and complete objectivity and it doesn't allow, so to speak, any of the reflections to stick. - So this mirror-like Wisdom is embodied in the figure of Aksobhya - the dark blue Buddha - the Buddha of the East whose mudra is the Bhūmisparsa - the 'Earth-touching' or 'Earth-witness' Mudra. So that's one, the first of the Five Wisdoms or Five Knowledges. The term here, by the way is jnana, not Prajnana. The Five Jnanas.

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Voice: Can you spell that please?

S.: J N A N A - with a little curly mark over the 'N' to show this is pronounced like a Spanish 'N', you know, followed by a 'Y' - Jilana. A long 'A' - a long first 'A'. Some translators translate: the five Wisdoms, some the five Knowledges and to make it still more difficult, Guenther translates - the five Awarenesses. So when Guenther speaks of Awareness, with a capital 'A', he means 'Jnana' - he doesn't mean Mindfulness.

Voice: So could you say that the Aksobhya kind of represents overcoming the ego, overcoming the self?

S.: You could, in so far as the self is no part of Reality. A mind that reflects things as they are, does not reflect any self. Do you see what I mean? It just reflects things as they are in Reality, without any separate unchanging self. If it did reflect a self, it would be an element of distortion because the self does not really exist and it would not then be the 'Mirror-like Wisdom'. It would be more like the ordinary mind.

Voice: So how would one express that in the outside world?

S.: Well, one expresses this in the outside world, or in terms of ordinary daily life in one's ordinary outlook by being objective, not being swayed by subjective feelings; not being influenced by them. Not projecting. The 'Mirror-like Wisdom' is, you could say, the 'non-projecting Wisdom'. It's the Wisdom that truly sees things as they are, without any element of subjective distortion entering into it.

Ratna una: I must say-, it suggests something a bit cold to me, even the term mirror

S.: Well, one must take the point of the comparison and you know, not let other irrelevant associations enter in. (Laughter) But don't forget that the 'Mirror-like' Wisdom is only one Wisdom, is only expressing one aspect, one side, so to speak. Do you see what I mean?

Voice: It doesn't exist by itself.

S.: Well, yes and no. Because when one is speaking of different aspects of Enlightenment, you can't really split up Enlightenment into four aspects. But it's as though we have to do that in order to get any sort of understanding of it at all on the intellectual level. That on the level of Enlightenment itself, well, the four are one and that one is, what is called the 'Wisdom of Reality' - the "Wisdom of Dharmadhatu". The Wisdom embodied in the central Buddha. We split up this one Central Wisdom into four different aspects, just to give ourselves a fuller and clearer and in a way, richer idea about it. So moving round the Mandala, we come to Ratnasambhava, the Buddha of the South - the Yellow Buddha who of course, has the gesture of giving - Supreme Giving Mudra. And he represents or he embodies the Wisdom~ Equality or Wisdom of Sameness. So what is this 'Wisdom of Sameness'?

Voice: Being value-free, I suppose.

S.: It's being value-free, yes. Because, one mustn't forget that from the Mahayana point of view, to see things as they really are - to see things in terms of Wisdom is to see them all as Sunyata; usually translated as 'Voidness'. Perhaps it would be better to ren-

der it 'Inexpressible'.

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So supposing a tree is 'Sunyata', a flower is 'Sunyata', a house is 'Sunyata', a person is 'Sunyata', the moon is 'Sunyata', the stars are 'Sunyata', the sun is 'Sunyata' - well, you're saying that all things are 'Sunyata'; all things are the same. So the Wisdom that sees all things equally in terms of Sunyata or if you like, in terms of the One-Mind - that is the ~Wisdom of



Sameness', the 'Wisdom of Equality'. Then goin~ further on in the circle, you come to Amitabha - the Red Buddha - Buddha of the West. --And he is represented of course, in Dhyana Mudra and he represents, -u he embodies the 'Discriminating Wisdom'. Now what is this 'Discriminating Wisdom'? The 'Discriminating Wisdom' is the Wisdom which sees things in their particularity, in their uniqueness. And this Wisdom, so to speak, balances the previous Wisdom - the Wisdom of Equality - because when you see things in terms of Equality, it does not mean that differences are all wiped out. You aren't left with a feature-less, blank monism. That all things are one, undifferentiated consciousness or anything of that sort. You see all things as Sunyata - as equally Sunyata. - But their unique features, their unique qualities are not wiped out. You continue to see those and the seeing still of those unique features of every individual thing is called the 'Discriminating Wisdom' - the Wisdom which is able to discriminate or make out the minutest differences of things. Because you see a flower - a rose and a daffodil are both Sunyata, equally Sunyata - you don't cease to see the distinctive qualities of the rose and the distinctive qualities of the daffodil. You continue to see their distinctive qualities. So from this point of view, in the vision of Reality, sameness does not swamp difference and difference does not swamp sameness. Sameness and difference are both there, are both seen. So Reality cannot be expressed either exclusively in terms of 'sameness' nor exclusively in terms of 'difference'. If we travel further round the Mandala to the North, we encounter the Green Buddha - Amoghasiddhi. Amoghasiddhi meaning 'Infallible Success' and he's represented with the Mudra of Fearlessness - Abhaya Mudra. And he represents or he embodies the 'All-Performing Wisdom' - the Wisdom that gets things done, or if you like, Practical Wisdom. The Wisdom that overcomes all obstacles or the irresistible Wisdom.

Gerry: Excuse me, I was changing the tape and I didn't get the chance to say, but is noL Amitabha also associated with Compassion? I mean, this discrimination is a compassionate discrimination. It's not a cold analytical one?

S.: Yes, well Amitabha is associated with Compassion in the sense that his colour is red and the red colour signifies warmth, love, compassion and so on. So in that way, for that reason, Amitabha is associated with all those qualities.

Gerry: It's just that all the rest seem a bit cold as Ratnaguna had said.

S.: But not surely Ratnasambhava, because he's associated with a golden yellow colour. It's the colour of harvest, the colour of ripe corn, the colour of sunlight, the colour of golden sands0 Technically speaking, you've got four Buddhas - one is blue, one is green, one is yellow, one is red.. Two of these colours are cold colours and two are what is called 'hot' colours. I don't know how scientific this is but, this is the usual classification. So actually, oniV two are cold, two are hot. And ydu know, Vairocana the Buddha in the middle - the centre rather, he is white in colour of course.

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His hands are in the Mudra of Teaching the Dharma,. ~nd he, of course, embodies knowledge or Wisdom itself or Knowledge itself or Awareness itself. He represents a-II

those fo~ut Wisdoms blended into one. In other words, 'The Wisdom of Reality'. So Milarepa says: "When one comes to the Essence of Being, The shining Wisdom of Reality Illumines all like the cloudless sky." Vairocana is sometimes~ called the 'Sun Buddha'.- The word Vairocana itself which means the brilliant or shining one, in pre-Buddhist times was a name of the sun.

Voice: Is there any order in which the Dhyani Buddhas are in? A~ion or something?

S.: Usually one starts in the East. So that you go clockwise, but also there's something else one should remember here, that the East is where the Sun rises. The East is where things begin. So when you have, say, a Mandala, drawn on the flo~dr, say, quite literally when someone is being initiated into a Mandala - enters the Mandala, he enters at the Eastern gate. Do you see what I mean? He enters where Aksobhya is. So usually, therefore, when you have the Mandalas, say depicted on a page, you would imagine yourself as being here, so the East is here.

Voice: At the bottom?

S.: At the bottom, because that means you're organizing the Mandala in relation to yourself at the point of entry. So you have to watch that - that you, that here is East, here is South, here is West and here is North. And so, Very often,-when you visualize you're going round, you know, in clockwise order, so, you start off visualizing first of all, right in front of you - ahead of you, Aksobhya and then on your left, as it were, above-Ratnasambhava, then in the middle - opposite to you, Amitabha, and then on your right- above- parallel with Ratnasambhava, Amoghasiddhi, and then of course, in the middle, Vairocana. Do you know what I mean? Or another way of visualizing, you can start off visualizing Vairocana in the middle. You visualize Vairocana first, and then you visualize on your left, on his right, that is to say in the West - you - not in the West but the West according to the position you are seated in, you visualize Ratnasambhava and in the East, you visualize Amoghasiddhi and then Amitabha in the North and Ratnsambhava in the South. Or you can start with Amitabha in the North and Aksobhya in the South and the other two in the East and West. Do you see what I mean?

Voi-ce: No, not the second bit. I got a bit confused in the second part.

S.: Well, you can say there are three ways in which you can go about visualizing, bec se you visualize one Dhyani Buddha after another. So you can either start at the bottom, with you facing the entrance - that is to say, facing or being East. You start off, you go, first you visualize right in front of you Aksobhya, then Ratnasambhava, then Amitabha, then Amoghasiddhi, then you go across to the centre, Vairo- cana. That's one way. Or, you can visualize, bang, right in the middle, Vairocana - you can then visualize above him, Amitabha, below him, Aksobhya, on your left Ratnasambhava, and on your right, Amogha- siddhi. Or you can do it the other way, visualizing first, Vairocana, then secondly visualizing Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi, and then lastly, visualizing Amitabha and Aksobhya. Do you see what I mean? You'd better do it with figures, you see? It's either, you either visualize one, two three ,four, five - like that or one, two,three, four, five, or one two three four five - as one wishes.

It means you can look at these Buddhas in all sorts of ways, on different levels, according to their Mudras and colours. - For instance, in the case of the Mudra of Aksobhya, he's pointing down. In the case of Ratnasambhava, he's pointing out, - in the case of Amitabha, the Dhyana Mudra, the two palms are facing up. In the case of Amoghasiddhi, out. Do you see what I mean? So if you look at them, say, in pairs, well then, Amoghasiddhi, who is in the North is out - Ratnasambhava in the South is also out. But one is the 'out' of giving, the other is the 'out' of keeping at bay. If -you look at Amitabha, his palms are up, as it were, to the heavens. - If you look at Aksobhya, his palms and his fingers are down to the Earth. You can play about with all these significances in all sorts of ways. It helps you to - get a more concrete feeling of these five Buddhas and five Wisdoms.

~ur~ta: Do you think it's sort of, well, important to get a feeling for the Dhyani Buddhas? I must admit, personally I've always been a bit nebulous, a bit rather difficult to....

S.: Yes, I think one gets a definite feeling for them, by acquainting oneself in a quite factual way, with first of all, their names, their positions in the Mandala, their colours, their Mudras, - then if you want to go further than that, the Knowledges or Wisdoms they're associated with, their consorts, their elements, their skandhas and so on. It's even more complex than we've mentioned.

Voice: The Bodhisattva Retinue and their consorts.

S.: The attendant Bodhisattvas, yes.

Gerry: Surata seems to be saying, how important is it?

S.: Well, you can't have a nebulous idea about a Dhyani Buddha. It has got to be concrete. So that means, to begin with, gathering the factual information, and then, through the information, through the concrete details, getting a feeling for the Dhyani Buddhas. They're not incidentally, really called 'Dhyani Buddhas'. That was a term popularized by the Theosophists. Buddhist texts never speak of Dhyani Buddhas. They either speak of the five Jinas, the five Conquerors, or the five Tathagatas. The term 'Dhyani Buddhas' is a bastard term as it is usually called. It's not a true Buddhist term at all. It was used by someone who wrote about Nepalese Buddhism in the last century. The term was taken up by Theosophists.

Voice: What do the Dhyani Buddhas' consorts represent?

S.: Well, this brings us in a sense, to the Mandala proper. One mustn't forget that the Five Buddhas or rather the Four Buddhas and the Central Buddha, represent an attempt just to communicate some- thing of the nature of Buddhahood or Enlightenment. If you just speak of say, the Wisdom of Reality, well, that's very vague, very general, so you sort of split it up into four principle aspects: there's the Mirror-like Wisdom, plus the Wisdom of Equality, plus the Discriminating Wisdom, plus the All-performing Wisdom. This gives you a better, a fuller, and richer idea of what Buddhahood is like. Do you see what I mean? The different aspects bring out more fully, more explicitly, the content of Buddhahood. So that process,

you could say, the one Buddha is divided into four principle aspects. It opens up the content of Buddhahood. So that one can see it clearly. And then each Buddha in turn is further divided. He's divided into a Masculine half and a Feminine half. So the feminine half is the consort. So if you had any feelings so far, that these Wisdoms

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are a bit cold, as it were, well, the consort you could say, is meant to counteract that. There's not only a masculine figure there, but a feminine figure. Not only a male figure but a female figure. So you've got not just four or five Buddhas, but four or five Buddhas and their consorts. And then the Bodhisattvas, the attendant Bodhi-sattvas, they bring out further more specific aspects of the activity of the Buddhas - the Dharmapalas - the guardians of the Dharma. They bring out further aspects still. And then, if you've got a very rich and complex Mandala, there are wrathful Buddhas as well as peaceful Buddhas. In that way, more and more aspects are brought out. Do you see - what I mean? I sometimes meant the comparison to a precious stone. You might find a beautiful precious stone and it's just a sphere, a complete, a perfect sphere. But because it's a sphere, it doesn't reflect very much. It's not really colourful. And if you cut it into so many facets, well, these facets sort of catch and reflect the light - well, you get all sorts of rainbows. So it's the beauty of the precious stone brought out more by being cut and faceted in that way. In the same way, you bring out more fully the content of Buddhahood, by splitting it up into so many aspects and embodying each aspect in a particular Buddha or Consort or Bodhisattva or Dharmapala form. So all the Buddhas and Dakinis and Bodhisattvas and Dharmapalas of the Mandala are all aspects of the one Buddha and that Mandala represents that one Buddha in his totality of aspects. Do you get the idea?

- Vo-ice: Why is it the one Buddha, the Central Buddha if you like, is not Sakyamuni Buddha? Why is it that a new archetypal form is chosen so to speak?

S.: Ah! This you could say is because the Mandala operates, so to speak, on an Ideal level; free from ordinary limitations. Sakya-muni, yes, is the Buddha or a Buddha, but he's a human historical Buddha and as such, you know, exists under the limitations of time and space. He's limited to a particular spot on the Earth's surface, in a certain epoch of history. But the Ideal Buddha, so to speak, - which is the Samboghakaya, is not so limited. It's the Ideal that the Buddha Sakyamuni represents, but liberated from the limitations under which the Buddha himself, Sakyamuni, realized that Ideal. The fact that he lived in India, say, 2500 years ago has got nothing to do with Buddhahood itself. The conditions under which Buddhahood is realized are ultimately irrelevant to Buddhahood so the Ideal Buddha figure, the Samboghakaya Buddha represents Buddhahood, as it were, emancipated from all the particular conditions, under which it may be realized. It's not Buddhahood at a particular time, Buddhahood in a particular place. - It's just Buddhahood itself, if you like, under ideal conditions. So the Nirmanakaya is Buddhahood realized under certain specific historical conditions. The Samboghakaya is Buddhahood as realized, eternally realized, under absolutely Ideal conditions. That's why the Samboghakaya sits enthroned in a world

which is usually a pure world, a Pure Land. The Dharmakaya is Buddhahood free from all limitations whatsoever - even Ideal limitations. - So the five so-called Dhyani Buddhas, are all Samboghakaya Buddhas. That is to say, they are all aspects of the one Ideal Buddha, or as he's sometimes called - the Universal Buddha - the Eternal Buddha. It's this-Buddha that very often represented as teaching the Mahayana Sutras, though not always. Some- times Sakyamuni teaches them.

Gerry: Why is then Vairocana's not always the centre? Do you want to go into that?

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S.: Well, it's as though, it's not that a particular Buddha occupies the Centre, but you're not really concerned with particular Buddhas. Any Buddha can occupy the centre because any aspect can be considered as the middle one. Suppose you've got a jewel which is faceted. You can turn it and as you turn it, you can turn it in such a way that any facet becomes the centre one. So if you've got a particular devotion to Amitabha, make him the centre of the Mandala. Put Vairocana in the West. But usually what has happened in historical - is that either Vairocana is in the centre of the Mandala or Aksobhya. This is just for historical reasons. I mean, more people seem to have wanted to put Vairocana - that is a figure of Vairocana was more appealing to most people, so put him in the centre of the Mandala. A lot put Aksobhya, quite a lot put Amitabha, but very rarely, it seems was ever either Amoghasiddhi or Ratnasambhava put in the centre of the Mandala. Sometimes a Bodhisattva can be put in the centre of the Mandala, that is to say, Avalokitesvara. Sometimes a Dakini can be put in the centre of a Mandala, like Vajrayogini and so on. Sometimes a peaceful Buddha can be put in the centre of the Mandala. Sometimes a wrathful Buddha; sometimes a single Buddha, sometimes a Buddha in Yab-Yum form - that is to say, in Male-Female form in sexual union. But who you put in the centre of the Mandala, depends on the Buddha or Bodhisattva who so far as you're concerned, is at the centre of your practice.

Voice: How significant is it do you think, just sort of hearing about those Buddhas - one finds a particular colour or a particular Mudra, more effective personally effective, more attractive, than others

S.: I think one usually does. Most people do respond quite strongly to this or that Buddha or Bodhisattva or Dakini or so on (Pause) So the tradition, so to speak, goes along with that. If you find yourself especially attracted by Tara, alright, do the Tara Sadhana - recite the Tara Mantra. If you visualize the Mandala, let Tara be in the middle of it. You can have a Mandala of Taras. You have a Mandala of 21 Taras. You can have all the figures of the Mandala in Tara form. Different Taras in different colours. Taras in different mudras.

It all came out of that one line: "The shining Wisdom of Reality" - So, "When one comes to the Essence of Being, the shining Wisdom of Reality illumines all like the cloudless sky." It doesn't say like the sun in the cloudless sky. That is usually the comparison. Why do you think that is?

Voice: Because there would be a particular point.

S.: Yes. there would be a particular point of origin at the light, but actually it isn't like that. It--isn't askf there is a particular point of Reality, that is illumining.... It is all equally luminous. Analogies tend to break down, because light as we know it always originates from a certain light source. But it isn't like that in the case of the 'Light of the Wisdom of Reality'. It shines, but it shines everywhere equally.- - it doesn't shine from any particular point, any particular body.

Voice: What do you think is meant by 'essence of being'?

S.: I'm not sure what is meant by that. I don't know what Sanskrit expression that represents if in fact it does at all.

Voic-e: Do you thi k there is any significance in the fact that the first three verses was talking in the first person, a~nd then from these two verses, he's talking in the third person?

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S.: It could be perhaps he wants to minimize the, well almost ego- centred approach. There is not a question of the experience being referred to any permanent unchanging self, soul or ego.... (Pause) So there's quite a lot in this little verse, as there often is in Milarepa' s verses. Airight, next verse: "When both pure and impure~thoughts are cleared, as in a silver mirror, The immanent bright Wisdom shines forth." So what does this mean? What is the point of the comparison here?

Voic-e: A mirror ref lects things no matter what they are, without distinguishing between good or bad.

S.: Yes, but when objects are taken away from in front of the mirror, well, what is left? Well, in terms of the mirror?

Voice: Just the mirror.

S.: Just the mirror. It's as though, the mind in its purity is just like the mirror. And different objects are put in front of the mind, pure objects, impure objects. In other ~ords, at one time the mind is skilful, at another -time it is unskilful. But when all objects are taken away, when it is practising neither skilfully nor unskilfully, then what happens? The mind manifests its natural purity. Just as when no objects are in front of it - if that were at all possible - the mirror would just reflect the light.

Voice: Could you see 'mind and mental eventS~' like that?

S.: Yes one can. So it's not only impure thought that are cleared away, it's pure thoughts too. In other words, the mind is completely free from thoughts. There are no objects at all in front of the mirror. The mirror is not reflecting- anything. It's shining by its own light, so to speak. In other words," the immanent bright Wisdom shines forth" - there~'s nothing to cloud it, nothing to obstruct it.

Gerry: Does it also say here, that once your mind's like that, when your mind is in quiescence like this, then the Wisdom comes in?

S.: Though it's not quiescence as opposed to action. Do you see w~t I mean? It's a state beyond quiescence and action, beyond passivity and activity, beyo~d pure and impure. But one mustn't be misled by anything in the comparison itself. The mind really isn't just passive. The image of the mirror might s~ggest that. Don't forget that Wisdom is also an All-Performing Wisdom or All-Performing Kn6wledge. It is active.

Voice: I missed the reference to your thing about 'mind and mental events'.

Ratnauna: I was- saying that perhaps the 'mind and mental events' oteidharma, was it the 'Mind in Buddhist Psychology'? I thought you could see Mind as the 'Silver Mirror' and the pure and impure thoughts as the 'mental events'

Voi-ce:- I thought you couldn't actually separate mind and mental events?

S.: Well, you can't really separate the ffl-irror and its reflection. Or at least it seertis like that. Well, time is passing. Perhaps we'd better stop for afternoon tea.

(End of Tape 11)

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Tape 12 side A

S: All right, let's carry on: When the Alaya consciousness dissolves into the Dharmakaya I feel my body and soul break forth Like the crushing of an egg when stamped upon.

What is this Alaya consciousness?

David: It called seed consciousness, a record of all mental e~ents that have ever taken place.

S: The word for consciousness here is vijnana - a Sanskrit word. And you notice the word for wisdom or knowledge - we've been talking about the five wisdoms or knowledges - is jnana. So you've got vijnana and jnana. In both cases the jnana comes from jna, the root to know". So vijnana is more like knowledge or consciousness which is split up1 which is divided, whereas jnana is knowledge which is not so split up and divided. You could say that vijnana represents dualistic knowledge, or dualistic conscious- ness, whereas jnana is non-dualistic knowledge, non-dualistic conscious- ness. Vijnana represents consciousness of an object, in the case of jnana there's no distinction of subject and object.

Ratnaguna: So the Alaya Vijnana is mundane?

S: That's in a way quite difficult to say. We'll come to that in a minute. One could almost say it's neither mundane nor transcendental or both mundane and transcendental. We'll come to that in a minute. In the Yogachara there is a list of eight vijnanas. Do you remember? Because there's a lecture on that - "The Depth Psychology of the Yogachara". Have you heard that lecture? (various grunts) This is quite important because it does explain the eight vijnanas. I think they're explained in The Survey also. First of all you've got the five sense vijnanas...

David: Are they five different vijnanas, or.

S: Well yes, one can say that - five different vijnanas. There's the eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, touch-consciousness, and tongue-consciousness, which is five. So when the eye - for instance - when the visual organ, the organ of sight comes into contact with a form, with the corresponding visual object, then there arises from the contact of these two visual consciousness, or eye-consciousness. So similarly for the other four. So there's five sense consciousnesses. Then sixthly there is the mind-consciousness. The mind is that organ which perceives ideas, just as the five sense organs perceive their corresponding sense-objects. Just as the eye is conscious of forms, in the same way the mind is conscious of ideas. The word which is generally used here is dharmas, it's another sense of the term dharma. So mind-consciousness is the sixth.

Ratnaguna: Can you operate one of the sense-consciousnesses without the mind-consciousness being present? Because when you say the mind has the consciousness of ideas...

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S: Yes, you can, because you can open your eyes - you can see, say, a red round object - and all that your eye-consciousness sees is a red round object. But then it's your mind-consciousness that tells you, say that this is a tomato, and then you think, oh yes, I had a tomato last week. That is the mind-consciousness coming into operation. But then there's a seventh consciousness which is called the klistomano-vijnana, or the soiled, or defiled, or even suffering, mind-consciousness. This is the consciousness which says That tomato is mine. It is soiled by the ego-sense by the sense of I and thou, mine and yours, me and you.

Ratnaguna: So would you say that had an emotional content.

S: You could say that, yes, but it would of course be the unskilful, to the extent that it was ego-based, So you've got the five sense-consciousnesses, you've got the mind-consciousness, you've got the soiled, or defiled, mind-consciousness, and then you've got the Alaya consciousness. The Alaya is the eighth. And this is usually divided - though there are many different teachings here - into two: the relative Alaya, where all the seeds are stored, the seeds of all impressions and experiences, and the Absolute Alaya. And the Absolute Alaya is usually considered to be identical with Reality itself.

Voice: Or Sunyata?

S: Or Sunyata. This is a Yogachara terminology - that of the eight consciousnesses. So - don't forget we're explaining this verse: When the Alaya consciousness dissolves into the Dharmakaya, I feel my body and soul break forth Like the crushing of an egg when stamped



upon.

So the Alaya consciousness, that is to say the eighth consciousness, the relative Alaya, dissolves into the Absolute Alaya, dissolves into the Dharmakaya. This is what happens on the gaining of Enlightenment. Perhaps we'd better look into this in a little more detail. We've got on the one hand eight consciousnesses, and on the other hand you've got five knowledges. Do you see what I mean? So what does the spiritual life consist in? It consists in transformation. In the simplest terms the unenlightened individual human being is transformed into the Enlightened human being. The ordinary human being is transformed into a Buddha. So the ordinary human being consists of - from one point of view - eight vijñanas. Buddhahood consists of five wisdoms. So therefore the process of Enlightenment consists in the transformation of your eight consciousnesses into the five - or the four - jñanas or knowledges. So this can be worked out in detail. It is said that the five sense-consciousnesses are transformed into the All-performing Wisdom - that's obvious isn't it, why that should be? Because you function through the senses. And the All-performing Wisdom is the functioning wisdom as it were. So your five sense-consciousnesses are transformed into the All-performing Wisdom, your five senses are transformed into Amoghasiddhi.

All right, the mano-vijñana. Not all the accounts of which sense is transformed into which Buddha agree, but usually it is said the mind-consciousness is transformed into the Discriminating Wisdom, because the mind sees the differences of things, so the Discriminating Wisdom likewise

S

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sees things in their particularity, though it is not a particularity which excludes sameness. So your mind-consciousness - or your mind - is transformed into Amitabha. -

All right then what about the next one: the soiled mind-consciousness. The soiled mind-consciousness is that which sees things in terms of I and you, mine and yours, in other words dualistically. So that soiled mind-consciousness is transformed into the Wisdom of Equality, which sees things in terms of sameness, which doesn't discriminate between self and others. So the soiled mind is transformed into Ratnasambhava.

In the same way the relative Alaya which contains all the seeds deposited by the actions of all beings throughout time, including yours, is transformed into the Mirror-like Wisdom of Akshobhya. The Absolute Alaya doesn't require any transformation; it is all the time identical with the Wisdom of the Dharmadhatu, the Wisdom of Reality.

Ratnaguna: I don't understand the last one. Why the relative Alaya would be transformed into Akshobhya. I don't see the connection between them.

5: Because Akshobhya's is the Mirror-like Wisdom, the mirror contains all the reflections. In the same way the Alaya contains all the seeds deposited, as a result of our functioning, through our senses, our mind, and our defiled mind-consciousness. That is the point of the

connection. The Alaya itself is like a mirror. But it's a mirror to which reflections stick. Whereas Akshobhya's Mirror-like Wisdom, in that case, the reflections do not stick to the mirror.

Ratnaguna: Would the relative Alaya then become - Akshobhya would then represent the Absolute Alaya?

5: No. Akshobhya would represent the relative Alaya in its transformed state.

Ratnaguna: Would that not be the Absolute Alaya?

5: No. The Absolute Alaya is represented by Vairocana in the centre of the mandala. And by the Wisdom of Reality - but don't forget all the four Wisdoms are aspects of the Wisdom of Reality, they're not separate from it. So in other words what all this is simply doing is trying to make more concrete the whole concept of transformation.

Jyotipala: When you say the relative Alaya contains all the seeds does that mean in everyone there is this relative Alaya and that contains the seeds of everybody? It's hard to

5: Hmm, it is something like that. The teachings do differ here, but it is as though when you come to the relative Alaya you go beyond individuality in the ordinary sense. It is something like a collective consciousness, or collective unconscious, on the Jungian model. It's as though underlying the individual consciousness there is this wider consciousness.

Gerry: Is that like race learning?

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S: Yes, you could look at it in that sort of way, though it's much wider, and even much deeper, than that.

Vimalamitra: So is that kind of similar to the archetypal?

S: Yes.

John: A bit like the source of myth and...

S: Yes, well this is from the Jungian point of view. I mean the Yogachara system says nothing about that. But to the extent that you identify the relative Alaya with Jung's collective unconscious. That you can do up to a point, but you must be careful not just to conclude that they are really the same thing.

Robin: It says in the previous verse that the bright Wisdom is immanent. In other words it's somehow already contained within the ordinary human being. In what way is it contained within the ordinary human being?

5: Well, strictly speaking it isn't contained at all. This is metaphorical language, which if one isn't careful one mistakes as literal language. Can you really speak in terms of something which is mental - that is to say non-spatial - being contained within something else? If you speak of something being contained in something else, well you're speaking in spatial terms, so you're concerned with a metaphor. You must be careful not to think of Enlightenment as being literally contained within as though it's already there. So what does it really mean? This is a way of saying, really that if you make the effort, you can realize it.

Ratnaguna: Is that the same as when we talk in terms of, say, when you're feeling metta there's other sides of you, like hate, and it's quite hard to imagine there's somebody there who's feeling metta now, but there's hate inside him. It sounds quite strange.

S: Yes, right, right. You must be very careful not to take that sort of language too literally. Because it means that even though now you are experiencing metta, on some other occasion, under other circumstances, it would be possible for you to experience hate. It doesn't mean that hate is literally there, as a feeling, at the same time that you're experiencing the metta, but that you're unconscious of it, because that is nonsense. It's self-contradictory.

Ratnaguna:~So even the idea of the unconscious mind?

5: Yes, even that, well, if you think of it as something spatial. It's only a metaphor which you're taking too literally.

Ratnaguna: Well, what is the unconscious mind then?

5: Well it is those mental contents, those things of which you could be conscious, but of which you are not conscious now. I mean for instance, at this moment of speaking, you may not be conscious, say, of the telephone number of a certain friend, so where is that knowledge of the telephone number of your friend when you're not actually thinking of it? We say that

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it's in your unconscious. That doesn't really mean a thing. It only means that if you so wish you can bring the telephone number of your friend to consciousness. We don't really know how it happens. Do you see what I mean? So in the same way in for instance some schools of Buddhism they say well Buddhahood is within you you are that, you are Enlightened. Well, it's all right speaking poetically, but taking it literally it's nonsense. What it really means is, as I've said that if you make the necessary effort you can have that experience which is represented by the word Buddhahood. It doesn't mean that you're like a box, and there's all sorts of things in the box and that Buddhahood is at the bottom, and you've got to take all sorts of things out of the box, before you can get to Buddhahood lying at the bottom. But the danger of this sort of language is that since it's all ready there, supposedly well you don't need to do really anything about it - it's there. So I think this

language of something being there - in a sense, even though you don't experience it - is very dangerous language, especially for us because it encourages a feeling of alienation. It's better to go back to the original language of the Buddha himself as far as we know it, which is the language of potentiality.

Ratnaguna: What is it with dreams? I mean I've always thought that there's part of you that's sort of going on in the back of your mind - the unconscious we call it - that sort of churns out these dreams when you're asleep...

5: Well, you can think in that way. You see, it's very difficult for us to think in non-spatial terms. Even our terms for thinking are vitiated in that way. We speak in terms of understanding something. Well, under is a spatial term, what do we mean by understanding? Standing under something? That's come to represent an intellectual activity. We speak of penetrating into something, having a 'penetrating mind' - a spatial term. How can you penetrate something if it isn't in space. A 'thorough understanding' we think in terms of considering a subject from every point of view, of going all round it, having a comprehensive understanding of it. These are all spatial terms. Insightful even is a spatial term. So we have to remember that to begin with our experience is entirely sense experience, and language was formed under the influence of sense experience. When we started talking we were like chimpanzees and gorillas, and our language has been built up on that basis, on the basis of sense experience. So we've gradually extended the scope of language to include mental states and mental operations. But we continue to use this space and time bound language to describe them. So we get into difficulties when we start speaking - and even thinking - about mental states and mental operations as though they were actually conditioned by space and time.

Ratnaguna: So the Alaya Vijnana is that. ...?

S: So it's not like a sort of box. It represents the notion of potentiality and availability and accessibility. It's like a sort of collective memory. When you want the thing it's there to hand. But you can only explain that by saying well it was sort of kept in a kind of box in the meantime. You're really saying no more than that; your thought is really no more sophisticated than that. So I sometimes think - in fact I've sometimes said - it's better to use the sort of terminology that the

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Buddha seems to have used. The Buddha did not speak in the language of Enlightenment being within you all the time, or Buddhahood being within you all the time. He didn't use that language at all. ~ver. But he did say that if you made the necessary effort Buddhahood could be realized, Enlightenment could be realized. This is what I call the language of potentiality - you are potentially Enlightened in the sense that the experience called Enlightenment is within your reach. But I think it's very dangerous to translate that into "Enlightenment is there within you all the time". That's really quite unnecessary - this translating it into something quite static, and quite static terms. But we should all the time be aware of the limitations of language. Otherwise we'll be involved with artificial problems,

problems which are really problems of language, not real problems.

Ratnaguna: I think the idea of people having certain emotions within them, or certain things within them, is quite limiting. Because it doesn't encourage a complete breakthrough, because you always think, well, there's a certain amount of hate in me and I can't just break through that! It's there, it's got...

S: But it isn't really like that at all. It's that you have more a capacity for hatred. That in dependence on certain conditions, well, hatred would arise, but it's not as though it's been kept in a little box somewhere in the meantime. Or that it is actually there in you. If you think in those terms it creates all sorts of quite artificial, quite unreal, problems and difficulties. Because somebody may say to you! "I don't really feel angry at all, I feel quite friendly," but "Ah, no, it's really there, it's deep inside you, you're not really in contact with it. It's very deep. But it's there." And you don't feel conscious of it at all. So that puts you in a strange position. As though a feeling, which is essentially something felt, is there, and you have it, even though you don't feel it. "Well, you must be very alienated from it. See, you're not in touch with your own feelings, you see." That's the next thing that comes in. In the last seminar we dealt very much with these sort of jargon-like terms, or expressions, which are in use in the Friends and sometimes misused.

Ratnaguna: What about alienation then? If you're not feeling a feeling, as it were, well, what's happening? Where is it? Is there...?

S: Well! you could say, well, is it really correct to speak in terms of not feeling a feeling?

Gerry: Not being aware of the feeling.

S: But a feeling, surely, if it's a feeling, you are aware of it. If you are angry you feel angry. To say that you're angry but you don't feel angry is a contradiction in terms. It's language run wild as it were...

Ratnaguna: Well, what's alienation then?

S: ... So think about that for a minute.

(break in recording)

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and, well, the term is tossed around in the Friends very... like if you go away on retreat or have a chat with someone, if you're not careful they'll tell you that you're alienated. (laughter) So what are they talking about? What is anybody talking about? One really needs

to know. So let's take a starting point from the dictionary. This is a very up to date dictionary. It won't go into detail but it will give you a general idea. Alienation: (1) A turning away<sup>1</sup> estrangement. (2) The state of being an outsider or the feeling of being isolated<sup>1</sup> as from society. Psychiatry: A state in which a person's feelings are inhibited so that eventually both the self and the external world seem unreal." But the crux of the definition is inhibited". A state in which a person's feelings are inhibited. " So how is a feeling inhibited? Or how do you know that a feeling is being inhibited?

Jyotipala: Surely it can be inhibited by the intellect, or by the mind.

S: Well, yes. It can be inhibited by the intellect<sup>1</sup> but then what is happening? What is your experience?

Robin: Presumably it must be coming into the consciousness first, and then you sort of stamp on it - jump on it.

5: Ah, yes. Yes. It's as though what happens when you're alienated is you have the beginnings of a feeling, you start to feel a feeling, or rather, let's say, the feeling is very faint. And you don't want that feeling to become stronger. So you take steps of one kind or another to prevent the feeling becoming stronger and fully emerging into consciousness. Do you see what I mean? So when you inhibit you're sort of hindering the natural process<sup>1</sup> the natural process being of that particular feeling becoming stronger and stronger. For one reason or another you don't want it to become too strong. So you ... if you use the word "inhibition you may tend think in terms again of spatial metaphors - putting the lid on something". But what do you do? You take steps of one sort or another to prevent that feeling becoming stronger. All right, take a concrete example: can you think of a feeling and then imagine what happens when you become conscious of that feeling, or rather that you have that feeling (because if you say "become conscious of it" it suggests it can exist apart from your being conscious of it, which is self-contradictory) but supposing you have a slight feeling of some kind or other, and then you think, it wouldn't be good if this feeling was to become stronger. And then you take steps to prevent it becoming stronger. Can you give a concrete example of exactly how this happens?

John: Well, with anger, I sometimes find myself that I've started moving my body around just to conduct it away through my feet, and my hands.

5: But is it anger? Is it the feeling of anger that you are conducting away in this manner?

Ratnaguna: Feeling is quite a subtle refined thing isn't it, and you can stop it by actually moving your muscles in such a way that it can't be conducted.

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S: Yes. Yes. And also mental states and bodily states are very closely bound up together. You can sort of inhibit in all sorts of ways - you can inhibit as it were intellectually by force of intellectual conviction. You might for instance feel a little anger. And then you might

think well, who am I feeling angry about? I'm feeling angry with my father." But then you might feel quite unwilling to acknowledge that you are in fact angry with your father. So you sort of inhibit - that is to say you prevent the feeling from becoming stronger - by saying to yourself No. I don't hate my father! of course I don't, I love my father, I'm very fond of my father, I ought to love my father, so I do. " In this way, by sort of force of intellectual statement, you prevent the actual feeling of hating your father from becoming any stronger, you are said to inhibit it.

G~ What happens then if it manifests itself in a different form? If it comes out in some different way?

S: Well then it is not hatred for your father. It's as though under the conditions that you're in the natural thing, given your make up, would be for you to hate your father. You have taken steps to suppress that feeling, so the energy that is in that feeling expresses itself in other ways. It's probably not correct to say that the feeling expresses itself in other ways. It's probably more correct to say that the energy that is in that feeling becomes displaced, and you have another kind of feeling: you might have a feeling of depression, or anxiety, instead.

Ratnaguna: Did you say the energy that results from that feeling?

S: No, that was in that feeling, or behind that feeling, because the feeling itself is the feeling that you hate your father. If that idea goes, or if that feeling goes, you cannot really speak of the feeling having become unconscious. The energy that had started to produce the feeling of hating your father, that energy is now producing some other feeling which may be a feeling of anxiety, or fear, or oppression or whatever. So perhaps one should speak really in terms of inhibiting particular expressions of energy rather than in terms of inhibiting emotions, if by inhibiting emotions you mean thrusting back emotions into the unconscious, as if to say instead of being conscious the emotions is now unconscious - that is really a contradiction in terms I think.

Gerald: So the energy precedes the emotion.

S: It's as though the energy precedes the emotion.

Gerald: You experience the energy as an emotion, is that the same thing?

S: No. Well, energy can exist without your experiencing it as emotion, but if your energy takes the expression of a particular emotion, and you're not happy with that emotion, well, you take steps so that the energy expresses itself in another way. So we say that you inhibit the emotion, but as I said if you tend to think of the emotion as an emotion being pushed down and becoming unconscious, that probably doesn't - accurately describe what happens.

Ratnaguna: Can't it be hard then to see how people become so conditioned

S

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with their emotions? If you think of it like as pushing the emotions down into a box, you can see that later on they're going to have to come back up again. But if you see it more in terms of inhibiting a certain emotion, or inhibiting an energy...

S: Well, you know, what has caused the energy to move in that particular direction? What has caused the energy in the first place to start expressing itself as an emotion of hatred towards your father? It's the whole set up, it's the whole situation. So because there is that situation, there is that tendency for your energies to take that particular form, and find their way into consciousness in that particular way. So if you block that, as we say, if you inhibit that, those energies are still there, they just have to find another outlet, and if they do become conscious they become conscious in the form - so to speak - of some other emotion. But the whole process is still envisaged in quite dynamic terms.

Vimalamitra: So if the energy comes out in a secondary emotion, then you're alienated.

S: Yes, you could put it like that, that alienation is really the replacement of primary emotions by secondary emotions. You could put it in that way. Or even tertiary emotions.

Ratnaguna: So an alienated person doesn't actually feel no emotions, he feels inappropriate emotions?

S: Yes, I would say that a stage can be reached where you don't feel any emotions, because the energy has been pushed further and further back. But probably most alienated people just do feel emotion, but in the sense of a dull discomfort and unease and anxiety. So it's not that they're alienated from their emotions, in the sense that they don't feel any emotions. But they've not allowed their energies to take their natural course, their straightforward course, and express themselves straightforwardly as primary emotions, so those energies have taken another turning and expressed themselves as a secondary emotion.

Ratnaguna: Which will be a weaker expression of...

S: Weaker and not only weaker but possibly more painful.

Ratnaguna: Why possibly more painful?

S: Because if your energies are not allowed to express themselves directly, which is usually pleasurable anyway, it is painful. For energies to be blocked is painful.

Vimalamitra: Blocked pleasure is pain.

S: Blocked pleasure is pain. Even if you are able to express your anger for your father, or hatred for your father, to the extent that you express it that is pleasurable. You can get a kick out of expressing it. It's an unskilful pleasure, but it is still a pleasure. In fact, well, forget about father - if you have disliked or hated someone for a certain



reason, it's a great relief and almost a pleasure you could say to say to that person I well 'look I really don't like you, I really hate you, I really hate your guts. You'll be pleased when you've said that because the energy has found its legitimate expression.

Gerald: So then, what is the skilful way then of dealing with this energy, experience this negative emotion.

5: Well, at least it must be acknowledged, and also you must recognize that your energies have been deployed in that way, or taken that direction, due to a certain complex of causes and conditions. And you must start altering that complex of causes and conditions. And even setting up a complex of counter causes and conditions.

John: What's likely to happen to somebody who actually does have a lot of energy, but continually alienates themselves, so that...

5: Well, he could one day have a great outburst, there could be an explosion. Sometimes that happens. That's why Shakespeare said 'Beware the fury of a patient man.'

Surata: That could be why people have heart attacks, couldn't it?

S: It could be.

Surata: It's like just this bursting of energy that can't get out.

S: ~ight, yes.

Surata: Boom... (unclear).. blood pressure.. the heart blows up...

Gerry: ... businessmen, it's like only they've got to subjugate so much. And they... (unclear).. And then they're playing squash and that is a kind of secondary expression, a very powerful secondary expression, they just drop dead.

S: So it almost suggests that you should be very careful to allow your emotions their primary expression. If someone hits you the natural reaction of your energies is in the form of anger. And if they keep on hitting you the anger will turn to hatred. So at least one must acknowledge one's primary emotional responses, not try to divert them into secondary channels, and then from there even into tertiary channels.

Gerry: But there's still an extension on that as it were, because you think of yourself as being a Rajneesh person and just running around crazy, in response to your primary drive or primary emotion, but...

5: But I've spoken of acknowledging your emotions. You have to consider whether it is skilful to express them or not. And if you consider that it is not skilful, well, how to deal with the situation, how to transform those emotions, and you may have to transform those emotions, or change those emotions, by changing the whole situation in which you are living. For instance it may be that certain irritations arise from your job. When you understand that then you may conclude, well, I'll just have to change

my job.

Vimalamitra: But you wouldn't suppress the 'expression of those emotions.

5: You Might. Supposing they are emotions of wanting to kill somebody. You would suppress those, at least you would check those, you'd acknowledge them - say, "yes, this is how I feel - and then you'd take steps to deal with the emotion itself. Not by suppressing it as we say<sup>1</sup> but by actually trying to change it, by seeing things differently, so that that emotion did not have even a natural tendency to arise, didn't need to be suppressed or inhibited. You could say inhibition is always negative. I mean, if you're having to inhibit any emotions<sup>1</sup> it's a sign that your energies are wrongly organized, or are being wrongly influenced, wrongly conditioned.

Ratnaguna: What about socialization in this sense? Surely you need some form of socialization which is going to inhibit certain emotions.

S: Well, it depends how one looks at the emotions. I think that if one thinks in terms of secondary emotions, then what you say is correct. But then I'm saying that you shouldn't allow that stage to be reached. I'm suggesting, though I won't suggest it with complete confidence, that if society is properly organized emotions will be able to express themselves in their primary forms, and that will not be negative<sup>1</sup> in the sense of not being destructive. I mean for instance why do you get so much vandalism? I mean what is the solution to that? It's presumably a different kind of set up.

Ratnaguna: But if, seeing that we work mostly on the basis of greed, hatred, and delusion, surely we're going to have to suppress...

S: No, I think it's not so much a question of suppression, but allowing even greed, hatred, and delusion, what you might call a positive outlet; at least a constructive outlet. Or, I mean, you may not even allow everything an outlet - you may have just to insist on it being merely acknowledged. But there's also the question of not just an outlet, but the reorganization of those energies. I mean your new set up, your ideal society, would not just provide outlets for existing emotions, it would try to - as it were - re-train the emotions, reorganize the energies, so that they didn't come out in the form of greed, hatred, and delusion. That could only be done if the society amounted to a spiritual community.

John: I'm just trying to understand what's happening in these terms when, for example, when somebody's being massaged or some event happens that's got no apparent link with these energies of being given a secondary expression, and suddenly these primary energies come pouring forth. What's actually happened there?

5: Well, it's a shift in the flow of energy. It's as though - speaking in terms of energy - when energy flows in a certain direction, or finds a certain outlet, there is an appropriate emotional feeling, so to speak. When the direction of the energy is shifted, or even reversed, well then there is another, different, appropriate emotion. So when you, say, massage somebody sometimes you shift the flow of energy back into its

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original channel and therefore you get the emotional response, or experience, appropriate to energy flowing in that particular channel.

End of tape 12, side A

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Tape 12 side B

S: ... someone is suffering from anxiety. Maybe you give them a massage or something else like that happens. So what happens is the energy is shifted from the channel which expresses itself in terms of anxiety back into another more basic channel which expresses itself in terms of sex. So the emotion of anxiety is replaced by an actual conscious sexual feeling. - You notice we're still speaking in spatial terms - of energy flowing in channels, etc, etc, so you mustn't take even that too literally. - But inasmuch as the emotions are acted on through the body and the body occupies space, perhaps that isn't altogether illegitimate. It shows how careful we have to be with our language, and use the language and not let the language use us. And this has all come out this verse

When the Alaya consciousness dissolves into the Dharmakaya, I feel my body and soul break forth Like the crushing of an egg when stamped upon.

It's as though "my eight vijñanas have been destroyed, they've been replaced by five wisdoms. I'm not an ordinary human being any more. I'm a Buddha, an Enlightened being. Energy now flows in other channels'."

Then Milarepa says When the rope-of-clinging is cut loose I feel the existence of Bardo disappear Like the uncoiling of a snake.

What is this rope-of-clinging, or what is this Bardo? Are you familiar with the idea of the Bardo, the intermediate state? Intermediate between what?

Jyotipala: Life and death.

Gerald: Death and rebirth.

S: No! Life and life. Or death and rebirth. So Milarepa says When the rope-of-clinging is cut loose, I feel the existence of Bardo disappear Like the uncoiling of a snake.

It's due to clinging, it's due to attachment! it's due to craving, that, in a manner of speaking, people take up one human body after another, i.e. they are reborn. It's not so much like a rope, it's more like a thread on which different beads are strung. Your continued craving is the

link, the connecting thread, from birth to birth, from life to life. So when the rope of clinging - when that thread - is cut, then Bardo disappears, the intermediate state disappears, because that is the state between death and rebirth, and it disappears like "the uncoiling of a snake". I don't quite see the point of the comparison, but no doubt there is a point. Because a snake doesn't disappear when it uncoils, does it? Maybe it's just the coil that disappears. Instead of being in a coil, the snake becomes more of a spiral perhaps, or is completely straightened out. Maybe it's something like that.

Voice: Coil gives the impression of clinging, doesn't it?

5: Yes! it does. It's free from clinging.

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Voice: It also gives to me an impression of pent up energy.

S: Yes indeed, yes. Energy turning round and round on itself. In all these verses Milarepa gives the impression of something happening instantaneously - a sudden change, a sudden transformation, a sudden break-through. Have you noticed that?

Voice: The smashing of the egg.

S: Yes. The uncoiling of a snake could be instantaneous. Bright wisdom shining forth, Dharma spontaneously freed, waking up, salt dissolving into water. So When the rope-of-clinging is cut loose, I feel the existence of Bardo disappear Like the uncoiling of a snake.

When there's no more clinging, no more attachment, there's no more rebirth. The round of birth and death and rebirth suddenly comes to an end, just like a snake suddenly uncoiling, straightening itself out.

Robin: If you look back at the persons he's speaking in - the tenses he's speaking in - there is this change throughout the song isn't there? He starts off with recalling what he experienced, and then goes on to speaking in the third person, and now he's gone on to speaking of an experience in the present, back into the first person. What could be the significance of that do you think? You've suggested why it might be that he went to the third person - to prevent it from being too personal, - but now he's gone back into the first person.

S: Well, perhaps he doesn't want it to become too impersonal, (laughter) doesn't want it to become impersonal in an abstract, alienated sort of way. (laughter) It has to be either - in terms of language - personal or impersonal, but in real terms it's neither personal nor impersonal, so he, apparently, perhaps, can only convey that by sometimes speaking in personal terms, SOMETIMES in impersonal terms, again sometimes in personal terms, in that way trying to give you a feeling or an idea of that which is neither personal nor impersonal.

Robin: Is it similarly neither past nor present, in a sense, so he's using both?

5: Yes. yes, you could say that too.

Voice: It's almost as though it happened at a certain point, but it's still happening.

S: Yes, it's a continuous process, though it's not a process that is taking place in time. All right, then he says When I act without taking or leaving, My mind is always at ease and non-doing. I feel as if I were a lion, With the power of the Three Perfections.

I'm not sure what is meant by the Three Perfections. It could be perfections of body, speech, and mind, but that's only a guess. So how does one act without taking or leaving?

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Voice: Neither pullin~ towards you or Pushin8 away.

S: Mmm, there's no question of taking or leaving if there's no real ego- sense. My mind is always at ease and non-doing.

It's not "non-doing" in the ordinary sense, is it? So in what sense is it non-doing?

Voice: Is this about that Nahamudra again?

S: Mmm, it's absence of the egoistic, absence of strain, absence of tension.

~atnaguna: Would it also mean absence of neurotic thought, thought that's unnecessary?

S: Yes. It could be that too. I feel as if I were a lion, With the power of the Three Perfections.

Tibetans seem very fond of the comparison with the lion, especially the snow-lion.

Gerry: I don't want to get too cerebral, but it's of interest that Rechungpa thought of himself as a lioness<sup>1</sup> and here Mila seems to think the same - he uses the analogy of a lion.

S: So why do you think this could be, if there is meaning in it at all?

Gerry: I think he's saying to Rechungpa, after this wonderful description of reality, that this is really what a lion is like. "In my mind the lion seems so much bigger<sup>1</sup> because of what we've talked about, than Rechungpa's lioness.

S: Yes.

Ratnaguna: But isn't the lioness the hunter? Isn't it the lion that looks after the children? Perhaps?

5: I'm not sure if it's true of the snow-lion, but with ordinary lions usually there's a pride of lions. There's a sort of bigger, older lion in charge, and four or five females. And what usually happens is that the females drive the deer or other animal towards the lion, and he does the killing. And then he eats what he wants to eat, and then they take whatever is left. (laughter) In other words he's got it well organized.

Robin: I would have thought the snow-lion is what's usually called the snow-leopard...

5: It's very likely.

Robin: . . which is I think a fairly solitary creature. It doesn't actually hunt in teams.

S: So what would be the point of the difference then?

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Voice: Well, if you were the lioness you'd be feminine, more receptive, more in keeping with being a disciple.

S: But he's not being very disciple-like in this song, is he?

Ratnaguna: I wouldn't have thought there was any particular distinction - might as well say a lioness as a lion.

S: Though again there must be a reason of some kind, if only a remote psychological reason. Why does Rechungpa picture himself as a lioness?

Gerry: Because it seems passive, whereas the lion is quite active.

5: Though that is not the impression... Well, he certainly doesn't speak in terms of passivity. I felt like a white lioness dominating and surpassing all others in the world.

Voice: It sounds like he's preening himself.

S: Preening himself. So one could say that is a more feminine characteristic. We can see men preening themselves too sometimes, but perhaps preening is more characteristic of the female of the species than the male of the species. There could be some such reason. But I won't be sure about that, because I was reading in the paper today that British men are the shabbiest in Europe, if not in the world. British men only go to the barbers once every five weeks on average, but in France and Italy men go to the barbers in many cases every couple of days. So if you say the human male doesn't preen himself as much as the female, well, it

might be true in Britain, but it's certainly not true in some of these other countries, apparently.

Ashvajit: Rule Britannia.

Gerry: A shaggy lion.

5: The British male is spending much less on clothes this year... (unclear) ...(laughter)  
Anyway, he's a pretty shabby creature it seems, at the bottom of the smartness stakes apparently.

Robin: More of a yak than a lion.

Gerry: Sue Lawson's going to have a good time with this!

5: Anyway, let's get on. The Illuminating Voidness, the Illuminating Wisdom, And the Illuminating Manifestations, Are my three inseparable friends;

It's as though the whole of Milrepa's life, the whole of his experience, is reduced, so to speak, to these three things. There's Reality itself, there's the realization of Reality, and the whole of existence as seen in the light of Reality. It's as though Illuminating Voidness represents Reality itself. Well, then one can only speak, if at all, in terms of subject and object. In Reality there's no division of subject and object. But if one is going to speak about Reality one so to speak turns it into a [216] subject and an object. So first of all he mentions the Illuminating Voidness, beyond subject, beyond object. Then he mentions the Illuminating Wisdom, which is to say Illuminating Voidness appearing as a subject, that is to say, an Enlightened being<sup>1</sup> an Enlightened consciousness, and then he speaks of the Illuminating Manifestations, that is to say the objective universe, as seen in the light of ultimate Reality, as seen by Illuminating Wisdom, as lit up by Illuminating Voidness. So he says these "are my three inseparable friends." - For me subject and object are suffused by the light of Reality. And this is my constant experience, my constant experience is of the Illuminating Voidness, the Illuminating Wisdom, and the Illuminating Manifestations. These are my three inseparable friends. I have this experience of Reality all the time. In fact he says "Like the sun shining from a cloudless sky, I am always in the Great Illumination. Like dividing the horses from the yaks, the [outer] world and the senses are clearly distinct [from the inner]." What would be our idiom for dividing the horses from the yaks?

Voice: Sheep from the goats...

S: Separating the sheep from the goats. So, in that way, "The [outer] world and the senses are clearly distinct [from the inner]". What does that mean?

Ratnaguna: You don't project?

S: You don't project. Yes. Though even that non-projection is only relatively real, because that suggests a subject and an object, and the distinction between subject and object is not ultimately valid. "The string of mind and Skandhas is forever cut! He says mind and skandhas, but the mind, from the point of view of the Abhidharma at least, is

included in the skandhas. Perhaps he means Absolute Mind, as dissociated from the skandhas. The Transcendental Consciousness as dissociated from everything mundane.

Ratnaguna: Yes. But he says "The string of mind and Skandhas is forever cut! "

S: I think he means the string tying together mind and skandhas. Because if you take the mind as mundane it must be included in the skandhas. So presumably mind is not included in the skandhas in which case it has to be Transcendental. So presumably - it's not very clear - the string ties together Transcendental Mind and skandhas. Presumably it's this string or rope of clinging that has already been referred to. So one's mind - so to speak - has been dissociated from the skandhas, it has become perfectly free.

"Having fully utilized this human form, I have now completed all Yoga matters." - Having fully utilized this human form I've made full use of the opportunity of human birth. I've carried my human development to the limit. I am in fact Enlightened. "I have now completed all Yoga matters." - I've no need to meditate any more. "Rechungpa, do you also have these Experiences? Oh, my son, do not be proud and presumptuous!" So Rechungpa's song relating his experiences was pretty good, but Milarepa's song goes far beyond it. That is, his song is very difficult to understand, truly to understand. One can only just get a glimpse of the meaning.

Ratnaguna: It almost seems like it's the difference between the dhyanas

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and insight.

S: Yes, yes indeed. The dhyanas and certain side effects and reflections based upon the dhyanas, whereas in the case of Milarepa's song you get the impression of something issuing directly from Insight itself, from Wisdom itself. There's a whole new dimension present.

Voice: Can I raise one small point about the song? He says "Like the sun shining from a cloudless sky, I am always in the Great Illumination." Whereas previously he'd said about the wisdom itself as illuminating all like the cloudless sky. He's say that in a way he's a personification.

S: Yes. Indeed, that is what he seems to be saying here. Yes. That he himself is a Buddha so to speak, the embodiment of that illumination.

Right, go back over what we've done today and see whether there's any further point that needs to be gone into. So we haven't in a sense done very much, but at the same time we've covered quite a lot of ground. And covered it quite deeply.

Vimalamitra: Can I ask you a bit more about this alienation? You were saying that there's a sort of guiding principle that one should try to experience this energy as primary and not secondary, but that one would have to ask oneself whether this was always skilful or not.

S: I didn't say "experience", I said "acknowledge"...



Voice: Acknowledge, yes.

S: ... At least one should acknowledge the energy the energy is taking, and the feeling that one actually experiences. So then one has to ask oneself, well, is it skilful not only to acknowledge it but also to allow it an expression. But if it is not skilful to allow it an expression, it is equally not skilful just to block it. You have to reorganize the causes and conditions which were bringing about the fact that your energy was taking that particular direction. So you see what I mean? That's why I mentioned the example of the job. If you find that your job is making you angry. Well, first of all what do you do? You acknowledge, that yes, I am growing angry - it's that job that makes me feel angry. Then you ask yourself, is it skilful for me to actually express this anger? That is to say express it in some destructive manner. So you conclude that it is not skilful, so what are you then to do? Well, one of the things you can do is to change the conditions which are causing your energy to take the direction that it is taking, and expressing itself in the form of the particular emotion that you are experiencing. You might change your job. Or you might say, well I can't change my job. All right then, I must set up some kind of activity, some causes and conditions, which will enable me not to feel angry, which will enable my energy not to take that particular direction, even though there are all these provocations inciting it to do that. You might say, well, all right, I will make sure that every morning and evening I will do an hour's metta bhavana now. That will counteract the effect of my work on me. But what you can't do is just acknowledge the situation and then decide you can't give the emotion expression and leave it at that. Otherwise you'll be forced, sooner or later, just to displace the energy and, as we say, inhibit the emotion, which may then become anxiety or depression or whatever.

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Voice: So if you were in a situation, for example, where you felt a lot of hatred towards somebody, but you see that it would be quite unskilful to express that hatred, you would say, for example, just have to move away from that person...

S: You might have to move away from that person, yes.

Voice: And not have any contact with them.

S: Yes, or if were going to remain in contact with that person, if you couldn't avoid that person, then you would have to actively introduce other factors into the situation in such a way that your energy was not taking that particular form, not going in that particular direction, and you are not experiencing that particular emotion. In other words, it's a question of the economics - or dynamics if you like - of human energy.

Ratnaguna: What is pleasure?

5: Well, pleasure can't be defined, but everybody knows what it is.

Ratnaguna: I think a bit earlier somebody said that pain was inhibited pleasure, so that would suggest that a negative mental state isn't pleasurable.

5: Well the word negative is very ambiguous. You would regard anger as a negative emotion, but the indulgence in anger can be quite pleasurable sometimes

Ratnaguna: Would that go for hatred?

5: I think hatred is less pleasurable.

Ratnaguna: So that implies to me that if hatred is not pleasurable then it must be an inhibition of pleasure.

S: Hatred represents a greater inhibition of pleasure than does anger. All right, supposing you are hungry and you want food. And supposing you ask someone for food and he refuses you. You could feel anger. Well, what is the anger due to? The inhibition of the pleasure which you know you would experience by eating the food. (Let's not go into the question at the moment that the organism needs the food - think of it simply in terms of the inhibition of the pleasure.) But supposing this went on for days together. Suppose that person was keeping you a prisoner. And every day, three times a day, you were asking for food and being refused it. Well, because you would be getting more and more hungry, and because your craving for the pleasure of eating was becoming stronger and stronger, your anger would change into hatred. Do you see what I mean? That's why I say that anger represents a lesser degree of inhibition of pleasure than does hatred. I mean, hatred is sort of accumulated anger, or anger which has become a fixed habit, because the original cause of the anger, or the person or the situation that sparked off the anger, has become entrenched - is continuing. So the anger builds up into hatred.

Ratnaguna: This points back to what we were saying about pleasure, and the Vajrayana saying how important pleasure is. Because it seems that pleasure is the natural flow of energy.

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5: Yes, yes. (pause) So people are likely to be in what we call a negative state if some of the primary channels of energy have been blocked. That is to say with regard to food and drink, with regard to sex, with regard to sleep, with regard to exercise, with regard to play, and so on.

Voice: It seems to be quite common actually.

Gerry: The pressures of modern life. Paranoia, depression, anxiety - they all seem secondary outlets.

5: Yes.

Voice: Where would you place anxiety on that scale: anger, hatred, et cetera. Would you

put it the next stage after hatred? Blocked hatred even?

5: Anxiety is usually regarded as a sort of diffuse state, on account of it's a very strong emotion (to use these terms, we haven't been quite speaking in these terms). Anxiety occurs when a strong emotion that you want to inhibit is showing signs of breaking through into consciousness. It can be a strong emotion of anger or hatred, or of sexuality, or fear, but you're not allowing the energy to reach the point where you have the experience, consciously, of anger or hatred or sexual desire or feeling, but it's quite near the surface, and you're uneasily aware of it and you're definitely holding it down, holding it back. Then you have this experience of anxiety, your anxiety is, basically, that it may burst through, that your efforts to inhibit may be unsuccessful.

Ratnaguna: This is not anxiety in the sense of one of the five hindrances.

5: No. Strictly speaking anxiety is not one of the five hindrances. The one you're probably thinking of is indecisiveness and doubt.

Ratnaguna: Restlessness and anxiety.

5: Ah. Yes.- It's worry, rather than. . . Worry is a more conscious thing. When you're thinking about it, well, in a sense you've got reason to think about it, or you think about it too much. That is worry, which seems to be distinct from anxiety.

Voice: Could you give a working definition of paranoia.

S: A working definition?

Voice: Well, that of anxiety seems to be a working definition.

S: Well, paranoia is extreme fear which has become projected on to external objects, and other people. Well, no it's not quite the fear which has been projected, it's the aggressiveness. It's your own aggressiveness - this is the usual definition - it's your own aggressiveness which you are not acknowledging, which you don't allow yourself to experience. (I mean I'm giving the usual definition, though we've not been speaking in these sort of terms.) You don't allow yourself to experience it but you can't avoid the experience of it altogether - it is too strong, it is too powerful. So you project it. You experience it, but you experience it as coming from other people. You would really like to kill them, but because of your paranoia your experience is that they would really like to kill you.

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Ratnaguna: You almost disown the experience.

5: You disown your own feeling and attribute it to other people. You can only experience it as second-hand, as reflected from them. This is the usual explanation of paranoia. I remember going for a walk with someone once who was tripping - on acid - and we passed a really nice sort of friendly woolly dog. And this friend of mine said "Oh, look at that dog, isn't it dangerous! Look at its teeth!" (laughter) "Isn't it big!" And it was just a nice, friendly, woolly dog.

Ratnaguna: It's very common that.

5: And he was a person who exhibited signs of paranoia on other occasions too.

Gerry: Why is one aggressive though?

5: Well, what is aggression? Again, we have to be careful of our terms. It's a term we use very loosely. To some extent it depends on the view you take of human nature. Aggressiveness, in the sense of the ability, even the readiness, to break up obstacles, seems to be an entirely healthy tendency. But we tend to think of aggressiveness more in terms of a destructive energy or destructive activity, motivated by anger and hatred. It has been pointed out that all creation has a destructive aspect. If you build a house, what do you do? You clear the site. That could be regarded as destructive. You uproot all the trees and bushes, you clear away the stones, then you've got a nice clean level site. So your destruction must precede creation. So that quality which enables you to destroy is what we call aggressiveness. So if the aggressiveness is in the interests of creation we call it positive, but if it is aggression for its own sake, we call it negative. And then, aggression for its own sake, you could say, is an expression of anger and hatred, that is to say, of unskilful mental states. Even when you paint a picture you destroy. You destroy the beautiful white canvas. I'm told that some artists even think, well what a pity, to spoil this beautiful white canvas. Isn't it so beautiful, so clean, so pure, and they start destroying it by painting the picture on top of it. But if you just destroy the canvas without painting any picture, or trying to paint any picture on it, well that is just aggressiveness in the purely negative sense, the unskilful sense.

For instance, someone may just get in your way, literally or metaphorically. Well, it's because of your aggressiveness that you manage to get him out of your way. But you only get him out of your way so that you can continue to do, or begin to do, what you want to do. You don't get him out of the way just because you want to put him out of your way, because you feel anger and hatred towards him, and because that is your aim and object - just to put him out of the way. But putting him out of the way is incidental to getting on with what you want to do.

Ratnaguna: So in the past you've had a lot of experiences of somebody getting in your way, and you haven't put him out of your way. That primary feeling you might use... You might actually go... If there's nobody in your way you might go out of your way to get somebody in your way to put them out of your way to express that...

5: Yes, you've got stuck in the habit of getting people out of your way.

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Or if you've never got them out of your way, well just frustration and resentment would

build up. It does seem that we need to think much more clearly than we do on these sort of topics, and perhaps express ourselves more clearly and precisely. Otherwise there's a lot of loose, sloppy talk, and thinking, and people just get confused.

Voice: A clear definition of words, as well, is very important.

S: Yes.

Gerry: A Friends' Jargon Dictionary.

S: Sagaramati was going to produce one. He even collected a few expressions. A few I think. Or at least he made a note of expressions to collect.

Voice: Didn't some appear in Shabda?

S: I don't remember that.

Voice: Had you thought this deeply about alienation yourself before?

S: I've thought about alienation more in a Marxist context. Having read about the worker being alienated from the fruits of his own labour, and in a sense from himself. And also the concept of alienation occurs in Heigel's philosophy, that's where Marx got it from, so I'd thought of it, or considered it, somewhat in these terms, but not very much in modern psychiatric terms.

Ratnaguna: I found when I did a meditation course a couple of years ago, and I was trying to think in terms of integration. And if you really start thinking about it you come up against this idea of integration, a person being a bundle of selves. But it really doesn't exist like that at all. It's more...

S: Doesn't exist like what?

Ratnaguna: A person being a bundle of selves that you have to merge together, integrate into one self.

S: Well, yes and no. Because it isn't that all these selves are present here and now at the same time. This is what the language suggests if you aren't careful. It means that you are capable of acting in a contradictory manner. This is what it really means. For instance, today you may be really kind and gentle and patient, tomorrow you may be very unkind, very cruel, very impatient, very rough. So in a sense you say, well, there's two different Ratnagunas there, two different selves.

~atnaguna: But that suggests that that's inevitable. It's a bundle of selves and it's inevitable that you've got to express, or be, each one of those selves at some point, whereas. Is it...?

S: Well no. It's a way of describing something that does actually happen. That people do behave inconsistently. So why do they behave inconsis- tently? Well, we express it sort of semi-pictorially by saying, well, they're a bundle of selves, they're not one unified self. So we can't take that language too literally. We're really trying to explain the fact that

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they behave inconsistently. So it is as though - well you sometimes say, well look, you're really quite different from what you were yesterday, it's as though you were another person. I don't recognize the person that I saw yesterday. Sometimes it can be as extreme as that.

Robin: But is it not possible, for example during meditation, to experience simultaneously, as it were, two forces pulling in different directions which are preventing concentration.

5: Oh yes, you can experience it even in other situations. You can experience a pull from, as it were, different selves. This is when the struggle is very intense, because there's so much energy invested in both of these impulses. I mean they're both so strong it's as though there are separate people there. I mean for instance you might have planned to have a pleasant evening out with someone who is very dear to you. You might have looked forward to that for a long time, been really very much wanting to go. But then maybe a sudden emergency arises and somebody else really badly needs your help. And you're pulled. You can feel one side of yourself pulling "No, I really want to go and spend the evening with this friend", and the other pulling "No, I must really stay and help this person". And it's as though you've been torn apart like that sometimes. It really is as though there's two people there fighting for supremacy. That sort of language does correspond to the facts of your experience.

Robin: So what does that mean in terms of the energies that are producing the mental states?

S: Well it means that there's no overall ideal which all the energies are acknowledging. There's not a common master for all the energies. Do you see what I mean.

Ratnaguna: Well, again it puts it down, when you say all the energies, as if there's quite a few energies inside you which are waiting to go in different directions.

S: Well, put it in this way. Your energy is one or single, but it has been divided. It is flowing in contradictory directions. So you have to find the point where the energies divide.

Ratnaguna: How do you mean?

S: Well, just that. You have to go (well, this is metaphorical language) but perhaps you could say that in order to be on safe ground you have to be in contact with the general direction of your energies. But if your energies are flowing in different directions, you really have to understand how it has come about that your energies are flowing in different directions, and that there is this conflict. It could be, for instance, to give an example, that when you were a child you wanted to be an artist, a painter. Most of your energies were flowing in that direction. But your parents didn't want you to be an artist, they wanted you to be a solicitor. So they saw to it that you got that sort of education. So you eventually perhaps became a solicitor, or solicitor's clerk. So a lot of your energy goes in that direction, it's now your livelihood, but there's still quite a lot flowing in the

other direction. So you're divided, you really would like to be an artist, but at the same time you are now a solicitor, or solicitor's clerk, you need to make a living. So in order to resolve the situation you have to go back to the

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point where the energies divided, and understand what happened. That - yes, I wanted to be an artist, but it was my parents that put me into a different kind of occupation. And then you have to say, well look, what I am I going to do about it? Can I go back? Can I introduce unity into my life by just giving up being a solicitor, devoting my life to art, and in that way unifying my energy. Or have I got to accept (in a manner of speaking) the division, and bring about a reconciliation of these two streams of energy in a different sort of way? You might say, all right, I've got to make a living, all right, I'll continue being a solicitor. But I will go to weekend painting courses, I'll spend my holidays in that way. In that way you can make a genuine reconciliation and bring the two things together.

Or you might say, well, I can shift, I can make an adjustment. Instead of being a solicitor I'll run an art gallery, a small private art gallery, I'll make my living in that way, and paint at the same time. But somehow or other you bring these divided streams together again, so that all your energies are flowing together and co-operating instead of working against each other. This is a simple example. Very often it isn't as simple as that.

So you must be very careful to have your energies flowing in one main channel, and if it is flowing in any other channels that they're just sort of offshoots as it were, natural expressions of that one main channel. Otherwise you're almost leading a double life, and that imposes constant strain.

Voice: That means the mandala with two things vying for the same

5: Right, indeed, yes, yes. That's another way of putting it. You need one thing in the centre of your mandala, not two, otherwise you'll have an ellipse, not a circle. Or you'll have a sort of peanut-shaped figure, (laughter) or something a bit amoeba-like, you might have two or three centres all trying to be the centre.

Ratnaguna: Isn't it more like you'll have three mandalas that appear at different times? You couldn't really have a mandala with two...

5: Well, no. If you use the word mandala meaning a circle, well, you can't have two things in the middle. So if you try to have two things vying for the central position the circle will cease to be a circle. That's why I said you'll have either have an ellipse or a sort of peanut-shaped figure. Or you'll just have a horrible lumpy sort of something with different dots in different parts each jostling and in conflict and each one trying to occupy the centre.

Gerald: Because there's no harmony there is there? It's inharmonious, lumpy, painful, ugly.

S: Yes, yes.

End of Tape 12 side B

### The Story of the Yak Horn 13/ Tape 13 side A

Gerry: Well, my name is Gerry Corr. I listened to one of the tapes last night and I realized that I've got a really dead, lazy, inarticulate voice, so I'm really trying to amend that because the transcribers have to keep calling me up to ask me what I said.

Gerald: My name's Gerald Burns. It was very stormy last night I think. Very windy. Quite exciting weather.

Jyotipala: My name's Jyotipala and I've really enjoyed this last week, I think it's really been great, great study.

Vimalamitra: I'm Vimalamitra, and Surata gave us a really interesting talk last night.

Ratnaguna: I'm Ratnaguna. I've really enjoyed this seminar, especially yesterday's

Surata: I'm Surata. I really enjoyed yesterday as well, and I had some strong dreams as a result of it.

John: I'm John Rice and I enjoyed yesterday very much. I'm sorry to be leaving tomorrow.

Alan: I'm Alan Morrow, and I hope this morning's study will be better than yesterday's.

David: My name's David Luce and I think this week has been much too short.

Brian: I'm Brian Platt and I've just had a really bracing walk down by the river.

Robin: I'm Robin Cooper and I've also much appreciated this week.

S: All right. Would someone like to read those two prose paragraphs and then that song.

Surata: Hearing this song, Rechungpa's mind was straightened out. Then Milarepa said, "Now let us, father and son, go to Di Se or Lashi, those remote mountains, to meditate." Rechungpa replied "I am very tired - my physical strength has reached the point of exhaustion. I think it best that I go to a near-by monastery to recover my strength, otherwise I will not be able to meditate or travel at all."

"If a determination is made from the bottom of one's heart, one can practise his devotion under any circumstances, at any time." countered the Jetsun. Thereupon, he sang a song called "The Six Sufficiencies".

O Son, one's own body suffices as a good temple, For the vital points within are Heavenly Paradise. One's own mind suffices as the Guru, For all true understanding comes from it. The outer phenomena suffices as one's Sutras, For they are all symbols of the Liberation Path. The Food-of-Samadhi is sufficient to sustain one, For the Father Buddhas will come and bless him.



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The Dumo-heat suffices for one's clothing - The warmth and blissful dress of the Dakinis. To cut off all ties is the best companion; To live alone is to become a friend of deities; To regard all enemies as passers-by on the road Is to avoid hatred. The best remedy for all obstacles Is to meditate on Voidness, For they are all magic-like players of the mind. This is the right way for you to follow - Against it, you will go astray!

I am an old man close to death, Who has no time for chatting. You are young, vigorous and healthy And would not listen to my helpful advice. To talk with honesty and straightforwardness To prideful and greedy persons would be a sheer waste. If you want to meditate, you may come along with me; If you do not, you may do whatever you please.

5: So, "Hearing this song, Rechungpa's mind was straightened out." This is, in a way, quite an expressive way of putting it. "Rechungpa's mind was straightened out." There's already been a reference to "Like the uncoiling of a snake." So it's as though Rechungpa's mind also uncoils<sup>1</sup> it straightens out. "Then Milarepa said "Now let us, father and son, go to Di Se or Lashi, those remote mountains, to meditate." Rechungpa replied, "I am very tired, my physical strength has reached the point of exhaustion. -- think it is best that I go to a near-by monastery to recover (my strength], otherwise I will not be able to meditate or travel at all." Then Milarepa says, "If a determination is made from the bottom of one's heart, one can practise his devotion under any circumstances, at any time, " countered the Jetsun. "

So what is Milarepa saying? Do you think the Rechungpa is really tired? That he's really reached the point of exhaustion? It's difficult to say - perhaps he has, but nonetheless, it's as though Milarepa is saying if you're sufficiently determined there is another level of energy to which you can break through, you can always do far more than you think, your resources are always far greater than you think.

Gerry: Well I think that he isn't too tired because in his song he expounded great energy. I think rather what happened was that his illusions were shattered by Mi la's song, so that has left him weak.

S: Do you think it is possible actually to reach a point of exhaustion, when you really can't do anything more? Do you think that ever does really happen? You think it does?

Voice: Well, physically, anyway, I've had that happen to me.

Voice: Working really hard, very physically, mixing concrete or something like that. You just reach a point where... I've done that at Tyn-y-Ddol. I've just pushed myself so much to get the job done that I've had to stop because I've gone white and sort of dizzy with sort of pushing myself too much - physically I've just done too much. That can happen.

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Voice: I think the point lies actually though far beyond after what we really realize<sup>1</sup> and I remember a while ago reading an account of a long march that the Communist Chinese made<sup>1</sup> and just... it's absolutely unbelievable what they went through sort of day after day, week after week. It was just the sheer will and determination that carried them through. It was sort of super-human.

5: Yes<sup>1</sup> yes. Whereas usually what happens is if we feel a little bit tired or we feel a little bit exhausted, we just stop. But we haven't usually that actual point of exhaustion.

Voice: But do you think it's advisable to carry on?

S: Well, it depends very much on the circumstances and what you're doing doesn't it? I think it is good at least sometimes to be stretched. Or sometimes the objective needs of the situation may demand that. I mean supposing someone's life is at stake. Then you just go all out to do what-ever you can. But I think that on the whole, in the Friends (I'm talking mainly about the Friends now) we do tend to give ourselves a fairly easy time; people don't really stretch themselves very much. Mainly because perhaps they don't feel sufficiently inspired, or they don't actually see the needs, the objective needs, of the situation in which they are.

Voice: And also just the scale against which one measures oneself. What one thinks is stretching oneself, actually very often is doing very little.

5: It might be just a bit extra. (pause) Anyway, Milarepa is quite uncompromising. He says if a determination is made from the bottom of one's heart, well I suppose that is the criterion. If it's made from the bottom of one's heart, that isn't always very easy to do. One can practise his devotion under any circumstances at any time. Thereupon he sang a song called The Six Sufficiencies.

Ratnaguna: Where does will come in? Say you saw intellectually the the objective needs of the situation, and you were feeling really tired. So rather than go to another level usually what happens is people tend to just will themselves on.

5: Yes. That's why it is significant that Milarepa says "If a determination is made from the bottom of one's heart." }3e's presumably not talking about will, in the alienated sense, here. It's a real determination, you really do want to put all your energies into what you are doing. This suggests that you're a ~uite integrated sort of person.

Vimalamitra: It's also a kind of limit with will. I mean there's a limit where you do just stop. With inspiration you can just carry on.

S: Right, because in the case of will, well there's quite a large part of you, so to speak, which doesn't really want to become involved. But where there's a determination made from the bottom of one's heart, well, one's whole being is involved. It is therefore easier to carry on.

Robin: So given that we have to use willed effort at the moment, would you say that, for example, one should go to one's morning meditation under any circumstances virtually, even if one feels very tired or . .

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5: Yes! I would say that, because the morning meditation is a quite limited sort of thing. You certainly ought to be able to break through after a few minutes into an actual meditation. Probably until you start getting a real benefit from the meditation, there'll always be some initial resistance that you have to break through. There's a sensible use of willed effort as well as a foolish one. You can have a willed effort based on a genuine understanding of the situation, and of your own need to develop, your own need for discipline, so to speak. And you can have a willed effort based on, say, foolish pride! just wanting to be successful or wanting to show other people that you can do it, even though your heart isn't completely in it.

So what does Milarepa sing. Rechungpa has said that he thinks it best that he goes to a nearby monastery, but Milarepa says,

"Oh Son, one's own body suffices as a good temple, For the vital points within are Heavenly Paradise.

He's saying that you don't need a good monastery or temple in which to rest. Your own body is sufficient. Because it's your own mind that is the decisive factor. Just as within the temple there is the Buddha image, so within the temple of your body there is your own Buddha mind, that's all that you need. "For the vital points within are Heavenly Paradise." What are these vital points.

Voice: Are they the chakras?

S: Presumably the chakras. It isn't altogether clear but presumably they are. And they are the heavenly paradise because it's within those chakras! within those lotuses, within those wheels, that the higher spiritual realizations take place. There seems to be a sort of implied comparison with the mandala. It's all allied symbols! the symbol of the temple, the symbol of the chakra, the wheel, or the lotus, there's the symbol of the heavenly paradise, the pure land. Milarepa is in fact saying that all these are within - you don't need an external temple, you don't need an external monastery, you've got everything within your own body. You've got the chakras, you've got your own inner mandala.

Surata: Do the Hindu and Buddhist chakras correspond?

5: Well in a sense they do, although in the Hindu system there are seven chakras. Most Buddhist systems make use either of three, four, or five, not of all seven, that is to say usually not the lower ones. The most common are those of the head, throat, and heart,

which correlate with body, speech, and mind, or with the three kayas. Sometimes the fourth, the navel centre, is brought in, and sometimes one just above the top of the head. But usually, when three are spoken of, this one and this one are sort of conflated - they're regarded as one. But the two lowest centres are not usually used or made use of in Buddhist systems, though occasionally they are.

Vimalamitra: What does the navel centre represent?

5: This is usually considered to represent the lower emotions, the heart centre represents the higher emotions.

Robin: What's the difference between lower emotions and higher emotions.

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5: You could say the lower emotions are those which are more crude or more tinged with selfishness, which are more closely related to our animal needs, our bodily needs, and so on; the more self-centred emotions. The higher emotions are, as it were, the more spiritual emotions, those of faith and devotion, metta, karuna.. Then he goes on: One's own mind suffices as the guru, for all true understanding comes from it. Even going so far as to say, well in the last analysis you don't even need an external guru. Your true guru is your own mind.

Voice: He seems to need one doesn't he?

S: Ha, ha. I don't know whether it's significant that at the beginning of this song he doesn't invoke Marpa. Usually he does. So all true understanding comes from your own mind. Well, this is true but sometimes you do need an external guru to help your own mind to develop that true understanding. Well this is a point of course I expect Rechungpa will make. The outer phenomena suffices one's sutras, for they're all symbols of the Liberation Path." What does that mean? It's a bit like Shakespeare's books in the brooks isn't it? Sermons in stone and good in everything.

Ratnaguna: You can learn something from everything.

5: But it's not just a question of learning something. Milarepa says one can learn about the Liberation Path - ~For all things are symbols of the Liberation Path. " So how is one to look at that? Is it true? Are all things symbols of the Liberation Path? For whom? Is it easy to see all things as the symbols of the Liberation Path?

Voice: Most people in fact don't, do they?

S: They don't. I mean if you see a tree, in what way is a tree a symbol of the Liberation Path?

Voice: Only insofar as it's impermanent or,,

S: Well, it's not a symbol then, that's different, that's just using it as a reminder of a certain abstract truth.

Voice: Isn't it in the sense that it actually grows from a seed to full maturity. That's more a symbol.

5: Yes, yes, yes. Or if you look at the earth and you reflect, well, the earth bears all, it supports all, the earth is patient<sup>1</sup> so to speak, well the earth then becomes a symbol of patience. So yes, you could say this, that all things are symbols of the Liberation Path, but then you need eyes to see things in that way, and that isn't so easy. Anyway, Milarepa is adopting a totally uncompromising position, a totally uncompromising stance, and perhaps it is good that occasionally we should be reminded of that, because we're only too ready to make compromises, make allowances and let ourselves off lightly and make things easy for ourselves and make excuses. So it's not a bad thing that we sometimes hear this very uncompromising sort of statement.

The Food-of-Samadhi is sufficient to sustain one, For the Father Buddhas will come and bless him.

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Don't bother about food, don't bother about eating and drinking, you can sustain yourself on samadhi - you can live on your meditation, because if you meditate the "Father Buddhas" will come and bless you. That is to say in the course of your meditations you'll have visions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and they will bless you, and that blessing will strengthen you and nourish you, you won't need ordinary food, so don't bother about it, just get on with your meditation. That will solve all problems. Again this totally uncompromising stand. And then:

The Domo-heat suffices for one's clothing - The warm and blissful dress of the dakinis.

We've already talked about this Domo-heat. If you practise the Domo-heat meditation then it's as though you're enveloped in very soft, warm garments. You don't need to bother about clothes. So just develop this tummo heat. Just practise this particular kind of meditation. That's all you have to do. So so far Milarepa has said you don't need a place to stay, you don't need a guru, you don't need sacred books, you don't need sutras, you don't need food<sup>1</sup> clothing. You can get everything from your spiritual life, everything from your meditation. That's all you should be bothering about.

To cut off all ties is the best companion;

Don't bother about even Kalyana mitras, just cut off all ties. That, paradoxically<sup>1</sup> will be the best companion for you.

To live alone is to become a friend of deities;

Well, if you want spiritual companionship, well just live by yourself, practise meditation, you will see all the Buddha and Bodhisattvas then. That's the best possible companionship that you could have.

To regard all enemies as passers-by on the road Is to avoid hatred.

Even if someone upsets you, someone acts inimically towards you - don't bother, just think that they're just like passers-by on the road. They're here for a minute or two and then they're gone. Don't disturb yourself, don't worry, don't become angry.

The best remedy for all obstacles is to meditate on Voidness. For they are all magic-like players of the mind.

If there's any obstacle just remind yourself, the obstacle is not absolutely real it's only relatively real it arises in dependence on causes and conditions. When those causes and conditions are no longer there, the object itself is no longer there, the obstacle itself is no longer there, it has only a relative existence.

This is the right way for you to follow - Against it you will go astray.

So what do you think of this? Do you think Milarepa's being reasonable?

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Vimalamitra: Well in the circumstances, in a way perhaps he is.

5: Presumably. Yes

Gerry: It's as though he's opened Rechungpa out, strained him out, and he's now just letting him know what the ideal is.

S: Yes! what the ideal is in a completely uncompromising form.

Voice: He can't really do anything else at this stage can he? Having been through different sorts of approaches to Rechungpa there's really isn't much else he can do.

5: Yes, he seems to have been getting tougher and tougher as the chapter proceeds. At first he's a bit easy-going and apparently just going along with Rechungpa, but as the chapter proceeds he's becoming more and more strict (so to speak) with him.

Gerry: Well, if he'd been struck right away Rechungpa would have just said beat it.

S: Yes, yes.

Voice: And also Rechungpa would probably have taken it in the wrong way, I mean, with all his pride, to think his own body was as good as a temple, and that he didn't need a guru. That's almost what he was thinking to start with. It's only now he's been straightened out he can receive this.

S: Yes, right, yes. And also when Milarepa says things like "The outer phenomena suffices one's sutras" one mustn't forget that Rechungpa has been very attached to the written scriptures, has overvalued them. Also of course when Milarepa says "The food of samadhi is sufficient to sustain one" he has neglected his meditation, he neglected it in order to go off to India, from which he has now just recently come back.

Gerry: Then again, he did get into certain dhyanic states, and he sang a song about how wonderful it was...

S: Yes.

Gerry:.. for its proper use.

Voice: I find that the danger for me of this sort of passage is that it seems to be so far away from me that I can't really identify very strongly with the teaching. I can't imagine, for example, living without food. I can sort of conceive of it, but at the moment, I can't really identify with it very strongly.

S: But what is the principle here then?

Gerry: Non-attachment.

S: Mo, I don't mean in that sort of way.

Voice: Is it priorities? For me it sort of means priorities, what is really important

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S: Yes. It's also "Don't do less than you really can. " Do you see what I mean? It's not necessarily a question of all or nothing. If you can meditate all day well then other factors being equal you should. Do you see what I mean? That if supposing you're objective limits, let us say 1 is an hour a day 1 supposing you can't meditate for more than an hour a day, whether for objective or subjective reasons, and let's suppose for the sake of argument that it wouldn't be good for you to meditate for more than an hour a day, then you must be uncompromising about that one hour a day. If you are able to meditate for one hour a day, well you should meditate for one hour a day. It's as though Milarepa is saying to Rechungpa, "You are now capable of this, Therefore you should not settle for less than this."

I don't think that what Milarepa means to say is that everybody should disregard the need of a temple or monastery, that nobody should have a guru, that everybody should look to his own mind, that nobody should ever read the sutras, or that nobody should ever eat but should get on with meditation instead. I don't think that that is Milarepa's intention. I don't think he's saying that. He's saying it to Rechungpa1 presumably because he's convinced that Rechungpa has reached the point where he can consider acting with this total uncompromisingness. But with regards to others, or perhaps even with regards to Rechungpa earlier on, Hilarepa would not adopt this sort of attitude. Well1 he's adopt the same attitude in principle, but in practice it wouldn't result in anything so extreme. But he'd certainly say do the utmost of which you are capable, and you are capable of doing more than you actually think. This is the basic principle it would seem.

Vimalamitra: Is he actually suggesting that Rechungpa's actually at the moment ready to do this? Or is he just kind of using this to kind of completely destroy any attempt at arguing with his rationalizations?

S: Well, I don't think he would actually say it unless he really meant it, as regards Rechungpa1 at that particular moment. It is as though he's advising Rechungpa to act in that way now and is expecting him to do so. Or is at least urging him to try to do so.

Gerry: It seems very Arahant-like, like really into yourself.

5: Yes, that is true. But no doubt Milarepa hasn't forgotten about compassion. He has emphasized compassion earlier on.

Voice: Would you say it was generally true that the spiritual friend has a much better idea of your capabilities than oneself. I'm thinking about this - Milarepa seems to know much better what Rechungpa is capable of.

S: I would say other factors being equal. That is to say assuming your spiritual friend is someone of the same intelligence as you or yourself and so on, that he really is your spiritual friend. He really does know you. Well then, when one is rationalizing, or making excuses, the spiritual friend is much more likely to be able to see that than you are yourself. It's not that he has necessarily got a great deal more wisdom than you, but just because he's not personally involved, he can see it all the more clearly. So one would be at least well advised to consider very seriously what one~spiritual friend says, especially of you are convinced he does know you and wishes you well, you would be well advised to consider very seriously what he says, especially when it goes against your

S

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own inclinations. I mean you still have to decide yourself whether to accept that advice or not, but sometimes at least the spiritual friend can see things more clearly, because he can be more objective. Therefore the spiritual friend himself has to be, you know very careful about giving advice, he has to ask himself whether he really has entered into the situation that the person to whom he's giving advice is in. I mean you might advise someone who



was very attached to, say his books, even his books on Buddhism, to go and burn the lot but that might be because you, even though you mean well you just don't realize what those books mean to him. Perhaps you don't even see the positive side of that. Maybe books aren't very important to you, so you can say very lightly to someone, go and burn your books, you're too attached to them. You don't, in a sense, realize what you are saying to him, because he feels very differently about books than you do. So if you give someone advice of that sort you must really have entered into the situation and have tried to experience the situation as he does, and to see it and realize it as it affects him, not as it would affect you if you were in that same position yourself.

Voice: Well you'd have to know someone really well wouldn't you?

5: Yes, indeed. So that's why sometimes people ask me, well shall I give up my job or shall I leave college. And I'm very reluctant to say anything, other than I consider the situation very carefully yourself, hear what everybody has to say, but especially if I don't know somebody very well, or at all well, and they come and say, well, shall I give up my job, should I leave college, I certainly don't sort of apply an automatic yardstick - well, it's good for everybody to give up a job and join a co-op so yes you give up yours. No, one can't proceed in that way. So I don't give any advice. Very rarely say to anybody - yes, you should give up your job, or yes you should leave college or leave school.

Gerry: Do you find yourself then being used as a sounding-board?

S. Well, yes. Perhaps that's so. But that's all right. I usually just point out the sort of factors that they need to take into consideration, but not actually to advise anybody under these circumstances what they should do.

Ratnaguna: That's why you don't advise people? I always thought it was because for some other reason you just didn't advise anybody.

5: Oh no, I won't say that. I do sometimes give advice if I feel that I know somebody quite well, and if I can see very clearly what the situation is, and I can see it more clearly than they do, and if I feel they need to be advised, well, I don't hesitate to advise them. But on the other hand, I'm not in a hurry to give anybody any advice, especially when they could make up their minds themselves. In fact I think one should encourage people to make up their minds themselves, and confine oneself to just drawing their attention to factors in the situation which they might have overlooked. Do you see what I mean? Say to them, well, make up your own mind but have you considered that particular factor? Have you considered that possible consequence? Have you considered such and such implications? Take those into consideration too. But I think one should be very careful about giving advice in a sense almost of bringing pressure on somebody to act in a particular way. I think you have to be very sure of your ground before you do anything of that sort. It's very easy to give advice, and the more seriously people take your advice, the more careful you have to

be about giving it. It's always best I think to put your advice, if you have any, in the form of a suggestion. - Have you ever thought about doing such and such? Just plant that seed. Leave them to think about it. -specially one should adopt this attitude with younger people who may be a bit impressionable, or they may be a bit emotionally under your influence, and they may be very ready to do exactly what you tell them to do. So that places an even greater responsibility on you. That you're very careful what you advise them. If someone has considered all the different factors involved, considered the whole situation, and has to come to a decision but genuinely isn't able to, and asks you, what do you really think, then you must say so. Not as advice in the sense of putting pressure on somebody, but as saying, this is what I really think would be best. If you are in a position to see that, then you have to say so if you're asked in that sort of way. If someone says to you, I really don't know whether I should give up my job, there's this argument for, there's that argument against, I'm unable to strike a balance. What do you think in the light of your knowledge about me. Then you can say what you really think, and then they can consider that. But otherwise one should be quite cautious about giving people advice, especially with regard to quite crucial decisions, otherwise you're just playing around with people's lives in a quite irresponsible way. If it's some relatively neutral matter it doesn't really matter - if they're asking your advice about whether they should have their holiday in Spain or in Portugal, well, it doesn't really matter much what you say, but when it comes to these more vital matters one should be very very careful, and very conscientious.

(break in recording)

Then Milarepa says

I am an old man close to death, Who has no time for chatting. You are young, vigorous, and healthy

You wouldn't have thought that from what Rechungpas's just said. He's just said

My physical strength has reached the point of exhaustion. But then Milarepa says

You are young, vigorous, and healthy And would not listen to my helpful advice. To talk with honesty and straightforwardness To prideful and greedy persons would be a sheer waste. If you want to meditate, you may come along with me; If you do not, you may do whatever you please.

What is Milarepa not exhibiting here? He's not exhibiting false sympathy. It's very easy - in the spiritual life - to sort of weaken people with a sort of false sympathy, a sort of pseudo-compassion, which is not the real thing at all. It's very easy to encourage people, or indulge people, in their feelings of self-pity. If someone says to you, oh, my knees are really aching, I've been meditating for three hours this morning. And someone says, oh well, you've been doing really well, you been really doing a lot of meditation, better take it easy for a bit. Don't do too much, don't strain yourself, don't overdo it. They sort of act all

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sympathetic<sup>1</sup> but that's not real sympathy. Real sympathy is just to say, oh "Knees aching? Yes<sup>1</sup> I suppose that's natural after three hours, anyway it'll soon pass off, especially if you sit and meditate again." Do you see what I mean? Very often people welcome an opportunity of showing this pseudo-sympathy<sup>1</sup> this pseudo-kindliness<sup>1</sup> this pseudo-compassion<sup>1</sup> and they indulge you instead of bracing you and strengthening you. So that sort of indulgence is not real sympathy. So Milarepa is refusing to give Rechungpa this false, sentimental sort of pity and sympathy. Rechungpa is saying that

My physical strength has reached the point of exhaustion. But Milarepa is saying

You are young, vigorous<sup>1</sup> and healthy.

Perhaps Rechungpa is indulging in a bit of self-pity. Milarepa's not going to tolerate that.

Robin: Do you think one should have the same attitude towards giving people approval? I mean one sometimes thinks we need a bit of bucking-up, we're a bit down in the mouth - better sort of buck them up a bit.

5: Yes, but it must be a real bucking-up, a real inspiration, not a sort of condoling with them or expressing pity for them, or saying to them such things as "Oh yes, you have a very hard time and you're really hard done by. Yes<sup>1</sup> life is very difficult for you, I sympathize, I understand." One shouldn't sort of try to buck them up in that sort of way.

Robin: I was thinking more of the case where you say something like "Well, you're doing all right really, don't worry about it, you're making progress, etc. "

S.. Well this is where they have, for instance, a lot of self-doubt. You don't go along with the self-doubt, you don't indulge them in that. If they're saying, "Oh, I'm very weak, I can't really do very much." Say "No, you can do more than you think you can. Come on, you've been doing quite well." The principle is still the same but just the approach is quite different. But in any case your sympathy is bracing, your sympathy is not weakening. There's no element of indulgence in your sympathy. If someone says "Oh, I'm feeling really sleepy this morning, I'd really like to stay in bed, I don't think I'll meditate." And if you say "Ah well, I don't suppose it'll matter much if you miss just this once. Go and have a nice sleep." Well, that is not real sympathy. Real sympathy would be to say "Come on, you've had enough sleep, you don't really feel sleepy, you're just a bit lazy. You'll feel better as soon as you get up. Come on. Let's go and meditate in five minute's time." That's the real sympathy. Yes? Or if someone does the same sort of thing to you. But this is in a way quite an interesting point - this distinction between genuine sympathy, genuine encouragement, genuine kindness<sup>1</sup> and the imitation.

Voice: It seems in one case one's really not entering into the other person's point of view, you just sort of seeing it very superficially and that's almost blocking with it and dealing with it, rather than entering into how they feel.

Gerry: Being in sympathy with somebody, as it were.

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5: Yes. So perhaps you want to present the image of a very kindly person. You're more concerned with them thinking how kind and sympathetic you are, than really being kind and sympathetic, because sometimes, if you're genuinely kind and sympathetic people may not experience it as that. They might even feel that you're not very sympathetic, or that you haven't understood the position that they're in, whereas you might have understood it very well indeed. But you're trying to have a tonic and a bracing effect on them rather than a relaxing and enervating effect. So to be able to strike the right note, so to speak, you have to be really very much in tune with somebody, you have to be very genuine within yourself, very clear about what you're doing. Are you really being sympathetic<sup>1</sup> or are you really just trying to present the image of big sympathetic big brother, or big daddy, or whatever? ... Or mother?

(end of tape 13 side A)

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Voice: It's as if there has to be an element of vision there, of seeing what they're capable of, and what you're capable of...

S: Mmm. Yes, indeed.

Voice: ...otherwise you actually don't know quite how to react, how to stand.

Vimalamitra: You're not taking him seriously either.

5: That's true. Yes, yes. You're treating them like a child actually, when you just indulge them and pamper them. You're not treating them seriously, you're not treating them as adults.

Voice: Your concern is to make them feel better rather than to see them what...

S: Yes, to make them feel good, rather than to do what is best for them. Perhaps you've got an image of yourself as the kindly person who makes everybody feel good, whom everybody likes.

Gerry: He also says "To talk with honesty and straightforwardness to prideful and greedy persons with their ...[unclear]... ways." What he seems to be say here was that he couldn't talk like this to Rechungpa earlier on. It seems bear that out.

5: Yes, yes.

Gerry: You experience it yourself or. .. Eunclear]

5: Well, he's also warning Rechungpa not to be like this. "So if you want to meditate you may come along with me. If you do not you may do whatever you please." So Milarepa has in a way brought the situation to a climax. I mean the talking has got to stop. Rechungpa has got to decide what he's going to do. Is he going to come with Milarepa or not? And this is sometimes what you have to do with people, with more or less rigour: you have to bring them to the point where they actually decide. Someone was commenting on the fact recently that sometimes when one gets copies of minutes there's a quite lengthy record of a quite detailed discussion, but one looks at the end in vain for the decision. Nothing is actually decided. Things are said like "Well, it would be good if somebody did such-and-such", or everybody agrees "Oh yes, it would be great if such-and-such happened". But there's no decision taken at the end as to what should actually be done and who's going to do it. So everybody goes away under the impression that something is going to be done, and of course nothing happens, and next time that particular set of people meets they're surprised to discover that nothing has happened since the last meeting. Do you see what I mean? So in this sort of situation too it's important to bring the discussion to a point of decision. In the end decisions have to be taken, even if it's only a decision to postpone taking a decision. That too is a decision. But after a lot of discussion things shouldn't be left hanging in the air. Something needs to be done.

So Milarepa is saying to Rechungpa "If you want to meditate you may come along with me. If you do not you may do whatever you please. So he's

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forcing him to decide. Otherwise people sort of dither endlessly.

All right<sup>1</sup> would someone like to read the prose lines and then the next song<sup>1</sup> Rechungpa's song?

The Jetsun was about to set out on his way, when Rechungpa clasped his clothing in time [to stop him], and sang this song called "The Eight Needs".

Though the best temple is one's own body<sup>1</sup> We need a place for cover and sleep; Without mercy, the wind and rain attack all. Because of this, we always need a temple.

Though the best Guru is one's own mind, We need a teacher to illustrate our Mind-Essence - We cannot neglect for a moment to pray to him. Because of this we always need a Guru!

Though outer phenomenon may substitute for the Sutras, Hindrances and doubts in any case will arise. To clear them up<sup>1</sup> A lucid reference to the Sutras is necessary. Because of this<sup>1</sup> we always need the Sutras!

Though the food of Samadhi may be sufficient, Provisions for nourishment are necessary; On food this delusory body must live! Because of this! we always need food'.

Though the best clothing is the Dharma-heat! Something to cover the body is necessary, For who is not afraid of shame and disgrace? Because of this, we always need clothing.

Though the best thing is to cut off relations with all, To get support and aid is ever necessary; Good or bad! who has not some friends? Because of this, we always need friends.

Though to avoid one's enemies is sufficient, Sometimes one meets them on the road - For who can be immune from hostility? Because of this, we always need protection.

Though the best remedy is to view all hindrances as void, The demons and ghosts are malignant and powerful; To conquer the demon of ego Is even more difficult. Because of this, we always need safeguards.

To stay with my Guru, brings happiness. To return to you brings joy. Wherever you go, I will go. But I beseech you! by all means, To stay in the valley for a short time.

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5: So what does Milarepa say? Just read that bit.

Voice: Milarepa replied, "If you have confidence! to follow my way will be quite sufficient; otherwise, there will always be a need for something. Well, if by all means you are unwilling to go to no-man's mountain now! let us go to Bouto to preach the Dharma." Thereupon the Jetsun and Rechungpa went to Bouto of Red Rock.

S: So in a sense Milarepa gives in, in the end. What do you think that means?

Voice: Perhaps Rechungpa really is tired.

5: Perhaps Rechungpa really is tired, but Milarepa has put the ideal to him in all its uncompromisingness. He has considered it necessary to do that. But Rechungpa has in effect said that some concessions need to be made to human weakness. He doesn't deny that the path that Milarepa has pointed out is the best, he's only saying that for most people it's just not possible to follow that. And Milarepa seems to accept that. It does seem important that the ideal is always pitched somewhat above people's actual reach. Do you see what I mean? Otherwise they won't really push themselves as much as they could. It's almost like a sort of bargaining. Someone says, well I can meditate an hour a day. And the guru says what an hour a day! no, at least ten hours. And the disciple says! no, I couldn't possibly manage ten hours, maybe I could even manage two but not ten. The guru says No! ten hours a day. I'm sure you could manage ten hours a day. The disciple says Well, perhaps I could even manage three or even three and a half! but not ten. The guru says No, I'm sure you can manage ten. In the end they settle for five hours a day. Do you see what I mean?

Voices: Yes.

S: But if the guru was to give in straight away, well, the disciple would not be stretched. He would not do what in fact he was capable of doing. So let's look at Rechungpa's song in greater detail.

Though the best temple is one's own body We need a place for cover and sleep; Without mercy, the wind and rain attack all. Because of this, we always need a temple.

Don't you think this is true? We need a place for cover and sleep. We need a place where we can be protected from the elements. It's actually quite difficult to live without a house, without shelter, what to speak of in Tibet. You might just about manage in India, or some parts of India, at certain times of the year. But even in the Buddha's day, even the Buddha himself and his disciples, though they were wandering from place to place for eight or nine months of the year, for three or four months of the year<sup>1</sup> during the rainy season, they had to take shelter.

Voice: It's certainly easier to meditate in some sort of shelter. I think it's very difficult to meditate in the open air.

5: It seems that the Buddha himself and his disciples normally did meditate in the open air. In the forest, at the foot of trees. But it's strange that we should find that more difficult. I wonder why it is, I suppose it's because indoors you are more sheltered, you're sheltered from

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the wind<sup>1</sup> and from draughts, you're sheltered from insects<sup>1</sup> from gnats and mosquitoes, and ants. You're sheltered from noise. But it seems in the Buddha's day, more often than not people did meditate out of doors.

Voice: It may be what we're used to. If one is not used to living outdoors, which I don't think we are, then I find it distracting to hear breezes or birds.

S: Yes, yes, yes.

Gerry: Also it's a bit cooler outside than in India, say.

S: Yes. Tibet of course is cooler still. So it does seem that we do need... But we just have to make sure that we don't demand more than we actually need. You need actually very little in the way of shelter really. You just need four walls and a roof that are weatherproof<sup>1</sup> and where you can be sufficiently comfortable and sufficiently warm (or sufficiently cool) to be able to get on with your meditation without being unduly distracted.

Voice: . . (unclear)... you've got wandering Christian friars and hermits and that, even in this country in the Middle Ages. They survived in very primitive conditions when you

come to think about it.

5: Yes, yes. Well even nowadays there are thousands of tramps who seem to manage, seem to survive. So perhaps we are capable of more than we think we are.

Voice: There was no heating. Even in the big monasteries there was only one room, and that was the califactory it was called, that had a fire, that and the kitchen.

5: Well what to speak of the monasteries even in the castles of the nobility there was not much in the way of heating.

Vimalamitra: Ah, you always see fireplaces in castles.

5: Well no, you don't, because in very early times there were no fireplaces. There was only a fire in the centre of the hall, and a hole in the roof for the smoke to go out of. There were no fireplaces with chimneys and flues. That came quite a long time afterwards. And you'd need a really big blaze to warm every corner of that vast hall. What about churches? There was no heating in churches. People used to stand (there were no chairs in those days) they used to stand through the Services on the cold paving stones.

Gerry: I'm sure that part of that was to do with the guilt and humility. I think we are quite a bit softer.

~Sy We probably are.

Voice: Did you find that you could get on quite easily meditating outside in India?

5: I didn't find meditating out of doors particularly difficult. What did make things difficult at one stage was actually walking from place to place. I don't know whether that was because ~ ou know, physically not in

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very good condition, or because it was quite exhausting, especially in that climate, but I did find that made it very difficult. But I didn't find actually meditating in the open air difficult. In fact I rather liked it. And under certain circumstances it can be very conducive to meditation, especially when you're sitting at evening time on the banks of a river, a big broad slow river, and it's very very quiet, very very still, and the sun is setting. That's very conducive to meditation. You get quite a different feeling, quite a different sort of experience, when you meditate under those conditions. I've never had the experience but I'm quite sure it would be very different also if you meditate out in the open air high up in the mountains, as Milarepa did.

Voice: I know it's not quite the same, but I once was on a walking holiday on the South Downs, and meditated on the tops of the hills every day, and the very broad expanse of countryside and the enormous amount of space did seem to make a difference.



S: Yes.

Gerry: It also seems to me that we &et in touch with nature whereas even in the shrine-room there's no real point of contact, except the windows rattling.

S: Ho ho.

Vimalamitra: I remember at Delphi I sat with Sagaramati and meditated a bit, and it was quite a strong energy. It actually, kind of - er - seemed to help the meditations and you'd just go into them.

S: So I think we should at least be aware of the fact that we meditate under rather special conditions, that is to say almost always indoors, and I think we must be very careful not to associate with meditation itself a feeling that we get just because we are indoors, or because we are meditating indoors. I remember on some of the summer retreats which I led at Keffolds we had meditation in the open air sometimes in summer. It was popular with some people, not so popular with others, and sometimes we were troubled by - it was some kind of gad fly I suppose, something of that sort. Or even by ants, but we used to sit in circle, I think round a big tree, in a sort of clearing, and meditate. This does give you quite a different kind of experience. So one has to be a little careful because what you may think of as an essential part of the meditation experience, as you have it, may just be due to the fact that you're meditating indoors, it may not be having anything much to do with the meditation as such. So it might be a good idea to experiment gently and try meditating under different conditions, namely in this case in the open air if you do get an opportunity. If you're say out hiking, you are living out in the country, and can sit out in the open air without disturbance.

Robin: So are you saying that the real aspects of meditation if you like are what is in common between the meditations in these different conditions?

S: Mmm. You could say that. For instance when you meditate you might experience a feeling of security. But it may not be because of the meditation, but because of the fact that you're safe and secure inside a house. When you're meditating in the open air, depending on your particular character and temperament, you may feel very differently, you [241]

may even feel threatened. But that would be nothing to do with the meditation as such but due to the fact that you are meditating in the open air, exposed and vulnerable instead of tucked away safely in your shrine-room, inside a building.

Voice: You especially get this when it's pouring down with rain or there's very strong stormy conditions outside and you're meditating, and you get a very strong feeling of "I'm here." You know. That's really caused by...

S: Right, yes. Well, that can be helpful and perhaps one should make use of it, but nonetheless one should be quite clear what is due to the meditation itself and what is due to the circumstances under which you are meditating. And not associate your meditation too strictly or exclusively with any one special set of circumstances. That may be necessary at first, but gradually you should acclimatize yourself to meditating under different conditions. Some people can't meditate unless they meditate in the shrine-room. Well that

may be acceptable to begin with, but eventually you should be able to transcend that limitation. Some people can meditate only in their own room. Others can meditate only at a particular time of day. Well, to begin with these limitations have to be accepted, you have to start somewhere, but they shouldn't be accepted as permanently valid. And after a while you should try to get over them. I think I've sometimes mentioned the fact that I had one friend in India who had a number of disciples, and he used to encourage them after a while to meditate at that time of the day which they found most difficult. Which was usually of course at midnight and in the early hours, just when they felt most sleepy, he'd insist that they meditated then. You shouldn't of course take up this sort of practice prematurely, but as time goes on you should try to make your meditation independent of conditions, even your own bodily conditions. Some people think that if they're a bit unwell, well they can't meditate. Well, perhaps for the beginner it is not advisable to try to meditate when you're not well. But as you become more established in meditation you shouldn't give up meditation just because you're not feeling very well. You can break through that. You should be able to break through that after you've had a certain amount of experience of meditation. So in a way in principle Milarepa is right, he's saying to Rechungpa don't allow your meditation, don't allow your spiritual life, to depend on any special set of circumstances. If it's on the fact that you are well fed, that you are healthy, that you are well, that you are not tired, don't let your meditation depend on circumstances or conditions of that sort. In the end it mustn't depend on any circumstances, any conditions. But by agreeing to stay in the valley he recognizes that Rechungpa isn't yet able to practise, or to follow his instructions to that extent. But nonetheless he has stated the principle involved without any compromise.

Voice: Rechungpa keeps saying we always need a temple. He does seem to regard these conditions as permanently valid.

S: Yes, yes. But the first verse says we need a place for cover and sleep. Oh, then he says we always need a temple. So we don't always need a temple, we certainly need a temple at the beginning, but in the end you should be able to meditate anywhere, under almost any conditions. We find in India some of our Indian Order Members are very good in this respect. They're able to meditate under conditions that people in this country, Order Members in this country, couldn't meditate under, or think couldn't meditate under. What to speak of Order Members. When I was there I heard

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that one of our women mitras was having to sleep at night in a room occupied by twenty-two other people, and she had her bed on a shelf up against the wall. But she still managed to meditate every day. There's not many people in the Friends in England who could meditate under those conditions. And quite a number of Order Members, mitras, and Friends meditate at home what we would regard as intolerably crowded conditions, but they meditate nonetheless, just sitting in a corner of the room while the rest of the family life is going on all around them. They're able to do this. There was one of our Order Members who was having a bit of trouble with his wife because he was so involved in

FWBO affairs. So one day he was just sitting meditating in a corner of the kitchen and she hit him over the head with something and gave him quite a nasty shock, but he's continuing with his meditation nonetheless. I think she's started coming round now. But there people meditate at home. There's no question of them having a separate room in which to meditate. There's no question of them meditating usually in the bedroom; there's no separate bedroom. People just bed down at night in the room or rooms where they're living during the day. There's too many of them to be able to have a separate bedroom usually. So they just have to find a corner where they can just sit, maybe turning their backs on the rest of the family and there's people talking and cooking and getting on with their homework and so on while somebody is meditating in the corner. But they manage, and their meditation is quite good, their standard of meditation is at least as good of Order Members and mitras in England, if not better actually. And it shows itself on retreats. And they really do sit on and get really deeply into their meditation. I mentioned in one of my letters from India how they sat on through a violent hailstorm when we were on retreat. Hailstones as big as marbles came bouncing in through the door amongst them, and there was thunder and flashes of lightning. No one took any notice. So it's a relative thing, and one should accustom oneself gradually to being less dependent on external conditions in every way, otherwise we become the slaves of external conditions. We become even quite precious: we can't meditate unless we've got a nice quiet shrine-room, and a decent cushion, and unless people are not fidgeting. In fact it made me smile quite a bit on my return to England to hear all the fuss and bother about cushions. All the time I was in India I never had a cushion to sit on when I was meditating. I never even thought of it, I mean people don't have cushions in India to sit on at all, it's a sort of luxury. All I had was at the very most just a blanket folded to sit on. Or just a piece of cotton cloth - that is recommended actually for yogis - a thin cotton towel just folded across, you sit on that when you meditate. You don't sit on a cushion. This seems to have developed in Japan, with the Zen school, because apparently the Japanese have got rather short little legs, and they need sort of propping up at the back, but we don't because we've got the same sort of physique as Indians. So I was quite amused when I got back at people having to sit on a cushion to meditate. Well maybe beginners do, but one shouldn't be too dependent on that; on a pile of cushions or even a meditation stool or whatever. This seemed quite odd to me when I came back from India at first, never having meditated on anything more than a blanket, usually just an old piece of cotton towelling.

Voice: But aren't the Indians used to just sitting on the floor, aren't their legs much more supple than ours?

S: Yes, but you can make your legs supple pretty quickly. If you make a point of cross-legged, even on a chair, you soon get used to it.

Surata: It really does make us sound a bunch of softies doesn't it? We use all these extra little bits and pieces and knick-knacks just so we can get it right.

5: Yes. Whereas the Indian just sort of sits down, closes his eyes, and gets on with it. You often find people sitting and meditating on banks of rivers<sup>1</sup> they're not sitting even on a piece of cloth very often, they're just sitting on the bare ground.

Surata: It can almost be a distraction can't it? All this preoccupation with bits and pieces just . . . Eunclear]

S: Well you've got these cushion sets for sale - you know, there's a sack cushion held in a sort of almost like a miniature mattress. Well all right maybe the beginner does need these things, but one should gradually almost make a conscious effort to become independent of these things.

End of tape 13 side B

#### The Story of the Yak ~orn 14/ Tape 14 side A

5: So anyway I think it's agreed that at least to begin with we need a monastery or temple, or a shrine, or at least our own little meditation corner.

Though the best Guru is one's own mind We need a teacher to illustrate our Mind-Essence - We cannot neglect for a moment to pray to him. Because of this, we always need a Guru'.

Yes<sup>1</sup> the best guru is one's own mind, but it's not one's ordinary mind, it's a higher mind, so to speak, and you need a teacher, an objectively existing guru, to point that out, to put you in touch with it, or to help you to put yourself in touch with it. It isn't as though your own mind can be a guru to you from the very beginning. Your own mind can be a guru to you only when you've had a considerable amount of spiritual experience. And you don't get that without the help of an external guru. So because of this we always need a guru. And in the same way

Though outer phenomenon may substitute for the Sutras, Hindrances and doubts in any case will arise. To clear them up, A lucid reference to the Sutras is necessary. Because of this<sup>1</sup> we always need the Sutras!

I mean the tree may be a wonderful symbol, a flower may be a wonderful symbol<sup>1</sup> but the tree cannot speak, the flower cannot speak. If you have difficulties, if you have doubts, the tree or the flower cannot clear them up. For that you need to refer to the Buddha's actual teachings, to the sutras. Even the sutras of course may not always be able to clear them up, not in a very detailed or a very specific manner. You may need a teacher as well, and there is that point also to be considered. But certainly the sutras are the records of the Buddha's teachings, the Buddha being an Enlightened human being in communication with other unenlightened or less enlightened human beings. So the teachings containing the sutras are more helpful to us than these phenomena which are symbols.

Voice: These sort of things are quite often used as rationalizations, aren't they. You hear people saying, well, life is my teacher - I don't need to meditate.

S: Oh yes indeed.

Vimalamitra: And "You mustn't depend on anyone else. "

S: Yes indeed, that is a rationalization. "You must be independent. Buddhism you to be independent. I'm an individual. I'm free." This seems to be the Krishnamurti-type approach, at least in theory - but in practice it doesn't work out like that because Krishnamurti's followers eagerly go to listen to his lectures and buy his books and do in effect regard him as a guru. So there is an additional element of double-think, and almost intellectual dishonesty involved. You look down on other people who have gurus, but you look up to Krishnamurti because, you know, he is advising you to not have any guru. So you listen to him with your mouth wide open, running down people who have gurus and foolish people who look outside themselves for help and so on and so forth. I mean I heard him speak once

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and he's quite good actually as a speaker<sup>1</sup> and I remember one thing he said was - looking round at his audience, mostly Hindus - he said, "There you are - rotting under your Bhagavad Gita!" And of course it was true - there's a great deal of truth in what he said, but you can also get people rotting underneath their copies of Krishnamurti's talks. He didn't seem able to see that. I had an argument about this<sup>1</sup> or a discussion about this, with one of his followers, and made the point that why does he say this sort of thing about scriptures, but at the same time he seems to encourage people to read his books. So this friend of mine says, well, his books aren't books, they're slices of experience. I said, well, what about scriptures? Aren't they also slices of experience? He had nothing to say to that.

Voice: That's probably what distinguishes Buddhist scriptures from Christian or Hindu scriptures - they are they are slices of experience rather than revealed knowledge.

S: Right. Yes, indeed. So allusive reference to the sutras is necessary. The sutras make things clearer to us than outer phenomena can do. Well, you could say that books means the sutras also, outer phenomena. I mean why exclude the sutras from the outer phenomena? You could say that too. This reminds me of a little story of Sri Rama Krishna's: Apparently someone had been studying the Advaita Vedanta in a one-sided sort of way - he believed, in a muddle-headed sort of way, that everything was one, it was all the same. So everything was God. So one day he was walking through the bazaar and there was a sudden shout of alarm - a mad elephant has escaped - an elephant has gone mad. So he saw this elephant coming towards him with his trunk up-raised. So he felt - well, everything is God, why should I get out of the way? But on the back of the elephant there was the Mahout, and he was shouting "Get out of the way, get out of the way, the elephant's gone mad." But the man didn't take any notice. He didn't get out of the way. He thought - well, the elephant is God. So the elephant sort of picked him up with his trunk and sort of tossed him aside. Luckily he only got a bit concussed, he came to afterwards. So people were scolding him<sup>1</sup> saying "How foolish you were that you didn't get out of the elephant's path. Why didn't you get out?" He said "Well, the elephant is God. It's all one, it's all the same. " So they said "Well, the elephant is God, yes<sup>1</sup> but what about the Mahout? Is he not God too? And he was

telling you to get out of the way!" You see? So in the same way you can't really oppose books to outer phenomena. Books as books are also included in the outer phenomena. So why should you make a point of listening to, so to speak, things like trees and flowers but ignoring what the sutras have to say, what the books have to say?

Ratnaguna: Because people would say that books are from somebody else's point of~view, they're biased, whereas trees are completely objective things.

5: Are they? I mean does a tree (here we have to come down to what we're really saying without sort of jargon) does a tree really tell you anything?

Voice: No. You've put something onto it...

5: No! That tree says nothing at all really. Perhaps a tree, so to speak, means something, but it can't be a symbol. I mean you can look at a tree and, yes, the tree is growing. But you can't think things like, oh,

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how brave the tree is, you know, look how he stands there bearing the wind and the rain, he doesn't care, he's indifferent to it all. This is really projecting and anthropomorphizing. So where has this sort of lesson come from? It's come from your own mind.

Ratnaguna: Is that a lesson at all? Or is it just...

S: Well, it may serve to bring something out from your mind which could be a genuine lesson. On the other hand it may not. So at least in the book, especially in the sutra1 you are genuinely in contact with another mind, whereas perhaps in the case of the other outer phenomena, the so-called objects of nature, you are not really, at least if you're not careful, so much in contact with something else. You're certainly not in contact with another individual mind. You may be in contact with something, but something, so to speak1 less developed than yourself, and really, in the strict sense, not capable of teaching you anything. You teach yourself perhaps by projecting your own thoughts or reflections onto the tree or the flower, but only in that way. So the trees and the flowers don't really say anything at all. Or rather - they say anything you please, anything you want them to say, they don't mind1 so to speak.

Vimalamitra: So projections in a way are kind of, in a way, part of integration aren't they?

5: Yes1 they do help you to become conscious of things that you might not otherwise have become conscious of, but you're not conscious of them as aspects of yourself, so to speak. So we always need the sutras it seems. So

Though the food of Samadhi may be sufficient, Provisions for nourishment are necessary; On food this delusory body must live. Because of this, we always need food'.

After all even Milarepa used to gather nettles and make a sort of soup, didn't he? So if you could really live on the food of samadhi and only on that all the time, why should he even have bothered? But no doubt you can get more nourishment from samadhi, from your dhyana experience, than you think. You are less dependent on food than you think. At least part of your dependence on food may be neurotic. You don't really need that MARS BA~, or that big bag of peanuts.

Gerry: What I find is that if I meditate a lot I get really hungry, as if I'm burning up a lot of energy.

S; Hmm. I wonder about that. Certainly as you get more into meditation you feel less need for food, even a sort of distaste for food. It seems a very sort of coarse, crude thing to do - to put lumps of matter (laughter) into your mouth and chew them and swallow them - it seems almost unnatural.

Vimalamitra: Even travelling around Greece I found that I was doing quite a lot of walking but didn't really need that much food, didn't even want it.

5: I used to find (leaving aside meditation) that when I was doing a lot of lecturing and travelling around, and presumably using up a lot of energy, I didn't feel like eating. I used to eat much less actually when I

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was doing those things. So I think if after meditating one feels hungry, it's probably a bit compensatory, because your senses have not received any satisfaction for some time. You've been out of contact with the senses and the sense-world<sup>1</sup> and they are re-asserting themselves rather vigorously. I think it's probably more likely to be something of that kind. I wouldn't like to generalize too much; it may not always be like that, but I think very often it is in fact like that. But after you've been in a somewhat different state of consciousness, maybe more in a sort of rupaloka than a mild dhyana state, than the senses start to get a bit restless, they're not getting any satisfaction, they're not getting any attention, and there's a tendency to make up for that afterwards

Voice: You say the senses, but they don't actually...

5: Well, the sense-mind or the sense-consciousness, so to speak.

Voice: Ah. So craving...

5: Yes.

Voice: Why do you have three meals a day then?

5: I seem to need them. [laughter] But I have noticed - I don't know whether this is due to the study or not - I have noticed the last two days I've had to ask for smaller portions.

Gerry: Then one day you have-nae eaten anything at all.

5: Well, that was for different reasons. (laughter] But there again...

Gerry: I thought so. (laughter]

5: when I went to India again last year I thought, well, I'm going to function in a more traditional way - because I was in my yellow robes all the time. So I told Lokamitra I'm not going to eat anything after twelve o'clock, because that is the custom for bhikkhus there. So he was quite horrified. But I said "No, I don't think I need it anyway." So while I was staying at the vihara I didn't eat anything after twelve o'clock. But I wasn't - when I say twelve o'clock I wasn't too pernickety about finishing the morning meal on the dot of twelve, no - sometimes we were eating at twelve fifteen or twelve twenty. I didn't bother to that extent. But I didn't take anything in the afternoon or evening. Though towards the end of my stay Padmavajra was pressing me at least to take a banana [laughter] or something with my milk, so I did that once or twice. But I adjusted in that way, and I thought well, it's interesting to see whether one can adjust. And certainly one could. It was partly due to the climate of course. You don't need to eat so much. You probably find on some retreats when you have just a brunch and then a late afternoon meal, after a few days you adjust to that.

Voice: At Tyn-y-Ddol we just have two meals, and it's quite sufficient. It's really amazing. You don't feel the need for anything at all. You just get perfectly used to it.

S: So I think it's a question of just adjusting to the situation, and also just following your own natural healthy needs, but without any neurotic element. I think probably what you have to watch are the second and third

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helpings, and the sweet things - the sweet things are especially suspect. All these innumerable - well, I don't like to harp on MARS BARS, but one does see them around - and KIT KATS and . . . I've been surprise~ sometimes when I've been out with two or three Order Members and we'd been on a long, say, journey by car, and when we stopped somewhere they'd sort of tumble out and when they come back they've usually great bags of sweeties of variQus kinds, between five or six or seven different kinds, not to speak of crisps and so on. And it doesn't seem to be to staunch hunger, but it seems to mean something quite different. (laughter) Boiled sweets and chocolates and bars of things. It really surprising - the sort of thing you expect teenagers to be into. And not young men in their middle and late twenties. I was quite astonished on one particular occasion last



year.

Vimalamitra: It must be all that blocked energy coming out.

S: Ho ho.

Robin: I think as people begin to lose their feelings of guilt, then it's much easier to start indulging all these cravings I suppose.

5: But why does one have this sort of cravings? Because they do say that a craving for food, especially sweet things, represents a craving for affection. This is what psychologists say and this is why teenage girls especially go in for these sort of things.

Voice: Maybe it's just because we're just not affectionate enough towards one another, Bhante. We're not expressing it to one another enough to compensate for the fact.

S: There could be something in that. Anyway, perhaps we'll leave it there.

Though the best clothing is the Dhoti, something to cover the body is necessary, for who is not afraid of shame and disgrace? Because of this, we always need clothing.

Do you think this argument is valid?

Voice: Well, not really. If they're going to be meditating up in the mountains and no one around, the question of shame and disgrace probably doesn't arise.

5: Do you think it really arises at all? Should arise at all?

Ratnaguna: shame and disgrace?

S: I mean, the shame and disgrace of being naked, not covering one's body in a decent manner. This is what he seems to be referring to.

Ratnaguna: Well there doesn't really seem to be any reason for shame and disgrace.

Vimalamitra: The Greeks weren't.

5: Well the Greeks were living among Greeks.

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Voice: It seems to be a cultural thing though doesn't it?

5: Partly climatic of course.

Voice: But the Japanese don't seem to have that shame.

S: No they don't.

Voice: And they have a similarly harsh climate.

Gerry: I think a lot of it goes back to Victorian mores, in that they may have the thoughts<sup>1</sup> but you've put the thoughts in the back of your head<sup>1</sup> i.e. you cover up the genitalia, and then by physically covering them you feel that you make [..unclear..]

Vimalamitra: This isn't the Victorian times is it?

Gerry: Yes, but we've still got a lot of hang-ups from that.

5: Of course also sometimes people go to extremes in a reactive way. But they can't be in the nude in a natural<sup>1</sup> healthy, unselfconscious way. They become a bit sort of exhibitionist, and they do it quite selfconsciously almost for the sort of kick that they get out of it<sup>1</sup> and the consciousness that they are offending somebody. That Mrs Grundy has her eyes fixed on them in horror and astonishment, and they get a bit of a kick, not to say a thrill, out of this, that Mrs Grundy is watching them, so let's see if we can shock her. I think this isn't very desirable. I think a lot of things that people do in the name of the arts come under this sort of heading. They see whether they can provoke Mrs Whitehouse for instance to loud screams of horror and outrage, and if they do they feel they've succeeded. You get the impression that this is what is behind a lot of it, especially when you see them doing various - not just nudity but various other things which are quite gratuitously introduced sometimes - into a play or some kind of stage performance.

Voice: Do you think that might be just a necessary stage that one has to go through as a reaction maybe. It's not particularly healthy.

5: Well, the reactions seem to be lasting a very long time. To me it seems a bit self-indulgent. To me people almost seem to be exploiting something quite subjective and not very pleasant in the name of freedom of expression, freedom of the arts and all that kind of thing. If the play requires someone to be on the stage in the nude, well fair enough, but sometimes people seem definitely to introduce nudity onto the stage just for its own sake. So that seems to be less justified.

Vimalamitra: Isn't it just a kind of battle going on between the nudists and the non-nudists?

S: It seems sometimes to be a battle between two different lots of sick people. It just seems that neither of them really is in the right. Well, Mrs Whitehouse certainly isn't, but then some people that she is against certainly aren't in the right. You certainly aren't in the right because Mrs Whitehouse is against you, or thinks that you're in the wrong.

Gerry: In a healthy society there'd be no need for censorship. I think it goes back to what you were saying about second rate emotional responses.

5: Yes. It does seem that when you've got a number of people of the same sex, especially together, and when the weather permits and it seems desirable, no one should feel any sort of selfconsciousness about not having any clothes on. But very often people do feel quite selfconsciousness in that sort of situation, where selfconsciousness, it would seem, is just not called for. So that would certainly represent a sort of hindrance. But if you were very insistent about being in the nude in circumstances where being in the nude was not really called for, well, you've still got a hang-up. It's a question of what is appropriate to the circumstances and your own genuine feelings. So here I think Rechungpa isn't really right at all. I think we can't really agree with him that we always need clothing. It rather reminds me of the story - I think it's a true story - about a nun who was asked why when nuns took a vow that in the bathroom they always kept on their shift - they were never naked. So she said "Oh dear, we couldn't be naked in front of the Good Lord." So he said that the nun seemed to think that the Good Lord was able to see through the wall of the bathroom and not able to see through the shift! [Laughter] So nudity, if it occurs, should be natural and unself-conscious. It shouldn't be something that you feel a need to flaunt or even inflict on other people. All right, in the next verse he says

Though the best thing is to cut off relationships with all, To get support and aid is ever necessary; Good or bad, who has not some friends? Because of this, we always need friends.

What sort of support and aid is Rechungpa thinking of, do you think?

Voice: Spiritual.

5: I was under the impression he was thinking in first place at least of material aid and support. You know, food and clothing from lay patrons, but perhaps he is also thinking of spiritual support and aid too. Protection from difficulties and dangers.

Robin: Is he interpreting Milarepa's words correctly to say that "the best thing is to cut off relationships with all"? Was Milarepa actually intending to say that specifically.

5: Is he saying that, bearing in mind he's.

"To cut off all ties is the best companion. To live alone is to become a friend of deities."

What he's saying is if you can have the company of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, that's better than having the company of ordinary human beings. Well, that's true, but there's a big IF here, isn't there? Most people are not capable of enjoying the company of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, so they need, presumably, spiritual friends, even ordinary friends. But by withdrawing into meditation you can so to speak conjure up all around you the presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who would not rather do that? But very few people can do that? So, the majority of people are dependent on spiritual friends in the flesh. So Milarepa is not against companionship. Really, he is only saying well, if a better and more spiritual companionship is in fact available to you, why should you not in preference avail yourself of that?

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Voice: He's almost making a principle - you should always aim for the higher friendship.

S: Yes! yes, yes. It does seem that Rechungpa hasn't fully grasped the point. He is probably is right in saying "Good or bad, who has not some friends." It's as though almost whether you like it or not you'll be in contact with some people or other, you'll have some friends, whether good or bad! so therefore it's really best, since you have to have friends, to have the best friends that you possibly can, whether on the human level or even on some higher level. And then he says

Though to avoid one's enemies is sufficient, Sometimes one meets them on the road - For who can be immune from hostility? Because of this, we always need protection.

Here of course presumably our friends come in. One can't always avoid one's enemies as Milarepa as suggested. They don't always just pass by, sometimes they're very far from passing by. Sometime~ they hang around, sometimes they really try to get at you and finish you off. So, we always need protection. It's not enough to wait until they've passed. It's not as simple as that. This is what Rechungpa is saying.

Voice: Do you think that's true?

5: Hmm. I think it is true. Because if you take Milarepa 'S words in the fullest possible sense, yes, in the end they pass by. That is to say they die or you die. But I don't think it's true that if you just keep quiet people will always, in the end, leave you alone. I don't think this is true. In think in some cases at least their anger or their hatred will be so virulent that it just continues indefinitely and you may have to take steps to guard yourself against it.

Gerry: Like the Christian action of turning the other cheek. But whereas the Christian really expects you to keep turning the other cheek.

S: I'm not saying that you should retaliate but you may have to take measures to protect yourself from the other person's attempts to harm you. That doesn't mean you'll necessarily harm him, but at least you'll try to put him in the position where he can't harm you.

Gerry: I once went to see a film called A Touch Of Zen. It's one of these martial arts things. But there's a group of Buddhist monks in it, and they go around and stop people, and they do carry weapons but they're ropes. And all these ropes do is just stop people. It's not an offensive weapon at all - it's not retaliatory.

5: They just immobilize them. Well, you need more than ropes in the modern age don't you? But I think in enmity of this sort, when people just don't give up, they never pass by, there's

something almost demoniacal, there's something almost mad. But you do occasionally come across people like that who've really got it in for you. You can't really see why but they do. And they really keep on~ they keep at it, year after year perhaps. Even though you as far as you know have done nothing at all to upset them. They've taken some sort of unreasoning dislike to you. Or more than dislike - actual hatred. I think sometimes there is some sort of reason for their

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being annoyed with you, but not to that extent. That sort of anger and hatred seems quite pathological. It's a bit like - apparently from what we gather - like the Yorkshire Ripper, who seems to have, judging from the newspaper reports, a sort of pathological hatred of women. Well something must have sparked that off, but the reaction presumably is out of all proportion to the provocation originally given - it goes far beyond that. One analyst suggests that if a woman sort of just - say a bar woman - just keeps him waiting a minute for his drink, or a woman bus conductor doesn't give him his ticket quite quick enough, that can spark him off into this insane rage against women. This is what they speculate, they don't really know, but this is how they've reconstructed his character. And that may well be so. This sort of pathological hatred is a possibility, and sometimes one does encounter it.

Voice: What then is the Buddhist attitude to capital punishment?

S: Well, it depends what you mean by the Buddhist attitude. Certainly if one looks at things from a purely spiritual point of view Buddhism wouldn't be in favour of capital punishment. But on the other hand it does recognize that under certain circumstances the state may not be able to survive without it. The question then is, well, do you choose the survival of the state or do you prefer to maintain your principle of complete non-violence? There is some kind of clash here, some kind of conflict. I think problems are sometimes solved, at least from a worldly point of view, by violence. But from a spiritual point of view the question is are they worth solving in that way? So it's not really a very simple or straightforward matter. In a way traditional Buddhism evades the issue: it says, well, the bikkhu mustn't kill. But some Buddhists say well, it's justified if lay people kill in order to save the country, protect their wives and children, and the bikkhus. But I think really, myself that that evades the issue, fudges the issue. I think the whole question is more complex and you can't solve it in that sort of way. Because, all right, do the bikkhus tell the lay people that they ought to kill people? Because according to the Vinaya the bikkhu must not speak in praise of, or in favour of, killing. So how are the lay people to know that it's their responsibility to do the killing, unless the bikkhus tell them. If they ask the bikkhus, what are the bikkhus to say? I mean, the orthodox reply probably would be, well, the bikkhu would remain silent. But does that really help very much? Silence might be taken as indicating assent. Usually it is so taken in Buddhism.

Ratnaguna: it implies to me that Buddhism doesn't go down to the social level, it stays purely spiritual

S: This is true to a great extent of Theravada Buddhism, especially to the extent that it's

identified with the monastic life. But historically of course, rightly or wrongly, probably wrongly, bikkhus have advised Theravada kings to wage war in defence of Buddhism, though that would seem to be inconsistent with their own principles.

Robin: I remember reading about the recent case of the king of Thailand I think who although he declared himself to be a Buddhist, declared an edict saying that it was lawful, from a religious point of view, to kill Communists. I think the way he rationalized it was to say that Communists were not really human, you could regard them as demons like the demon of ignorance. And he offered scriptural support for this.

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S: I think it's very dangerous when you begin regarding your political opponents as sub-human. You could say, well, capitalists are non-human. A lot of people say, well, Fascists are non-human, or Communists are non-human. Some people might say that the foolish people who believe in democracy are non-human, or sub-human. So once you start there seems to be no end to this. The Christians used to say that the Pagans were really non-human, that black people were non-human, et cetera. So I think this is a very dangerous sort of thing for anyone to say, especially for a Buddhist to say. But what do you do? The question nowadays is - and I think there's no easy solution at all - how does a non-violent person survive in a~ ver~~i~n:t~~d? Do you allow yourself just to be annihilated? At~ there is n~em, because then you believe that, well, by being true to your principle in this life, by not reacting to violence with violence, you've strengthened your moral character to such an extent, and earned so much punya, that you will have a better rebirth next time, and be born in fact under better conditions. Conditions more favourable to you, less violent conditions. But if you don't have that sort of belief in rebirth, you know, especially if you believe that this life is the only one that you have, then even if you believe in the value of non-violence, how are you to behave? Do you allow the violent people to take over completely? I mean it's not an easy question to answer. So far as the FWBO is concerned, we haven't yet faced this question, we haven't had to you may say. You could say we've been able to avoid it so far. But perhaps one day we shall have to face it, we don't know.

Gerry: I think what may well be important is the attitude to the violence. I think for example the Yorkshire Ripper, if you were to kill him, to do it through greed, hatred, and delusion, then that's very unskilful actually.

S: But the Theravada believes that there can be no deliberate taking of life without unskilful mental states. The Theravada does not believe that you can take life skilfully. They may be right or wrong in believing that, but that is the Theravada teaching.

Voice: I presume the Vajrayana thinks differently.

5: The Vajrayana thinks differently. Even Mahayana adopts a position somewhere in between. The Mahayana point of view would be, well, you can kill, for the benefit of others. It is an unskilful action and you will suffer for it, but you are prepared to suffer for it in order to benefit others. That is the Mahayana point of view.

Ratnaguna: What's the Vajrayana...?

5: So the Vajrayana point of view is that if you are a Tantric yogi and sufficiently developed spiritually, you can kill others who are harmful, but you can liberate their consciousness onto a higher level through your spiritual powers. Therefore you are justified in killing, if you have those spiritual powers, that is the Vajrayana point of view. But again, how many people have powers of that sort?

Ratnaguna: That's to be taken literally is it, not symbolically?

5: Well, no, the Vajrayana does take it quite literally. How otherwise could one take it? Because you are actually killing somebody. They are

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speaking of killing individual human beings.

Ratnaguna: But you could take that, you know, symbolically, couldn't you?

5: You could, but then of course you evade the whole issue again, the question under discussion is whether you can skilfully kill actual living human beings. That is actually the question being discussed. So I mean if the Vajrayana attitude is interpreted symbolically, then in effect you're discussing something else! you're no longer discussing this particular topic. So the question is what is the Vajrayana's attitude to the actual killing of human beings.

Robin: I don't quite understand why an advanced yogi would be able to as it were liberate somebody's consciousness in the bardo state, but not to be able to do it while they're a human being. And thereby change them from being...

S: Well, that is because the bardo state is a quite different state from the ordinary state of waking consciousness. In the bardo state you are free from the physical body, and you are, so to speak, nearer to Reality; you are, you know, receiving, so to speak, impressions from Reality. You have even a momentary experience of the Dharmakaya. So in that state you're much more open to any teaching you may receive. The way that the matter is presented in some works of Tibetan Buddhism it almost suggests as though the consciousness of the person that you've killed is completely passive and you just sort of put it, you know the lama who has just committed the killing just sort of puts it into the state of Enlightenment like keeping something on a shelf, but it can't really be like that. At the most the lama through his spiritual powers can remain in contact with that deceased consciousness, now in the bardo and more open to higher spiritual experiences and teach

and lead it under those conditions. He can't just automatically conduct it to the level of the Dharmadhatu. But that is the way sometimes things are put. This would not be correct. But the Vajrayana does believe in that kind of possibility. But clearly it's not something that could be practised on a mass scale. It's not something that soldiers fighting in battle could do. It's not something that the state executioner could do, presumably. Or the Home Secretary, when he signs someone's death warrant.

Voice: Taking it down to more concrete terms again<sup>1</sup> is it worthwhile talking about what the FWBO could or would do in the event of violence being done to members of the WBO.

5: Well, it depends upon the nature and extent of the violence. If it's a question of atomic war, there's nothing you could do probably. You don't have any atomic weapons at your disposal anyway. The FWBO hasn't got its own nuclear deterrent, or anything of that sort. But supposing an individual member of the FWBO was beaten up. Well, one would presumably have to do something about it. It doesn't mean that you find the man who's done the beating up and you beat him up, but some attempt should be made to contact him and at least talk him into a better frame of mind. This actually just happened once at Sukhavati didn't it? Someone got attacked and I think it was Subhuti found out who had done the attacking and went and had a talk with him. We haven't really had any trouble at Sukhavati to speak of at all, though quite a few people were apprehensive at the beginning. So I think on that sort of social level you can protect your- self against violence by establishing individual contact with people, by

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taking sensible precautions, and if necessary going around in groups, so that no one is sort of picked on if they happen to be wandering around on their own.

But supposing there was a change of government<sup>1</sup> supposing the government outlawed the FWBO, and they actually persecuted its members, well, what would you do then? You probably couldn't do much against the combined might of the government, you'd probably have to lie low and do your best to survive, live to fight in another kind of way another day.

Voice: Then propagation becomes much more difficult.

S: Yes, but not impossible. Fortunately we don't have to face those sorts of difficulties as yet, not anywhere in the world, but we might in due course. So we shouldn't assume that we're always going to have things as easy as we have in this country at least at present. Don't forget that Hitler shortly after coming to power banned all existing Buddhist societies then in Germany. There were I think twelve or fifteen or more of them, and they were all forced to close down.

Vimalamitra: Were they specifically Buddhist or were there...?

S: They were Buddhist.



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Robin: Does this in any way do you think justify more political activity on the part of Buddhists in this country in order to try to prevent such a government from coming into power, at least in some small way?

S: I think it justifies a greater degree of political awareness. Whether one would actually be able to do very much . . . [break in recording]. aware one was of the situation that's another matter. I mean there'd have to be quite a large number of people in the movement for your action as a movement, if you decided upon that, to make any difference to the situation. But we mustn't forget what the situation was in the case of the Christian church at the time of the collapse of the Roman Empire. The bishops more or less took over the administration, because the Church was the only remaining viable institution, even though they had been persecuted quite a lot they had preserved their - well, infrastructure, as the term is now - intact, and were able to take over many functions of the civil power when it collapsed. So it may be what one can more usefully do is to just to keep alive an alternative structure which in times of collapse or chaos, when people are just looking for some kind of support, can rapidly extend itself, and sort of meet the needs of the situation - there's that aspect of it too.

I think perhaps in the FWBO generally, even now, we don't nearly forcibly enough bring to the attention of people that we have, even though it's on a very small scale, an alternative society, complete in itself virtually.

Voice: Perhaps we're not really convinced of that ourselves yet.

S: It's not I think just that we're not convinced of it, but I think a lot of people still have the attitude of - even in sort of spiritual terms or pseudo-spiritual terms - "I'm all right Jack". I mean "I'm living in m~ spiritual community, I'm working in m~ co-op. Life is pretty easy and positive for me now. But not realizing for how many thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people, things are not so easy or so positive; but not sort of caring sufficiently about them to go out and tell them the good news, so to speak. I think there's still a tendency among many people in the FWBO just to settle down in their own cosy corner of the FWBO and just sort of lead a happy personal life, with the minimum of responsibility. I think not nearly enough people within the FWBO feel an urgent need to expand the FWBO. That is to say they don't really see the urgent need of the people around for the FWBO, or something like the FWBO.

Voice: This ties in with what you were saying the other day about still being too problem-oriented.

5: Too problem-oriented and too self-oriented.

Ratnaguna: Do you think that's the sort of next step for most people - to sort of see that...

S: Yes, I think it is. I think some people begin to see. I think it's very good for instance that we've been made aware of the needs of people in India. Their needs are more obvious because they're material as well as spiritual. I think it's very good that we've almost been forced to consider the needs of the movement in India, the needs of people in Poona

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and Ahmedabad and Aurangabad and Bombay and other places. It's sort of jolted us a bit out of our self-centredness, even our selfishness<sup>1</sup> as a movement. But it's still surprising to me that the response to the needs of India hasn't been more warm and wholehearted than it actually has been. That people in some cases seem to have been quite luke-warm about it. Maybe because they're already quite busy doing other things, but nonetheless one would have thought there would have been more enthusiasm for helping the movement in India, which means helping our Indian friends<sup>1</sup> whose needs in many ways are much more desperate than our own.

All right, so, Though the best remedy is to view all hindrances as void, The demons and ghosts are malignant and powerful;

To conquer the demon of ego is even more difficult. Because of this, we always need safeguards.

Well, if you can view all hindrances as void, well<sup>1</sup> that's best, but very often you can't. You can view them as void only in a purely theoretical, a purely intellectual sort of way. So you need practical supports, you need safeguards. For instance, take up the question of the ego. Yes, you're conscious perhaps that your ego is very strong, but it isn't enough just to contemplate the void in order to get rid of that feeling of ego, because your experience of the void is very weak perhaps, you've only got an intellectual understanding of the void, so you need actual practices which will weaken your ego, you need safeguards<sup>1</sup> that is to say which will enable you to weaken your ego. You need to engage perhaps in unselfish work, work for the benefit of other people, need to practise the metta bhavana, you need to communicate with other people, even need to teach other people the Dharma. You're not able directly to apply the remedy of Sunyata, you're not in a position to do that. So in fact one can say Rechungpa is right, he's insisting on the path of regular steps. Milarepa is insisting it seems almost on the path of no steps at all. Just going straight to the top of the stairs with one tremendous leap, you know, not going up step by step at all. Not everybody's able to make that leap obviously. Maybe safeguards isn't quite the right word here. Perhaps the English word isn't quite appropriate. I don't know what the original Tibetan or Sanskrit word was.

Robin: So how do you think we should view hindrances? Particularly I'm thinking of the hindrances that come up in meditation. I mean somehow they seem very real, they seem...

5: Well, in tradition there are various ways of dealing with them. If for instance the hindrance

of anger comes up you can deal with it by cultivating the opposite of anger<sup>1</sup> that is to say metta. You can deal with it by reflecting on the unpleasant or the undesirable consequences of indulging in your anger. You can deal with it by reflecting that your anger is just a passing mental state and that if you watch it carefully it will eventually dissolve. You can deal with it in all these different ways.

But the ability to view all hindrances as void is the prerogative so to speak of only a person who is very highly gifted spiritually speaking, or highly developed even. Most people have to accept the hindrances as real and deal with them on that level. They can't directly see their unreality, their voidness. But nonetheless what Milarepa says is true. The hindrances

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are void. That is the ultimate answer to them.

Robin: Is that in a way the approach one is taking if one uses the - I think what's the last antidote in the list, which is the one of just going for Refuge, of trying to transcend the whole thing.

S: Yes, right, indeed. Or you could say that the difference is this: That you can get rid of the unskilful with the help of the skilful, and then go beyond even the skilful. Milarepa is saying as it were you should get rid of the unskilful straight away, without going via the skilful. Do you see what I mean?

Ratnaguna: So we use dualism?

S: Yes, in order to get rid of dualism.

Ratnaguna: There is a possibility for some people to not even use that?

S: Yes, but I would say that that is very exceptional, very rare. I mean the saying in this connection is that you'd use one thorn to get rid of another. If there's a thorn sticking in your flesh, well you take another thorn and you insert it into the first thorn, and in that way pull it out of your flesh. So in that way you use the skilful mental state to get rid of the unskilful mental state. But even the skilful mental state is still mundane, and you need to go beyond the mundane. So in the end you abandon even the the skilful mental state.

So, he concludes:

To stay with my Guru, brings happiness; To return to you brings joy. Wherever you go, I will go. But I beseech you, by all means, To stay in the valley for a short time.

It's as though he's saying "I really am exhausted, wherever you go I will go, but please, if you possibly can, let us just stay in the valley for a short time, let me just have a little rest."

So Milarepa replied:

"If you have confidence, to follow my way will be quite sufficient; otherwise there will always be a need for something. Well, if by all means you are unwilling to go to no-man's mountain now, let us go to Bouto to preach the Dharma.

So that's the compromise, that's the easy way, just to stay a little way and preach the Dharma. It's not that they're going to have a good time or going to spend their few days socializing, no, they're going to preach the Dharma.

Thereupon the Jetsun and Rechungpa went to Bouto of Red Rock.

So Milarepa sort of gives way, but he doesn't give way altogether. The fact that you give way, that you just relax a little, doesn't mean that you give up effort altogether by any means. All right, they're going to stay a little while, but they're going to preach the Dharma instead of

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going and carrying on with further solitary meditation.

Voice: So you say that for most of us the important thing is working to build up the FWBO rather than go off and live in a cave. That's a long way away for most people.

S: Yes. No caves (laughter). Not any well furnished caves to let anyway.

Voice: I think that some of the people in Glasgow got some ideas of building a few.

5: So you see, Milarepa has had his say, Rechungpa has had his say, and they've come to some kind of agreement. Milarepa has clearly stated, unambiguously stated the ideal in all its austerity, or at least in all its integrity, and Rechungpa has pleaded for some concessions to be made to ordinary human weakness, and he seems to have some right on his side. What he says is not altogether unreasonable. Nonetheless it is so easy to slip back and make excuses and to rationalize that it's not a bad thing that someone like Milarepa does hold up spiritual principles in a totally uncompromising way. There are very few people around who are totally uncompromising. It's very good that there should be at least a few. Otherwise if you're not careful of compromise there's no end. You can compromise your spiritual life out of existence if you're not careful. At some point or other you have to make a stand.

One of our Order members in India had to make a stand<sup>1</sup> because Order night is Sunday night, or Sunday night, is Order night, but that was the night of which he always used to take his wife to the pictures. And apparently it was a free show somewhere or other - they couldn't afford to go and pay<sup>1</sup> but there was a free show somewhere I think in connection with his work. So he had tickets every week for that. His wife used to look forward to it all week. So what was he to do? So he decided to attend - you'll be glad to hear - the weekly Order meeting. But it led to tensions at home you see, but he had to take that sort of stand. He felt there was not much point in being an Order member if he was never able to attend the

weekly Order meeting. So he even had to displease his wife. He didn't want to displease her, he didn't want to deprive her of her weekly pleasure, but he had to make that decision. She wouldn't go without him of course. Well, maybe she's compromised with it now, maybe she in the end did agree to go on her own or with some other member of the family.

Gerry: I think one important thing is that when we come to a situation of compromise we feel that in principle what we should really do is this, and then once in a blue moon we actually do it, then it's not really a big deal. Like we feel that the whole of Western society as we know it going to crumble because we've stood up, but not a lot happens.

5: But sometimes when you're uncompromising people are more amenable than you think they might be. This is as you say not such a big deal after all, or perhaps they don't mind all that much. Really you've made it a big thing in your own mind - sometimes. Or you perhaps have thought that they'll be less reasonable than in fact they turn out to be. Or maybe the fact that you're firm and decisive means that there's not much argument or discussion. It's your being uncertain yourself, perhaps, that has led to there being so much discussion about it.

Robin: I think Surata gave some examples of that in his talk last night

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about how Lokamitra was insistent on getting to Kalimpong despite the fact that there were no visas.

S: Hets got visas now. Hets probably there now.

Voice: Oh really?

5: Probably because he was leaving Poona on the 10th of November and going to one or two places on the way, going to Nagpur certainly, going to Calcutta, then up to Kalimpong and Darjeeling. And he's going to Sikkim too, to Gangtok. He's got permits for that, for him and Puma, and Mahendra is going with them. So they could be there at this moment.

Voice: Is that because the FWBO in India is getting more recognition?

5: No, I don't think it's got anything to do with that. I think we have to keep quite a low profile for the time being. The FWBO in India is still very very small as in fact it is here still. But perhaps it's known to more people than the FWBO is known to in Britain, because especially in Maharashtra, among the ex-untouchables we're very well known now. I mean the magazine, the Marathi magazine, circulates quite widely, dozens of people every copy. We've become quite well known in Western India quite quickly.

Voice: Is that not because there's a greater awareness of the spiritual...?

S: No, it isn't just that. It's because the ex-untouchables especially have become Buddhists

out of real need in every respect, and so far no Buddhist organization has been able to help them very much. But it seems that our way of functioning really does suit the conditions there, and they see some possibility, some hope, as regards the FWBO, they feel that we've found the right way of doing things, that's been very encouraging to many of them. Our main difficulty is we have so few full time Order members. The Indian Order members though very sincere are just not free in most cases. We've only one full time Indian Order member working there, that's Vimalakirti. Even to get him free has been very difficult. It means we have to finance the support of his family, as well as his support. So we need more and more full time people there.

There's the work, there's people just waiting, wanting classes, lectures and so on. It's not like here where you have to sort of persuade them to come along. No they're there ready waiting, in many places, many areas, many towns and cities and villages. We just have to get to them.

Voice: In this country people say that Rajneesh et cetera, they're very well known because of their eccentricities...

S: That is true, yes.

Voice: .. whereas the FWBO is not very well known because it's very down to earth.

S: But the Rajneesh movement is known in India not only because of its eccentricities, in the strict sense, but because it flouts certain Hindu conventions in a way that they regard as quite unpleasant. Like Rajneesh followers walking - men and women walking - round hand in hand and kissing

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and cuddling in public which is regarded by Indians as being really very indecent. So this sort of thing attracts a lot of attention. And Rajneesh seems to advocate that sort of thing. He says he wants to break down the sort of conventions, but whether he really knows what he's doing I think is quite another question.

Voice: I was thinking mainly in this country.

S: Well yes, he's got hold of one or two publicists like Bernard Levin. But I don't think he's really well known; he's not exactly a household word. I don't think he's as well known as the Maharishi is. And you even hear the Maharishi's name much less than you used to. You used to hear it a lot ten years ago, especially after the Beatles took up with him. But he doesn't seem as well known now. The Guru Maharaj doesn't seem as well known now as he used to be, you don't hear his name so much. Or perhaps I'm just out of touch, I don't know. Do you hear his name, or do people come along to the Friends, new people knowing or having heard about Guru Maharaj, or the Maharishi?

Ratnaguna: The Maharishi.

S: The Maharishi more.

Voice: It's more TM you hear of now than the Maharishi, because they're selling it as a sort of sophisticated package that's called TM.

Voice: That's non-religious.

Voice: TM's not a religion.

S: Ah yes, so I think there are some groups that have sort of broken away, or detached themselves a bit, from the Maharishi. Maybe they don't want to stress the exotic oriental element. They want to stress the scientific character of it all.

Voice: I think that comes from he himself doesn't it?

S: Well1 he lauds science, he praises science1 though he doesn't actually have I think a genuinely scientific approach...

Voice: I think he's got sort of pseudo-scientific institutes and so on.

5 : Science is just another sort of magic almost. "It must be true because it's scientific. " Well, some people try to present Buddhism like that. "The Buddha was scientific, Buddhism is scientific1 Buddhist meditation is scientific. "

Voice: Is that still going?

5: Well, in a sort of wee way I think. It might catch on because this sort of approach does appeal to some people.

Ratnaguna: There's that new movement isn't there, or magazine?

5: They brought out three or four issues. They're old friends of Dave's. He's still hoping that they'll see the limitations of that kind of approach let us say. They're certainly very keen on it. Anyway, any

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further point? We've actually come to the end of the chapter. We're nearly to the end of the session and very nearly to the end of the week. So just look back over what we've been doing, maybe over the whole week1 and just see whether there's any points that we need to clear up finally. It's the story of the Yak Horn. Obviously it wasn't all about the Yak Horn, but the chapter's been entitled in this way. Perhaps that's regarded as the highlight of the whole chapter - Milarepa creeping into the Yak Horn and Rechungpa being unable to follow him. He was too big.

Robin: In a way we didn't really talk all that much about pride and conceit. We did cover it as far as the story went, but that's not so much in how we ourselves can deal with feelings of conceit in ourselves.

5: Do you think that is very strong in people?

Robin: I think it's very strong in me.

5: What is this pride and conceit?

Vimalamitra: It can either be negative pride or positive pride. 5: So what's the difference?

Vimalamitra: Well negative pride is self denigration . . Eunclear]

S: Yes. I think quite a lot of people denigrate themselves. It's negative type. I think perhaps the reason why it wasn't dwelt upon or wasn't discussed at length was, well, everybody agrees that it is an unskilful mental state and it's so obvious that one has got to get over it or do something about it or transcend it. There doesn't perhaps seem very much to say about it. Perhaps everybody already knows what one means by terms of that sort.

Robin: Well, can you suggest any specific practices, for example, that are useful?

S: Well, inasmuch as pride in a way, or conceit in a way, is the basic error from the spiritual point of view, all spiritual practices are meant, directly or indirectly to tackle it, especially vipassana. So one might say that there's no particular remedies, all the remedies are remedies. All spiritual practices, ultimately<sup>1</sup> are remedies for pride and conceit. If you meditate, or if you engage in Right Livelihood<sup>1</sup> in the long run what you're trying to do is to break down your idea of yourself as a fixed stable ego, in a metaphysical sense, you're trying to transcend the limits of your existing consciousness, or existing limits of your consciousness. You're trying to grow. Pride or egotism is sort of settling down at a particular level and considering that as you, refusing to go beyond, refusing to change refusing to grow. So everything that helps you to grow is inimical to egotism, or inimical to pride and conceit obviously. So all spiritual practices whatsoever, really, tackle pride and conceit. The whole spiritual life tackles pride and conceit, because the whole spiritual life insists that you should grow. The whole spiritual life in fact consists in growth, which is completely the antithesis of pride and conceit. I mean how can you be proud of or conceited about what you are now if you realize that it's got to be transcended as quickly as possible.

Robin: But in Rechungpa's case, perhaps his conceit in certain respects

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was more specific than that. I mean for example he was expecting approval from his guru, and looking for this approval, and in that sense are there any specific ways that one can overcome that particular difficulty, not necessarily from one's guru, but just looking for approval from people?

5: Well again, if one is keeping up with one's spiritual practices they will all have that effect, because what are you looking for approval for? Approval for yourself as you are. Probably the best practical way of dealing with that sort of difficulty, that sort of situation, is just remaining in contact with spiritual friends, those who will give you genuine encouragement but who will not just approve of you as you are now, or not allow you



to remain as you are now without changing, will not allow you to settle down in what you now are.

Gerry: It seems to me that the story goes a deeper than that, and that what Milarepa 'S saying is to try and get rid of the subjective to form a more objective view of life, and from that to then transcend it.

5: Well ultimately one tries to get rid of the very distinction between subject and object, but one can't do that immediately, one can't reduce them immediately to the void, you have to purify and refine them until in the end you get a very tenuous, even diaphanous, subject/object distinction, that you can begin to see through with insight.

Voice: I think [you've got to have an?] understanding of what it means to change. [Does it?] go deep enough. Then like you said in order to change you've actually got to change. That point quite came home to me [...unclear...] just "I'm going to get rid of this, I'm going to be more like that." And it's sort of me being resculpted, rather than the change actually being something absolutely fundamental.

5: Right, yes. Well, sometimes the change is thought of in quite external, peripheral terms. Well, external changes do help, they do help bring about internal changes, but external changes are nonetheless distinct from internal changes. even if you make external changes, changes in your way of life, you have still got to take advantage of those external changes and change internally as well. You don't necessarily change just because you give up your job, or just because you give up going to college. It only gives you an opportunity to change. You don't necessarily change just because you join a spiritual community. Externally speaking you just exchange one roof for another. It's what you do under that roof that really counts.

Voice: There was a point that came up on Thursday and I think we never brought up because we went on to something else: We were talking about discussing with somebody at a centre if they believe in change and so on, and then saying to them, ah, but then you are a Buddhist, and how that often provokes a reaction in people; they don't want to be labelled a Buddhist, and it's as if the FWBO is just another of many alternatives, and they don't want to sort of be forced into a [category?] and just how we can present the Friends as actually something different. There's not just - you know - there's Rajneesh, there's the Divine Light Mission, there's TM, and we're just another alternative to the newcomer, and not to sort of push him into the position of "You're a Buddhist", but actually how can we present ourselves as something different and something not on the same level as all these other...?

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5: I think it's virtually impossible. Because as some of us discovered in connection with the Festival of Body, Mind & Spirit these "other" inverted commas groups use the same terms as we use, they also speak of Enlightenment, they even use the word transcendental they use the word community, they use the word alternative, they use for the most part all the words that we use, but they use them in a rather different way<sup>1</sup> and it isn't easy to devise an

entirely new set of terms and to popularize those. We also have meetings, we also have retreats, we also have meditation, so it isn't easy - I don't think there is any quick and easy way - of just showing how we are different. I think that people who are at all sensitive or who are at all receptive, if they come along to one of our centres or even visit a community, or come on a retreat, they do detect the presence of something different, even though they may not be able to identify it. I think sometimes we have to explicitly make clear how we differ from other inverted commas "religious groups" or "spiritual groups", even by, if necessary, criticizing them and making it clear that we do not agree with some of the things that they are advocating, or some of the things that they are doing. Make it quite clear that we don't even see eye to eye with some other Buddhist groups sometimes.

I think perhaps what we have to do is to take a much bolder or even more militant stand; I think we're still rather too apologetic and not outward-going enough, not bold enough, not emphatic enough even, not challenging enough.

Voice: Not confident enough.

5: In a way not confident enough.

Voice: If we were confident we could. ..(unclear]

S: Yes, yes.

Gerry: But we don't want to get into the - as was mentioned earlier - the Bible thumping syndrome, you know, hitting people over the head with this thing.

5: Well, I don't know about that. (laughter) There's even hitting over the head and hitting over the head. I don't think we could have a Bible thumping approach actually because to begin with we don't have a Bible. And our sort of putting our point of view in a strong way I think would just not be like that at all.

Voice: So you'd say don't be afraid of hitting people over the head with a Bible. Just go out and present the thing as strongly as possible.

5: Yes. Why should you be thinking in those terms at all? Forget all about those wretched Jehovah Witness type people, you know? I mean if you are aware and if you are tactful and if you are really trying to communicate with somebody, I think you won't speak over-forcefully or put things so strongly that they're repelled rather than attracted.

Robin: I think there are some people who are so suspicious that they'd be repelled anyway.

5: Yes, but if they've come along to the centre, well, presumably they are looking for something and are open to some degree.

Gerry: A friend of mine went along to the Festival of Mind and Body and he didn't know I was in the FWBO or involved, and he just talked to me about the festival and he said "Oh! there's one bunch of people there looked as if they had something." And I went "Oh, no! Who was this?" and it was the FWBO.

S: Ah that's interesting.

Gerry: It was the people themselves.

5: Ah, yes, yes, yes.

Gerry: In fact it's the only...

5: At least they did seem a happy healthy bunch?

Gerry: That's correct.

S: And especially those running the restaurant that was; at least that - you could say - they looked physically healthy and they looked - you know - quite positive and cheerful, and they seemed to work well together.

Robin: I don't think that was a uniform impression actually, I mean two friends of mine went down there and described the FWBO people - both independently - both described them as being "a surly bunch".

S: Oh! Surly?

Robin: Or rather one of them used the word surly, and the other a rather similar word.

5: I wonder how that came about.

Robin: It may have been a mistaken identification...

Voice: I think sometimes quite recently there's been a lot said about being more confident about the FWBO, and I think what people do is they go out with the intention to be aggressive and confident, without any real confidence

5: Yes. You have to let your confidence emerge within the situation, within the communication, not have a sort of preconceived idea of being confident, or speaking confidently. You have to build up your inner confidence so that when the situation requires it, it will take over, you don't have to think about it. You don't sort of spot someone walking about over there and think, well, I'll go up and speak to him in a really confident way - you just go up to him and talk to him, and if you're naturally confident, or you've built up your inner confidence, that will gradually come across in a quite natural manner. I'll show you a little painting that's quite interesting a little painting of two Jehovah's Witnesses, just see if you really think there's any danger that we may adopt that sport of attitude, or look like those two people - it really is quite amusing. I'll see if I can find it. It's over here somewhere. The artist is called Beryl Cook, I don't know whether you've heard

of her. Have you? Here we are. (laughter) Do you see yourself looking...

End of Tape 14 side B

**End of seminar**