

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/Tiratna 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 Tiratna 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 [Tiratna 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

Final Preordination Retreat: Questions and Answers

Held at Padmaloka in July 1982

Present: the Venerable Sangharakshita, Upasakas and Mitras

S: Who are the three question-masters?

Voice: Well there's Robin and (?)

S: Which Robin?

Voice: That one. We don't actually have a question-master from our group, there will be four people who will be putting questions.

Voice: My group's the same.

S: So these are questions that you felt you hadn't fully sorted out yourselves, unresolved questions?

Voice: Yes (laughter) - the ones we thought might provoke you (laughter).

S: (unclear) so who is going to start? I'm not feeling easily provokable this morning (laughter), you can try if you wish (laughter) (pause) Get rid of the background first, if you like, the ground covered under which the question arises.

Voice: I think most of these questions arise out of discussions of precepts. There are one or two sections which some of us - Robin had a sort of number of questions.

Robin: I was listening to your tape on the spiritual importance of confession and you said that on full moon days and new moon days that traditionally the Sangha used to get together in pairs before the usual gathering came close together. I was wondering since that as it seems to be so important in the spiritual life, the part of confession, was there not a case for that sort of thing to happen in the Order?

S: Yes, there was this tradition, there still is this tradition in many parts of the Buddhist world that the monks, because within the context of the Vinaya, or bhikkhus or monks, gathered together every full moon and every new moon day. The purpose for which they originally gathered is the subject of some discussion. They've gone into the question, I think it was in the unpublished work on Buddhist literature I think, that this question of the (?) in the twice-monthly observance. It seems that originally in the Buddha's day, or at least earlier in the Buddha's day, it was sort of what we would call order meeting. The bhikkhus, the full-time followers, gathered together, they meditated and they seemed to discuss or recite the verses of the Dharma.

Perhaps it's in the "Three Jewels" I've dealt with this, does anyone remember the section on the Sangha? But anyway this seems to have been the original practice, that the bhikkhus gathered together and recited those verses in which the Buddha's teaching had been codified, almost for the purposes of recitation and memorization and also meditate together. I mean

there are a number of occasions in which we find the bhikkhus gathered together and simply meditating on full moon days. We came across this a little while ago, the other weekend, when we started the Sammalaphala Sutta.

It's a full moon day, or full moon night, and the King of (?) wanted to go and visit a teacher and eventually decided to go visit the Buddha on the full moon night. And he finds the Buddha and all his disciples, of whom there are quite a large number, meditating in the forest. So this seems to have been the practice in those early days that the monks gathered together, the bhikkhus gathered together, recited the verses embodying the Dharma and meditated together. It would seem that the practice of confession was introduced into this monthly or bimonthly meeting only somewhat later because the question of confession doesn't arise unless you've got something to confess. In the very early days, it seems the bhikkhus had nothing to confess for obvious reasons, for they were virtually Enlightened in most cases. But things did change, people joined the order who weren't quite so spiritually advanced and there were little things they had [2] to confess. So in the case of more serious offences that had to be confessed at the meeting itself and the order as a whole then took any necessary action to deal with the matter. But less serious matters could be dealt with as between two bhikkhus that were members of the Sangha. One, who was conscious of an offence, could confess to the other and, so to speak, purify himself - it was in fact called (?) - before the actual meeting and this is still very much the practice except that in some parts of the Buddhist world there is in fact no public confessions. No confession within the context of the actual order meeting, it's all sorted out, as it were, in private beforehand so that the order when it meets is in harmony and in, so to speak, purity.

So this is really important and the question is whether - I mean this sort of practice, this sort of confession, could not be introduced within the order, the Western Buddhist Order. I think in a way it is because what it means is that when you meet together as an order you meet together as individuals, you meet together as committed persons. So if prior to the meeting you've done anything which detracts from your status, so to speak, as an individual which detracts from your going for refuge, clearly you must put that right before you can authentically participate in a meeting of the order, which means, of course, a meeting of committed individuals. Do you see what I mean?

Take for instance and extreme example. Supposing before the meeting you committed an offence with regard to another order member, supposing for instance, you hit him in anger, intending to hurt him. Well clearly there's been a breach between you and that other order member. So you cannot really, generally, both of you, go along and attend that order meeting because you're not in harmony with each other. You must put that right before you go along, before you can validly or even generally join in the order meeting. But this sort of thing does happen, maybe in some cases it doesn't always happen but it should happen so that when you meet as an order, you really do meet as an order. You meet as an order of individuals who are in harmony with one another.

Sometimes, of course, it may happen that differences are thrashed out at an order meeting, it may not always be possible to thrash them out beforehand especially if they involve a number of people. But so far as possible, especially personal breaches and maybe conflicts just between a couple of order members should be thrashed out, should be put right before they go and actually participate in a meeting otherwise there can't be a genuine meeting. You've either got to sort things out beforehand or you've got to sort things out in the context of the meeting

itself. Otherwise you've only got a pretence of an order, a pretence of a Sangha to that extent. Do you see what I mean?

Voice: Does once a month constitute a really frequently enough practice?

S: That's difficult to say, it depends; some people, some order members might be living together in a community. They might see one another every day or they meet every day. So life becomes, as it were, one continuous order meeting, which is the ideal. You know sometimes you're working together and sometimes you're meditating together. But if one normally isn't in contact with other order members I would say once a month is the absolute minimum. But perhaps one could consider meeting, as it were, formally even more frequently than that.

The principle of course being - rather than laying down a rule - the principle being, meet together as often as you can, as genuinely as you can, as effectively as you can. If possible be in continuous contact at least with some other order members. Perhaps it should be a question of how often in the month it would be permissible for you not to be together.

[3]

Voice: The second question is relating to order weekends, development of the order (unclear) - (laughter)

Voice: That's right, sorry, you certainly in the introduction in the 'case of dysentery' that you felt the development of men's order weekends was an important innovation in the Movement. Vessantara said that another important point that you said you felt that the order was becoming unified in vision but not necessarily united in activity. Could you sort of elaborate on that?

S: Well the second point ... does anyone remember when or where I said that and in what context?

Voice: No it's something I've heard, the version I heard was that the order we were a unified order but not united, you were talking in terms of development more of single sex development within the order.

S: Yes there is a difference of being sort of 'unity in spirit' in as much as everybody has the same spiritual commitment and 'unification', as it were, organizationally. One doesn't necessarily have everybody doing everything together especially in the case of men order members and women order members. This is a united order inasmuch, of course, as all are equally going for refuge but it is not a unified order in the sense that men and women order members live together, work together et cetera (in the system?).

Voice: Do you see that trend developing in any particular direction?

S: You say in any particular direction what do you mean because that trend itself is a direction?

Voice: Oh yes, ah well, would you consider yourself any sort of a greater, ah - shouldn't use the word switch, ah - divergence in activities between male and female members?

S: Yes I wondered about this. I was talking about this with some of the women order members on the last women's study retreat. It does seem that there are some things that women as such are more suited to or in a way better at. It's rather difficult for instance to imagine a women's building team. There was one, a very small one, you know, consisting of two women some years ago, they did a certain amount of light building work but they did rather quickly tire of it and it is rather difficult when (?) to imagine them working together in that sort of situation, although there might be a situation in which they could work together, such as caring for children or for old people.

So I think one needs to take that into consideration also eh? That one may have to take into account in this sort of way, the different sort of natural attributes of men and women. Some people would, of course, say there is no difference, attribute is entirely a matter of social or cultural conditioning. But after studying both men and women quite intensively for a number of years that is [seems] not to be the case. I'd say I disagree with that, even though there may be exceptions on both sides. There may be men who like caring for children, women who are good at building work, I'm sure there are some of them eh? In New Zealand I heard of women panel-beaters (laughter). Some of them were quite good at it (pause).

But what was the earlier part of that question?

Voice: Well it was just that you'd seen it as an important development and I wondered why you'd mentioned it.

S: Well I think if we look back at the history of the FWBO it does seem that the men usually have taken the lead in any new development. For instance the first single sex weekend retreat was a men's retreat. The first single sex community was a men's community but it does [4] seem that so far the men have taken the lead and I think the fact that we're having - or we were having on that occasion a men's order weekend was important because I'm quite concerned that we should be intensifying activity at all levels. I think there is still, you know, quite a bit of general slackness throughout the Movement. So I think if one wants to introduce anything new, if one wants to introduce any new development, improve things in any way, one has to start with the men. They are in the majority in the Order anyway, because experience has shown the men really (try?) and do something, the women will follow suit sooner or later.

So therefore one starts with the men and (discuss among?) order members. For instance, we've had a Tuscany for men (unclear), and one for women: but not enough women for that particular purpose and it is a question whether that type of set up is best suited for their needs, as they themselves are not sure about that; they are quite doubtful. So the sexes don't necessarily do everything together nor do they necessarily do everything in the same way. So basically what they are concerned with in the end is the same thing especially in the case for those who are spiritually committed and the goal is ultimately the same. What else?

Voice: We had our usual run through the Third Precept and one or two questions and Campbell (unclear) - (laughter)

Campbell: We were talking about the Third Precept.

S: Oh yes? (laughter)

Campbell: We were talking about the dangers of having sexual relationships even though the ideal thing to do was to practise celibacy. I was wondering whether the practice of masturbation was actually a backward step for having sexual relationships.

S: Well there's apparently a lot to be said on both sides of the question. I remember some years ago a friend of mine, a rather eccentric Englishman living in the South of India, following - well I don't know what you would call it - he followed (?) at one time and he followed Krishnamurti at one time, he followed (Narayan?) at one time. His name was (John?) he ran a little paper - I forget what it was called - anyway it was very, very interesting. I used to say it was the most interesting magazine that I used to receive - "Values" it was called, that's right "Values".

He ran a whole series of articles on masturbation, its place within the Indian spiritual tradition etc., and he showed me with a number of quotation that it was regarded in some spiritual circles in India, by some siddhus, as a healthy and helpful practice and according to him it was not to be unfavourably compared with the, what shall I say, what does one call it ... the other oriented form of sexual activities (laughter). So it's really very difficult to say.

The main point about that particular form of sexual activity obviously is that it concerns the individual himself and not any other party. So one can say its characteristic feature from that point of view is that the element of communication with another person is not present. Now, obviously one regards communication as a positive thing, one regards it as a value, one regards it as something to be cultivated.

But of course the question arises, well does one need to be communicating with another person all the time, or on every occasion, or in every situation. You have solitary retreats, on the same principle why can't you have solitary sex? You see what I mean? Does one necessarily have to think in terms of mutually exclusive alternatives. So I would say that even though, you know, the element of communication isn't present in that form of sexual activity it cannot therefore solely for that reason be ruled out. Do you see what I mean? But obviously you can have a neurotic other-dependent form of sexual activities. You can obviously have a neurotic-auto erotic [5] sexual activities. So it's those sort of factors I think that one has to pay attention to.

Voice: Do you think that one member is more likely to become neurotic than the other? Is one more dangerous ...

S: No, I must say that would depend on the individual person. It would depend on all sorts of variable factors, that is to say, I mean some people have, you know, a problem communicating with other people. In their case perhaps auto-erotic activity is not to be recommended. Not because there's anything wrong specifically with auto-erotic activity but because that particular person needs to enter into communication with other people. I think here we have to be quite careful about our own sort of cultural conditioning in this sort of area because most people have been brought up to believe that auto-erotic activity is harmful or that it is sinful et cetera.

So one has to be careful that as such, you know, conditionings are not present. But I would say that even in the light of the loss of communication one can't say that auto-erotic activity is to be ruled out altogether, one has to look at the whole situation and the individual person one

has to take into account. But obviously any form of neurotic, addictive sexual activity is undesired, you can have - talking about relationships - you can have an unhealthy relationship with yourself too (laughter).

I remember an instance from my own recollection in the army, a member of the same barrack-room in which I was staying, there was someone from Lancashire. He had a sort of typical, what I would call, musical Lancashire accent, he was about the same age as I was, about eighteen. I knew him for a couple of years, he as thin, weedy, pimply ... (laughter) and as I say this musical Lancashire accent and he took himself very, very seriously indeed. His name was Tatlock - if that's of any interest to you? (laughter) He was called Tatty or Batty Tatty (laughter). His prize possession in his life was a photograph album and this photographic album was filled with photographs of himself from the age of 3 months right down to last week.

He had a photograph taken at the photographer's nearly every week and he used to spend the whole of his evening in the barrack-room, you know, just turning over the pages of this album and just gazing at these pictures of himself. He spent every evening in this way and he wasn't very other-oriented (laughter), to the other inmates of the barrack-room that he was addicted to a certain form of sexual indulgence. So in the case of such a person that wasn't surprising because he was oriented so much towards himself. So therefore, one might say, well for some of them it can't be, you know they were so self-oriented, so self-absorbed in auto-erotic activity that it would certainly not be recommended. But it's difficult to lay down any general rule, one would have to see the principles that are involved.

Voice: (?) Paul.

Paul: It's to do with fantasizing while masturbating. It's sort of ah, it's always in a discussion of masturbation that is, is ah Campbell's question was, 'Is it a backward step to masturbate, if you're trying to get out of a relationship, would it be a healthy thing to do'. And I was saying that perhaps it might not be because sometimes masturbation includes fantasizing which might actually, sort of, push you back in that direction.

S: Well, we seem to be getting into rather deep water (laughter). I must confess that this is going a bit beyond my own experience (laughter) ...mine came from my reading and observation (laughter). I think that fantasizing with sex is probably quite unhealthy - this [6] is the conclusion I've come to because it sometimes does happen that you are having sexual experiences with one particular person and you're fantasizing about somebody else and this is quite unskilful inasmuch as you're not fully aware of the person with whom you actually are and obviously when you communicate with anybody in any way you should be a fully present with that other person as you possibly can be.

So if you're with one person and fantasizing or even thinking of another, well clearly you're not really present with the person you are present with, so that's the first point about fantasizing. The second is fantasizing in connection with masturbation, well, this would suggest that you ought not to be masturbating at all because normally people speak of masturbation sort of, you know, release for sexual tensions.

If you have to fantasize it would suggest that you're sort of driving yourself along not by will, you know you're sort of dissatisfied, you're bored or don't know quite what to do, so you use

yourself in that particular way. Do you see what I mean? Because if you had a genuine sexual need one might say, one just doesn't need to fantasize. So I think on the whole fantasizing in connection with sexual activity is unhealthy and would represent a sort of rather alienated self-stimulation which shouldn't be necessary. (pause) If you have to fantasize, well why bother?

You spoke about withdrawing from a relationship, what was that?

Voice: Well like if you've withdrawn from a relationship and say, perhaps, instead of having sexual activity with that other person that you're having it on your own, masturbating. What if during that masturbation you're fantasizing about that person who you've previously had sex with...?

S: I really don't know, I couldn't say, it would seem to be such a personal matter that I couldn't generalize... but perhaps when one is trying, say, to end the relationship it's always possible to reflect on the words of the old proverb eh, 'that there are as big fish in the sea that ever came out of it'. (laughter) Though maybe good healthy open air sporting activities would be better - karate or something like that it would take one's mind off unhealthy subjects, eh?

No, but seriously, if one finds for instance at any time, or one becomes aware one has become unhealthily involved in a relationship and you feel you ought to get out of it, well, there are always one's spiritual friends. It's a question also of how did one get into that sort of relationship to begin with? It must have been that you got out of contact with your spiritual friends because if you are enjoying a warm, positive, satisfying, creative relationship with your spiritual friends, well why should you get involved in relationships in an unhealthy sort of way? So you need to retrace your steps, re-establish contact with your spiritual friends, spend more time with them. Sort of lift the whole question to another level.

Voice: Well we have one other question connected with celibacy.

Voice: Well I was just wondering how far celibacy was an integral part of practising the Brahmaviharas?

S: How far?

Voice: Well I've always understood that from my reading anyway, that the Brahma... well you had to be celibate to practise the Brahmaviharas. I was wondering, when I brought that up in the study group...

S: Well, let's put it this way, what are the Brahmaviharas? Eh? The Brahmaviharas are mental states eh? They're spiritual states. [7] So as spiritual states where do they belong there, so to speak? The role of the Viharas corresponds to the rupaloka. You know there are these three lokas, the Kamaloka, the Rupaloka and the Arupaloka. So the Brahmaviharas correspond to the Rupaloka which is of course a part of the Kamaloka eh? So sense experience of any kind is possible, in the ordinary sense, is possible only on the Kamaloka.

So when you rise to the Rupaloka that sense experience, or rather let's say, sense motivation, or sense orientation, is left behind. So that sort of, one might say, that sexual activity is sense-oriented so to that extent that sex activity is sense-oriented, as you pass from the

Kamaloka to the Rupaloka and in this case, into the Brahmaviharas, that kind of activity is left behind, at least for the time being.

But it's not that, unless you're celibate, maybe for a certain length of time, you can't enter upon the Brahmaviharas but to experience the Brahmaviharas and engage in sexual activity, these two are contradictory. Because sexual activity, in the ordinary sense, is as it were, sense-oriented, whereas in the Brahmaviharas there is no sense consciousness in that sort of way. So these two things cannot go on at the same time. Does that answer your question?

Voice: Well yes, but don't you have to build-up a sort of 'head-of-steam' so to speak, to get from the Kamaloka to the Rupaloka and wouldn't that imply being celibate?

S: It would imply being celibate but it would imply, as it were, a natural celibacy. Not that you could just switch off sexual activity and be sort of technically celibate and in that way more easily deepen your meditational experience for the Brahmaviharas - that would not necessarily happen. I mean how you got up that 'head-of-steam' would depend very much on your personal temperament, history and so on. (pause)

It's as though one needs to follow a middle way. Most people in this sort of area need to follow a middle way. They, it seems, can't afford to let themselves get too much out of contact with ordinary, even sense, experiences, if they do their energy dries up. On the other hand if they're too much absorbed in sense experiences then also energy is wasted. Do you see what I mean? We've got to follow a sort of middle path to be sufficiently in touch with your, in a sense, cruder energies., to be able to refine them. But not so much immersed in them that we find it is out of the question. That would seem to be the most important point for most people. (long pause)

Voice:: (unclear - announcing the next questioner)

Voice: It's the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead', it's on the Pali scriptures you find the term applied, noble family, and I'm just wondering what that actually referred to?

S: The term is Kulapatta. Kula means just family, it doesn't - the translation did not really noble family it's just Pali 'son of noble family' eh? Yes there is an implication not so much of noble family as well-known family, an established family. It's the son of people who are somebody, do you see what I mean? It's not just the son of a (Dagera?) you know the son of poor people but the son of people who are well established in society, this is what it means. You could regard it as a polite mode of address. You assume everybody is, as it were, of good family, of good social background. Until you discover otherwise (laughter).

Voice: How would you spell that?

S: Kula k-u-l-a and putta p-u-t-t-a, or in Sanskrit [8] putra, p-u-t-r-a. Or it might be used as a sort of mode of address, a polite mode of address.

Voice: Martin has a question.

Martin: Yes it was to do with Sanskrit words particularly the precepts. I found when chanting the precepts that each word suggests a definite colour, to every particular word. Well not all

the words, just some of them seem to suggest a particular colour. I was wondering if you'd come across any connection between particular words with certain colours?

S: I can't say that I have (laughter) that's not to say there may not be you know, some connection somewhere as that sort of (?).

Martin: It's come to me it's a language, you know, there must be a language of colours.

S: There are some people who believe that there are some correlations between certain sounds, certain vowel sounds, certain colours. There is a famous sonnet by Rimbaud, does anyone remember that? Where he describes the different colours of the different vowels. 'O' for instance, Omega, I think he says, is violet in colour. So it means some people have had these sort of ideas in the different sounds associated with different colours but to what degree it has an objective basis is difficult to say... Whether it is just subjective association on their part.

In Tibetan Buddhism the mantra 'Om Mani Padme Hum' is divided according to syllables and the different syllables are differently coloured. But isn't as though there is a sort of natural colour for that particular syllable because that in turn is correlated with the Five or Six Realms. You know the 'Om Mani Padme Hum' has six syllables, so each syllable is connected with one of the six realms. Because one sort of aspect of Tibetan teaching, in this respect, is by reciting the 'Om Mani Padme Hum' you're delivered from Samsaric existence, that is to say you're delivered from the Six Realms, you'll not be reborn in the Six Realms.

So there are Six Realms, there are six syllables, one particular syllable is said to deliver you from one particular Realm and that syllable takes on the colour of that Realm. The Realm of the Gods is white, the Realm of Men is yellow, so the syllable corresponding to the Realm of the Gods is coloured white, the syllable corresponding to the world of the men is coloured yellow and so on. I forget the rest. But here one arrives at the colour of the syllable via the colour associated with the particular Realm and the Asuras are green.

Martin: It wasn't that I thought it out, it was just that in actually chanting words it was very definite - colours with the words.

S: Well perhaps you should just write the precepts out with the colours that you associate with them and then see if there is any thing in tradition corresponding to that.

Martin: The only colours I've, ah - red, green, yellow, blue, magenta and gold are the only colours that are in suggestion. Some of those are (unclear).

S: Well perhaps you should just follow it up and see whether there is anything in tradition corresponding to that or there seems to be any natural association there. Of non-violence with a particular colour or not telling lies with a particular colour. I mean often blue is associated with truth, people say blue for truth don't they? (laughter)

[9]
(end of tape)

Voice: These are question raised in our discussion (unclear). The first one was from the

beginning of the Sangha section in the Mitrata Omnibus when we were talking about the beginning of a Sangha with the original five ascetics and how the Buddha raised them to a high level of development. Then later on there were fifty and these fifty were sent out to different parts of India (S: interjects 'Sixty') Sixty, was it so? - and we were wondering why this sort of chain reaction of stream-entry or Enlightenment hasn't continued with more and more people in the world gaining stream entry from that day?

S: Well that's quite an interesting point eh? One can answer that in a word, or one or two words - the gravitational pull because the gravitational pull is always at work. As I think I've said on other occasions, it never sleeps, it never rests, and you may rest from your spiritual effort but the gravitational pull never rests, it's working all the time. But what is the important point of transition?

Supposing you've got, let's say for the sake of argument, people who are stream entrants. So why is it that every stream entrant doesn't so to speak produce two other stream entrants? I mean this is the question really reduced to its simplest terms isn't it? Because if each stream entrant - leaving aside anyone who was Enlightened - if each stream entrant produces, or is responsible for producing, to other stream entrants, there will be that increasing, that multiplication of the Sangha, the Ariya Sangha even. What is that sort of growth called, where we double it?

Voice: Exponential.

S: Exponential growth. So why? It would be a very simple matter wouldn't it? It doesn't seem to be asking very much from one stream entrant that all you've got to do in the course of your life is to produce two other stream entrants but it seems not to have happened.

I mean I remember talking in somewhat similar terms some years ago saying that if every order member, every two years, was to produce, so to speak - not that we really can produce them - two other order members then the order would double every two years. But it isn't doubling every two years, so clearly even that is not being done, that every order member is not, so to speak, producing, you know, two order members every two years. So why does it not happen, what is the principle reason do you think?

Voice: A difficulty in communicating our experience.

S: I think we've got to go back a stage before that, I mean before they can even begin to communicate their experience, what must happen?

Voice: Knowledge.

Voice: There must be some receptive person ready to listen.

S: Well put in its simplest terms.

Voice: They've got to have the experience and want to communicate.

S: Well yes if you're a stream entrant, well that's taken for granted surely?

Voice: They need to know people, to actually know them.

S: They need to know people... well it's even simpler than that, it's [10] so simple you're overlooking it.

Voice: An ability to communicate?

S: Well I think if you're a stream entrant you can communicate, I don't believe in the tongue-tied stream entrant (laughter). But what has got to happen?

Voice: You've got to meet people.

S: To meet people, yes, we're getting a bit closer - at least you've got to spend time with them eh? You see what I mean? The stream entrant has got to spend time with the non-stream entrant. The order member has got to spend time with the non-order member before anything at all can happen, before communication can take place et cetera. I personally think that the weak link in the chain must be there. Do you see what I mean?

Voice: Yes but why if you're a stream entrant would you not be spending time with people?

S: Well put it this way, why if you're an order member would you not be spending time with people? If you think of it in simpler terms eh?

Voice: Yes but on the level of stream entrant it's a bit more elevated, well it's a much more elevated level. You'd expect a certain kind of behaviour, you'd expect to be influenced by compassion, for instance.

S: Yes indeed.

Voice: So it would seem a bit more, ah, seem a little bit less understandable at that level than at the level of the order.

S: Well one could say two things here. One could say, if one is speaking in terms of stream entry why that is, ah, stream entry pertains to the inner sort of - I suppose it's a slightly narrow doctrinal sense but - pertaining to the path of the Arhant. One could say from the Mahayana point of view that, in the path of the Arhant, compassion is not sufficiently emphasized. Hm? That's point one. The other point is that people may not be willing to associate with the stream entrant.

They may not be interested in what he has to say, or what he has to tell them, so therefore they don't spend time together, not sufficient time, you know, for the stream entrant to influence the non-stream entrant sufficiently for him to become a stream entrant. But this again perhaps from the Mahayana point of view comes back to the question of compassion because there is such a thing as skilful means. If you have compassion you have skilful means, if you have skilful means you'll find some way of approaching other people.

You won't necessarily approach them as a stream entrant or even as a bhikkhu, or as anything else, you'll approach them, so to speak, on their own terms and try to communicate with them in some way or other. So if we again look at it not so much in terms of stream entry but in

terms of order members and non-order members, I think it's a question first of all of really feeling that one wants to communicate. So that means some touch at least of compassion, some touch of the Bodhisattva Ideal must be present otherwise why should we bother eh?

On the other hand you must be sufficiently skilled in your approach to people - it's not enough to hit them over the head with Buddhism or even with the FWBO, you must be sufficiently skilled and tactful in your approach and really be able to engage them in conversation and then communication and then really try to put [11] something - I was going to say 'across' but that isn't quite the right word - put something over. It isn't something to be done just on one occasion, you've got to develop a definite friendship with that particular person, as it were, for its own sake. You haven't got a sort of ulterior motive in communicating with them, even the ulterior motive of helping them to develop, it isn't really such a separate thing as that.

You've got to be concerned about them as an individual, them as a human being and want to communicate with them. In a sense perhaps one should say that one should like people, one should like the person with whom you're trying to communicate. You can't just do it out of an abstract sense of duty, or just as a matter of principle without that individual liking you, or warmth, or some feeling. Do you see what I mean?

This all brings me back to something I was talking about the other day which perhaps along with other things I was reported as saying which I actually did say (laughter). This was with regard to kalyanamitras and their Mitras. I did say - I forget when I said it but maybe someone remembers and will tell me - that kalyanamitras needed to spend at least two hours a day continuously with his mitra. I gave that as the norm - does anyone remember where and when I said that?

Voice: Yes it was in an order meeting in my room in Sukhavati.

S: Oh.

Voice: About fifteen months ago maybe a bit longer.

S: So do you think that those words have been seriously heeded?

Voice: They were probably thought as being ridiculous (laughter)

S: Perhaps they did, I don't know, I didn't get any immediate feedback.

Voice: I get the impression it's considered to be, although perhaps ideal, at the moment impracticable.

S: Well perhaps it is but if it is impracticable one should consider possibly the results. Which means not much in the way of communication will be established and not much influence, to use that word, will be exerted and not much growth or development will take place or not very rapidly.

Voice: So the whole expansion, whether it expands or not, lies on perspective?

S: Yes this is the crucial factor, really it does come down to individual contact, individual

communication.

Voice: If this was followed through and given that some order members may be still wasting a lot of time, could be more outgoing et cetera. If we take for granted the time that they actually are putting into the Dharma and communicating with people. On the whole a lot of effort is going into, maybe spreading quite thinly, either into administrative things for centres, or co-ops, or working with people in centres but perhaps you have a lot of beginners who you keep moving from one person to another, to another.

If one were really to take this as ones first priority, you might almost just close the centres and just have a few friends who you picked, one or two of them and really worked very closely with them.

S: I think one might even have to consider this in some cases what [12] would be the most productive method of working. I did talk with an order member recently and he said that as a result of a conversation we'd had sometime recently, he'd decided not to start up a co-op but he was just going to spend more time with people. And as regards that particular centre - it was Manchester as a matter of fact - it seems to be working very well.

But also I think this involves, two hours a day is not really very much if you consider, it involves really seriously scrutinizing how one passes ones time, what one does with it, eh? I don't want to harp on this particular topic but some, even some order members, do spend quite a bit of time with their girlfriends. If they were to spend perhaps half of that time with a mitra, well then my requirement, I think, would be met hmm? So one has got to examine, you know, the way in which one spends ones time and it is a question of ordering ones priorities and if one really wants to do something, one will always make time.

I think that this is very much the talking point. If one would reorganize ones schedule, one will make time and one is only asking each individual - and I'm talking about order members now - each individual order member, to spend that amount of time with one other person. I wouldn't ask you to do it with twenty people, with one - only with one. That doesn't seem to be a very big demand because one of the things I found when I went down to London and spent some time with people there, that there were two points that quite a number of people made, especially Mitras.

One could say that they were complaints but they didn't put them as complaints, they were just making points. There were quite a number of people said they really wanted more Dharma, not more fringe activities, more Dharma and they wanted more personal contact with order members. These were the two points that were made again and again by people. So it clearly means that some deficiency is felt in this area and something more really needs to be done.

I mean I'm saying all this now, in a way you know, to some extent, you're all in an intermediate position, you're a bit amphibious eh? (laughter) Like a tadpole I saw in the lily pond the other day. The little back legs had started to appear (laughter) and his tail (laughter) had fallen off. You see what I mean? So you can see it from both sides, you know, you're Mitras, some of you with kalyanamitras but you're all thinking very seriously in terms of ordination and hopefully quite soon, you will be ordained.

Voice: And in operating in this way and sort of, well, having a desire to spend say quite a lot of time with just one person every day.

S: So I make the point very strongly because if you feel it now, you feel these things now that your Mitras but once you're order members don't forget what it's like to be a mitra and not getting enough time and attention from order members - don't forget that! Though of course there is, you know, a level of kalyanamitrata within the order itself. One keeps up that too, one keeps up ones relations with as many people as one possibly can.

You're limited only by time and ones other activities. But this does seem to me to be more and more important, although we should be very, very careful what we actually sacrifice to this, or with what we sacrifice this to. Maybe sometimes it does have to be sacrificed but be very careful what you sacrifice it to - it will have to be something very, very important.

Voice: Bhante, when you say two hours, do you mean apart from say working order members and Mitras working together in a co-op?

S: Not necessarily, because you can have a good working contact and communication but it must be a really good one. You could be working on the same building site but you never speak [13] to each other, well that doesn't count. Or you may be in the same wholefood shop, you're so busy packing things you've not even time to look up at the other person, that doesn't count. But if in the working situation there's a natural interaction between you, that real communication's going on, whether apart from the work or something else, well that can count for two hours or part of it.

Voice: Last year I went to some concerts at the (unclear) society, they had some evening concerts. The thing I noticed about them was that in the main they were old, you know, they were much older than you, in their seventies and eighties (laughter) and I looked around these people, they were very bright, very cheery, but definitely a generation on the way out, as it were. It seemed to me what had happened to them, they had become, ah, I call it 'flat-earthing', they'd gone inwards and they hadn't actually appealed to successive generations except for a few stragglers and I think what you are saying has obvious benefits, there's still a need to go out to people outside the FWBO.

S: Not necessarily, there should be, you know, plenty of people coming along within the structure of the FWBO but perhaps you should look around and find someone who you would like to become friends with and spend time with them. But certainly looking for people outside the FWBO isn't precluded by any means and if you've got a job outside you may get to know someone that you really like and you feel you could communicate with, you might spend time with that person.

Whereas speaking in terms of the two hours a day minimum sort of thing, I was thinking more specifically in terms of an order member spending, you know, time with the mitra whose kalyanamitra he is. But certainly that doesn't preclude other contacts, other possibilities. But as I speak in terms of a mitra because he has declared his interest, he's said - I mean by virtue of the fact that he is a mitra, he's said, 'I want contact with order members'. So here you are, people are wanting contact eh? You don't have to go looking for them, they've already said they want it.

So it would be a great pity and shame if they didn't get what they wanted and what they needed, you know, in this kind of way from you as an order member. They're swarming all around, you've no need to go looking for them. The element of personal life, of personal pleasure does enter into it to some extent, you can't operate purely out of a sense of duty. But if that little spark of light is there it can lead on to very much greater things, in a word, communication and spiritual adventure.

Voice: Just listening to that point, we were originally talking about stream entrants and I would have thought they should have had enough wisdom and compassion. But did you say that they perhaps - the compassion wasn't stressed enough?

S: Well I'm looking at it, as I said, in slightly narrower doctrinal terms but I don't really accept that the real stream entrant is sort of narrow or lacking in compassion in the sort of Hinayana way. I can only conclude that if, for instance, there is a stream entrant around and I mean he is compassionate to a very great extent, he wants to communicate his experience et cetera. If he doesn't succeed in creating, in the course of his life at least two other stream entrants I can only attribute that to the strength of the gravitational pull where other people are concerned. Perhaps they will just not listen to him or not allow him to establish contact with them.

[14]

Voice: Not with the stream entrant? Not with the stream entrant - the gravitational pull as on the people it has nothing to do with the stream entrant...

S: In the case of the stream entrant he might experience some slight gravitational pull, it might prevent him getting further but it doesn't ever pull him back to the world so I would certainly put it down to lack of receptivity on the part of other people, perhaps the general state of the times. I think a stream entrant cannot but want to communicate his experience. I mean in a way you might think it's quite dreadful just for one person to be a stream entrant and no other stream entrant at all because there's then no possibility of horizontal communication. I think there's a natural tendency, so to speak, to want both vertical and horizontal communication.

So in a way it's in the stream entrant's own interests that he creates other stream entrants so that he can have decent (laughter) (unclear). So when he talks about stream entry they'll know what he's talking about (laughter) so then they really won't because they'll have no experience of that sort of thing. So it's in your order member's interest, you might say, to create more order members to increase the possibilities of contacting and communicating for himself and for everybody. So there should be this ever-expanding circle of communication and commitment.

I think that in the case of order members - this is descending to a somewhat lower level, there is a danger in warning you about this in the past - of order members becoming a bit involved in political activities and things which are of a personal interest in a rather narrow sense. So that a lot of time might just be spent, you know, in ... well, things which from a spiritual point of view are really rather trivial, even though you may feel that (partly?) for your development, well they may but really, not very much.

You know, a bit in that sort of way, you know, stamp-collecting would be good for your spiritual development - you see what I mean? I think order members have to be aware, have

to be a bit precious, about their personal development and their personal interest - (Potter?) said 'their private lives' so I won't go into that for the moment.

Voice: Can I just ask about that? I wonder if there's really quite a lot of value, whether it's very valuable to devote yourself quite seriously to a discipline, to say, like seriously painting or some thing like that?

S: I think if you devote yourself to it seriously as a discipline it certainly does have especially if you devote yourself to it as a discipline in a sense that the Japanese term 'do' - it's a way. But that requires tremendous, well I might say, commitment and the sort of thing I'm thinking about, people really committing themselves wholeheartedly to some sort of major interest. But, ah, this just sort of dabbling in this and dabbling in that, whiling away their time justifying it in the terms of, well it's good for my spiritual development, or I feel a need to get into this, or I feel a need to get into that. The arts, taken seriously, are very, very demanding.

Voice: Would you say it's either appropriate or inappropriate for an order member to commit himself in such a way?

S: I think it would depend on his motivation and I have encouraged order members, say, to involve themselves with karate with a view to order members eventually teaching it. Which means you have a means of access to a whole new lot of people who wouldn't normally come along to a Buddhist centre. It establishes a medium of communication [15]with them, so I've certainly encouraged it from that point of view. The same goes for yoga, the same goes for any of these martial or semi marital arts. I don't know why anyone hasn't taken up flower arrangement yet! Maybe you should start getting into the feminine side (laughter).

Voice: Our second question arose rather incidentally. We were wondering about the first dhyana, the Buddha's experience of first dhyana, whether he was able to operate continuously from the first dhyana or whether he had to come down to, as you call it in the text, a psychological level and to Kamaloka every time he needed to talk to people but he uses senses - and connected with that, we were wondering about this (unclear) dhyana state and whether we can occupy that all the time?

S: I have discussed this with somewhere (?) or other on a number of occasions. There was a school of Buddhist thought in the very early days, that maintained that the Buddha was always in the state of samadhi, that is, in a state of highly-developed dhyana. This was not generally accepted. One has the distinction, you know, of samata and vipassana, you know, that was between calm and insight - maybe you're familiar with that distinction? The degree of the Buddha's samata experience may vary from time to time. I mean the Buddha may be absorbed in dhyana or he may not be, but the general view is the Buddha is not always absorbed in dhyana.

But the Buddha's insight never fails and his mindfulness never fails so that it is possible for the Buddha to operate within the sphere of sense consciousness, as when he speaks to other people, eh? So he will not then be in a state of dhyana but his insight will, of course, be constant, his insight into say the three lakshanas will be constant and his mindfulness will be constant. But he will not necessarily be in a dhyana state. He will be in a dhyana state only when he, as it were, is by himself or when he actually concentrates his mind or wishes to be in a dhyana state. Because his insight which makes up Buddhahood not just samata which is

calm but dhyana, you know, by itself.

Voice: So we are also wondering, what is the dilute dhyana state and is that something we can aspire to occupy continuously?

S: Yes, because even though the Buddha is functioning in the sense sphere there are no unskilful mental states present. So it's the absence of these unskilful mental states which contributes, what I have called, that 'dilute dhyana state'. I mean you know this from your own experience. That sometimes it may happen that you're not actually meditating but you do enjoy a very positive (?) sort of mental state or emotional state as you're just moving around them doing ordinary things in the ordinary way.

So it's something like that, even though you're not actually in a dhyana state, mindfulness is present, the insight may be present and your overall mental state is very, very positive. So much so that it is, well, almost dhyanic - but not quite, otherwise you know, you would not be able to continue functioning.

Voice: Could you say the hindrances aren't in existence while you're in this state. Is that (unclear)...?

S: Of course, normally one needs to ensure that the hindrances subside before you can enter into the dhyana state. But if insight is present well the hindrances will be to that extent destroyed and it's the absence of those hindrances, it's the absence of those unskilful mental states, that constitutes what I call the 'dilute dhyana state'. I have said, I think, that it would be [16] possible to do certain things in a first dhyana state because mental activity is still present but very, very difficult to function objectively in the world once one has entered the second dhyana.

Voice: Second dhyana?

S: Yes, the vitakka-vicara, the mental activity is suspended but you wouldn't, for instance, be able to answer a question because you wouldn't be able to think.

Voice: But would you be able to do that in the first dhyana?

S: You would be able to do that in the first dhyana, yes.

Voice: So you could actually answer questions

S: Yes, yes

Voice: I always understood that the vitakkavicara was only connected with meditation itself.

S: But it's connected with the meditation itself to the extent that that is what you are preoccupied with at that particular time. You are concerned with the actual meditation object, so even your preoccupation, your mental preoccupation with the meditation object itself, even that goes in a separate dhyana, not to speak of your mental preoccupations about other things, your mental activities about other things.

Voice: In the first dhyana the vitakkavicara, if you're not meditating, it's not limited, it can be perhaps extensive, toy can't sort of ah...

S: Even if you're not meditating your vitakkavicara can, as a result of previous meditative experience, be more directed, less scatty, more sustained, more purposeful. (pause)

But you know, I mean, I think that quite a few people have had the experience that you end up in a sort of meditative state and maybe someone asks you a question and you can just about answer it, you can just about get your mind going to that extent. You might find this when you wake up in the morning eh? I don't know whether anybody ever noticed (laughter).

You can wake up in the morning and you can be absolutely clearly awake, you're wide awake, your mind without question is clear and bright but mental activity has not yet started up. You're just aware of the world, aware of your own awareness, aware of yourself but mental activity with regards to the world has not yet started up.

So when you wake up you're almost in a sort of, for a few instants, sort of second dhyana state. I don't know if anybody has ever noticed this. Do you know what I'm talking about or can you conceive or can you recall in your experience anything like that? You wake up, eh - you're completely awake, you know everything is fresh and bright and clear but mental activity - even mental activity, well, 'here I am in such and such a place', hasn't started up, memory has not started up.

In a sense you don't know where you are but in a quite positive sense. Because you haven't started thinking where you are, so how can you know where you are, for that all comes with thinking. You might be in India or you might be in England (laughter). You don't know until you start thinking, all you've got, you know, is that consciousness of your surrounding, you know, yourself, without any mental activity.

Voice: Well I had been aware of that sort of experience while on solitary retreat.

[17]

Voice: I've experienced something like that but I often tend to sort of almost drop off back to sleep again (laughter). You can be in a sleep state and dreaming, you wake up and you experience what you've just been talking about and then, before you can really be awake and back in the world, you have to go back to your sort of dream state and sort of almost make the transition from your dream state to your everyday way of working.

S: It's just sort of instant of lucidity, one might say, it's not the lucidity of insight but it's lucidity of absence of mental functions including even memory.

Voice: The last question came up on the discussion of the third precept again about homosexuality. We wondered what you thought the origin of the sort of taboo in the West against homosexuality was?

S: Well it isn't only a taboo in the West. I mean it was also a taboo in India, for example. I think one can understand it almost entirely in sort of biological-cum-cultural terms. One finds that in the case of all the ethnic religions there is this sort of taboo; one finds it in Judaism, one finds it in Hinduism. But why should that taboo come about, a taboo doesn't come about

just for no reason at all?

It would seem that in those very early days it was important that the number of human beings should increase. The strength of the tribe, the strength of the family, you know, depended on the number of members. So therefore marriage was the norm, the production of children was the norm and anything which seemed to threaten that was taboo. This would seem to me to be the major factor in any sexual relations.

Voice: We were also wondering what the attitude in modern India and also ancient India in the Buddha's time was towards homosexuality?

S: For all that one can gather from Buddhist texts, homosexuality, in the modern sense, was not understood in ancient India, they seemed to have mixed it up with hermaphroditism. They seemed to have the same words you know apropos phenomena, as it were. They seemed not to have understood it as a psychological state and maybe it wasn't differentiated in that particular way. They seem to have, as I said, equated it to hermaphroditism.

Voice: What is that?

S: Hermaphroditism is a state in which a human being has either completely, or in part, the sexual organs of both sexes in juxtaposition. So the ancient Indians seem to have mixed this state up with the state of homosexuality, as far as one can see from the literature. And it was in orthodox Hinduism, amongst the Brahmins and amongst caste Hindus generally, it was considered very, very important that you had a son to perform your after-death rituals otherwise you wouldn't go to heaven. So all these sort of beliefs, you know, that if they could eradicate anything which detracted from the actual reproduction of the species, well clearly, homosexuality sort of points in that direction.

So one might say, in those early days homosexuality was regarded as anti-social because it was seen as representing a tendency to limit or even decrease the population. But now of course the situation has completely changed. It may be that fresh ethical norms arise because now our problem is, well, we've got too many people. So you could even argue now and some people have argued that, you know, homosexuality, far from being anti-social any longer, is a highly responsible social activity (laughter) to the limitation or even decrease of the population or at least to its stabilization at its present level.

Voice: Could you say why a man chooses to have relationships with [18] another man rather than a woman?

S: I don't know whether it's a matter of choice. I mean in some cases it may be but in others it does seem to be a question of natural born instinct. It's a question of whether it's an instinct or not but at least, one might say, a natural attraction in the age of presumably 16 - or maybe it's 12 nowadays. You don't just sit down and ask yourself, you know, with whom do you now have a sexual relationship and what kind, but things sort of happen, or you just feel naturally attracted or you tend to go in this direction or maybe sometimes in this direction or maybe in that direction because it's somewhat difficult to pin down human nature.

But it does seem that even in early times there were quite a few cases of people who defied the social norms, who, despite everything that the tribal elders had said, were sexually

attracted to members of the same sex and sometimes that was sort of recognized sometimes such people became shamans. Shamans were usually of this type in some primitive societies. (pause)

So one can understand the reason for these taboos. They did no doubt make sense at a certain stage in human evolution but perhaps they don't make that sort of sense any more. (pause) And of course the Jewish taboos on this subject were taken over by Christianity, it strongly reinforces - it's very difficult of course to understand why this thing came about - but early Christians seemed to have felt very, very strongly on this particular topic, in a sense almost out of proportion to, you know, maybe the biological needs of the tribe and all that sort of thing. I can't say that I understand this fully, or why they should have felt so really worked up about this particular matter because they undoubtedly were, right down to the present day. It's only quite recently that some Christians began to let-up on this particular issue. It really seems very strange indeed.

Voice: Do you think it's perhaps marriage is such a central part of the Christian life?

S: But it wasn't at the very beginning. There was an ascetic sort of emphasis at that time.

Voice: Could it extend to relative alienation from their own feelings as you were saying earlier?

S: Yes, there was also, and maybe, I've just thought of another possible reason, or part of a reason. I mean among the Greeks it is well known that what we would term homosexuality, the Greeks experience is rather different in this respect, was sort of institutionalized. So the early Christians were in a way quite afraid of Greek influence in general which represented a pagan influence. So they obviously discouraged the worship of the pagan gods, they banished and they even, sort of, censored pagan literature. So this aspect of Greek life, this aspect of Greek and Roman life too, was perhaps discouraged, that was partly because it was part of that pagan culture. Do you see what I mean? So that ran together with the Jewish tendency, you know, to frown upon sexual relations which were not for purposes of reproduction of the species.

Voice: I still don't think that can account for the ah, particularly ...

S: But Christianity on the whole, I mean individual Christians, well almost from the beginning, seemed to have been quite hysterical ...

(Recording ends there with expiry of the tape)

[19]

CASSETTE TWO ONE

?: Questions from Mike. We seem to be running short of time.

S: I just add to that that in India, the modern Indian attitude seems to be, they don't get hysterical about homosexuality or anything like that. They certainly regard it as odd, they can't quite understand it. Most Hindus can't, even though the odd few, very few Indians have this particular tendency. They regard it as odd, if anything they regard it as a bit of a joke, but they

certainly don't get hysterical over it. Anyway, pass on to other questions.

?: First of all there are 2 questions which arose out of our discussion of the first precept. Mike has a question.

Mike: Concerning violent sports such as knockdown karate or boxing and the first precept, where you are trying to knock the person down but it is not done in anger.

S: I think the true point is whether one can actually do that not in anger. I really question that. Traditionally, the Abhidharma questions this : the Abhidharma doesn't believe that an act of violence can actually be committed without at least a subtle state of anger or hatred being present. But you mention boxing. There has been an enquiry into this recently. I was really quite surprised to read that since the end of the war (I think about 1950) there have been more than 300 deaths in the boxing ring and quite apart from the very serious injuries including brain injuries, brain damage, and the BMA (British Medical Association) has now recommended officially the total abolition of boxing. This was only the other week. Reading what they had to say at their conference, I was inclined to go along with this. They pointed out that the purpose of the sport, of the match was to inflict actual harm and damage on one's opponent. You knocked them out, which could mean to kill them. So it would seem to me that boxing in that sense is certainly against the first precept. I don't know enough about karate, but I would say that if your aim is to knock out your opponent, then that could be a matter of violence and therefore against the first precept. I mean, if it was a real-life situation and somebody is trying to kill you, well you could say that you are justified in stopping him from doing that, or trying to stop him even if it means you may kill him. You don't intend to kill him, you intend only to protect your own life and you accept that that may result in you killing him. It means there is a moral decision here. Objectively, whether it is better that he should be dead or you should be dead. You might consider [20] that if you are an order member, you are of more use to the world than he is and quite objectively decide, well, you are going to defend yourself even though it means that he may be killed. He asked for it in a way, you could say, or he brought it on himself, you haven't invited the attack. But it would still be the lesser of two evils : it wouldn't be an actual good you were choosing.

But after reading those reports about boxing, I'd say that I'd agree, ban boxing. It seems really dreadful and also not really very good that people should enjoy these things. I remember I was telling someone not so long ago that when I was in Singapore, when I was in the army, I had a friend. He was a quite good friend of mine, he was quite a bit older than I was then, he was an ex-miner and we used to go around quite a lot together. He was interested in all-in wrestling so I used to go with him to see the all-in wrestling. I was really quite surprised. I'd never been to any such things in England. I didn't know anything about it. I was really quite surprised at the reaction of the audience, especially the women, that when blood was drawn they really loved it and I don't think that is really very positive. A real howl went up when blood was drawn or when someone's joints cracked, you could hear the crack so far away and people really loved this. They really enjoyed it. That's what they'd come for; not for the finer points of wrestling.

So develop your more heroic qualities by all means but I think one must draw the line at actual violence.

?: Another question from that discussion on violence and non-violence.

Terry: Bhante. I'd like your views on unilateral disarmament in general and also whether you think this country should adopt that position.

S: I would say I don't know. Unilateral disarmament as a policy is a policy aiming at a certain result which is the abolition of nuclear weapons, ultimately, because it's no use one country disarming in that respect and other countries not. So the aim seems to be that the use of nuclear weapons, even the production of nuclear weapons, should ultimately be abandoned. Obviously one agrees with that. Whether unilateral nuclear disarmament is the way to do that, I think that is disputable. I think different people who quite honestly and sincerely would want to see the total abolition of nuclear weapons can disagree over that. But that is a disagreement over strategy. Do you see what I mean?

?: Yes, one of the things I was concerned about was whether this whole thing about the arms race isn't just a mutual paranoia and the reason that the [21] Russians have their missiles trained on us is that we have our missiles trained on them.

S: Mutual paranoia is certainly there in the situation but whether that could be resolved by unilateral disarmament, which would have to be the whole of one side - it wouldn't be enough say for Britain to disarm or just America to disarm. So I can accept that very sincere people believe in unilateral disarmament. I can also accept that very sincere people don't see that as the way to total nuclear disarmament and that, therefore, there can be genuine disagreement on this point.

?: What would be an alternative to disarmament?

S: There's no real alternative as far as I can see. If nuclear weapons are produced, and produced to the extent that they are being produced and stock-piled, sooner or later they are going to be used. So therefore I think it is very very important and vital that some way is found of halting the nuclear arms race, stopping the production of nuclear weapons and even destroying, if that's possible, those that already exist, but whether nuclear disarmament - unilateral nuclear disarmament - by a particular nuclear power will contribute to that, I think that is disputable; at least arguable.

?: I can't see how else it could come about.

S: Well it could, for instance, come about by all the nuclear powers sitting together and all agreeing that on a certain date they were all going to stop the continued production of nuclear weapons and on another date they were going to destroy all the nuclear weapons they had and there would be mutual inspection and so on. (Pause)

But what I'm saying in a way is that it is possible for someone to be not convinced that unilateral nuclear disarmament is the way to the abolition of nuclear weapons and if someone is not convinced that way, they should not be regarded as not sincerely devoted to the cause of world peace. They can have genuine reservations on that point. In politics especially, the tendency is that if someone does not agree with your way of doing things, you just assail his good intentions and motivations. I think that is not constructive. But there is an element of mutual paranoia. I agree with that. That has got to be broken through somehow. Russia feels she is encircled by America. America feels encircled by Russia. Anyway what other questions were there?

?: Greg had a question arising out of the third precept.

[22]

?: Bhante. At the end of the appraisal of the third precept we got, in the case of adultery, the violence is committed against the woman's husband in as much as his domestic life is deliberately disrupted. It seems that is only one side of the story. The question is that for a particular reason or just that it's presumed that it operates on both sides?

S: It applies pari-passu to what would be the corresponding situation, the woman who breaks up another woman's domestic life by committing adultery with that woman's husband. Of course, in ancient India the woman was regarded as being not very responsible. She was - and still is to a great extent - looked after carefully, protected, shielded, so that if anything went wrong in this particular respect, it would be as the result of the initiative taken by some man rather than as the result of the initiative taken by the woman. But certainly the section applies to women. As one knows, there are women who deliberately, more out of mischief, set about breaking up some other woman's marriage. That would certainly bring about a breach of the third precept.

There is an interesting point here about what is the definition of 'wife'? I believe there are at least a dozen different kinds of 'wife' enumerated in the Pali scriptures. There is the 'wife of the night'. If you have contracted or agreed to spend the night with a particular woman and some other man interferes or brings about a breach of that relationship, even though it is for one night, he is also guilty of breaking the third precept in the sense that he commits adultery, though it is less serious than if there was a lifelong relationship. So one might say, to seduce somebody's girlfriend, even quite casual girlfriend, is also a breach of the third precept, though not as serious a one as seducing the lawful wedded wife. You're interfering in other people's relationships. I'm using the word relationship here in a quite neutral sense: you're just making things more difficult and complicated. They're difficult enough as they are, these relationships, without third parties wandering in, even with the best of intentions. We know that matrimony is so heavy a burden that it takes at least three people to carry it (laughter) but that's another matter.

?: What are the other sorts of wives?

S: I didn't study this passage with any great attention (laughter). For instance, there is the wife who is a concubine. There is the wife who is a servant girl in one's house. Do you see what I mean? There is the wife by purchase; the wife by legal marriage. I can look it up for you if you are especially interested.

?: Whereabouts does it occur?

[23]

S: I'll have to look that up. I haven't paid great attention to this matter. Perhaps I should have done.

?: Indecipherable

S: Probably some text. (Indecipherable) Perhaps the word wife here is not quite correct. In the Indian language it's a bit ambiguous because they use the same word for wife and for woman,

like in French 'ma femme' is my wife and my woman both together. (Itthi in Pali or Stri in Sanskrit. If you say (Sanskrit quote) it means my woman. It also means my wife. So it's the twelve kinds of women or twelve kinds of wives. Wife and woman are virtually inter-changeable. A woman's function being traditionally regarded as to be a wife. (Pause) But the principle here is that you do not wantonly break up or disrupt a relationship between two other people, in this case sexual relations.

?: One last question. A certain centre do a description of the metta bhavana practice. Two points came out reading your description of it and Tony's description of the sort of thing the centre ran. There's been creeping in one or two small changes such as the principal one was in the second stage. The person, instead of saying 'of the same sex' said 'some one who you do not feel sexually attracted to.

S: That isn't sufficiently clear. It should be, if one is taking a class and one is actually teaching the metta bhavana, one should say that one should reflect or one should think of someone of around the same age, someone who is living, not dead and someone of the same sex, and explain why that is. Someone may pop up and say what about homosexuals. Well you'll deal with that in whatever way you can. Then you may say, when it comes to that point, just think of someone of whom you are quite fond but with regard to whom you do not have actual sexual feelings or with whom you do not have a sexual relationship. But initially you should explain in detail in the traditional way quite carefully. There was an instance quite recently of that not being explained at a particular centre and serious confusion arising. Someone came to see me and said he had learned the metta bhavana at a certain centre and he'd only become aware later that he'd been - he said incorrectly, but - incompletely taught because he was not told this, that one should think in the second stage of someone of the same sex. He'd been told that you should think of a near and dear friend. He said he happened to have quite a number of near and dear women friends so used to think of one of them. He said he wasn't able to make any progress with the metta bhavana because sexual thoughts kept coming up. He practised for several weeks in this way before coming on [24] another course, somewhere other than at his centre. He discovered that there was this additional instruction that his near and dear friend should be of the same sex and he was quite upset about that, feeling that he'd almost been misled and that that was what was wrong with his practice. He put it right and he started getting on quite well with the metta bhavana. So this point needs to be made.

?: Shouldn't this point be carried through to the third stage as well? That is to say, one should concentrate on someone of the same sex in that stage?

S: The tradition does not state this with regard to the third and fourth stages, in a sense for obvious reasons. If a person is neutral, you don't have any feeling towards them at all, whether sexual or non-sexual. So you could think of someone of the opposite sex in that stage. If of course you found that you were developing neurotic feelings and not metta, well you'd just have to drop them and concentrate on someone of the same sex. Similarly in stage four. But it is significant that towards the end of stage five, one does direct one's metta to all living beings and one says 'all men and all women' because by the time one has reached that point - at least as regards one's experience at that particular time - one should be able to feel genuine metta towards everybody equally, at least as I said during the meditation practice itself.

?: Somebody told him the whole point about how one should follow the tradition.

S: I think it is quite important that the tradition does work. I suspect (I haven't had a chance to discuss the matter) I suspect that where people don't make that point - that you should concentrate in the second stage on someone of your own sex, not of the opposite sex - they are afraid of perhaps offending against the pseudo-egalitarian ideas that are around these days, that shouldn't make any distinction between men and women or there may be almost an unconscious fear of homosexuality. They don't like to say develop metta for someone of your own sex and not someone of the opposite sex. But I think we should stick to what the tradition says and if questions arise, if someone says he is attracted sexually to a person of the same sex, one can deal with that when it arises and simply say 'think of a friend', towards whom you don't have any sexual feelings. I mean in the very early days, some clever person perhaps said what about bi-sexual people. Well you'll just have to do the best you can (laughter). If you're attracted to everybody, you'll have to try to find someone you're not sexually attracted to (laughter). If there isn't any such person (??) In that case I suggest you take up the practice of the ten stages of decomposition (hilarity)

[25]

?: Are you being serious?

S: Well what else can they do? (laughter) If everything is sexually stimulating, of course, if they say unfortunately I happen to be a necrophilist (laughter) you'll have to offer up prayers for a better rebirth (laughter).

?: Bhante. You say it is not traditional to maintain someone of the same sex for the third and fourth stage, but I'm under the impression that from Terry's investigations into the (Vasuvi) mandala, that is specified.

?: That is how I remember it.

S: I'll check that later. I personally think that it does not matter and certainly at the end, it does say 'all men and all women'. At some point one needs to make the transition from confining one's metta to one sex to extending it to both sexes. But just where one makes that transition depends on the personal temperament, degree of inflammability etc. For instance, if you think in the second stage of someone of the opposite sex as your neutral person, well you could make sure perhaps that no sexual feelings arise by thinking of some elderly woman towards whom one would feel more like a son, one would see as a mother figure.

?: It would not be desirable.

S: Yes, one could do that. Mother is not necessarily a dirty word, so to speak. You could see someone as like a mother in a quite positive way, though I'm not wholly convinced that is possible (chuckles)

?: I thought in the second stage it was not desirable. I may have been misled.

S: Sorry, third stage. I meant third stage, neutral person. If you're thinking of a neutral person and if you think it would be all right to think of someone of the opposite sex, take the precaution that you at least think of someone who is much older. Do you see what I mean?

?: It goes against what you're doing in the second stage because you don't pick someone that

is older than you in the second stage for that reason.

S: Yes because you're trying to develop metta towards a friend. A friend is a sort of neutral person, but in the case of the neutral person, what you are trying to overcome is that feeling of neutrality, absence of emotion altogether, so you can overcome that by thinking of an older person. It doesn't have to be someone of around the same age in that particular stage. (Pause)

[26]

CASSETTE TWO SIDE?

?: We were talking about Samatha and Vipassana and the fact that it does seem that if you were undertaking a purely Samatha practice, if you take that almost to its limits, you begin to move almost naturally into Vipassana. So I posed the question about, say, Hindu people who are engaged on purely samatha practices to whether it wasn't possible for them to slip into Vipassana and hence ultimate reality.

S: I think it is possible in principle providing there is not any inhibiting micchaditthi which is strongly held. (Pause)

?: So is there any sort of Vipassana tradition whatsoever in Hinduism?

S: I would say not officially, not as it were codified.

?: Ah, orthodox.

S: The codifications all seem to be of micchaditthis. But - and there is quite a big but here - there is quite an interesting experience that Kevala related to me after his tour of Northern India. Kevala wasn't very much impressed by Hinduism in India but, he said, when he was in Gorakpur, he went to a Hindu temple and he found a completely different atmosphere there. It seemed I gathered from his description, more like a Buddhist temple: not the usual sort of Hindu atmosphere at all. So he felt as a result of that, he had to rather modify his impressions or views even about Hinduism. So he described the temple to me. But it was clear that it was a (Nark) temple. Technically they are Hindus but actually they are sort of semi-Buddhists. The continuators of the tradition of the sort of semi-Hindu/semi-Buddhist medieval type of yogins who don't have the orthodox Hindu ideas about caste of God and so on, and who presumably could step from Samatha to Vipassana much more easily as a result of natural spiritual progression than could the orthodox Hindus who cling perhaps to micchaditthis. So that even if they do have a quite strong and clear Samatha type experience, the micchaditthis prevent them going any further.

We find that sort of thing happening in the case of Christian mystics in the West. You can read accounts of the lives of Christian mystics and it sometimes happens that they reach a certain stage in their mystical life and mystical experience when they become afraid that they are departing from orthodoxy, and intellectually speaking they genuinely believe in orthodoxy. They are afraid of heresy. They start thinking then that certain [27] intuitions that come to them may be temptations coming from the devil, tempting them to doubt the true faith, and great conflict is set up in them in this way. It is well known that some mystics making, on the basis of their mystical experience, certain statements which seem to have a sort of heretical or not very fully orthodox tinge, have been taken to task by certain persons

appointed by the church for that purpose and sometimes subject even to correction. I mean the famous St. John of the Cross in (?) incarcerated for a number of years because his doctrinal orthodoxy was in question. Do you see what I mean?

So in answer to your question, I am quite sure that in the case of some Hindus as a natural result of their spiritual progression, they do manage to pass from Samatha to Vipassana provided of course there is not that inhibiting micchaditthi present. Sometimes, even if a micchaditthi is present, you can see through it and see it is a micchaditthi, but if it is strongly reinforced by your environment, your teachers, you may not be able to see straight or at the very least, doubt and conflict may be set up. But in as much as, from the Mahayana point of view, the Buddha nature is reflected in all human beings one can not refuse to recognize the possibility of anybody, any time, even under the most unfavourable conditions, being able to cross from Samatha to Vipassana. No doubt a Buddhist environment is the most favourable and Buddhist teachings the most operable, but in the last analysis the nature of the human spirit is such that it can be dispensed with in the case of a very exceptional person. (pause)

?: There is a connected question, Bhante. Some Christian mystics experience stigmata. How would you tie that back?

S: Some Christian mystics experience stigmata. Some non-Christian non-mystics experience stigmata. Some non-Christian mystics experience stigmata. Stigmata is a comparatively well known pathological phenomenon. I believe that within the Catholic Church itself there are about 136 attested cases of stigmata, not all of which are recognized by the Church as indicating sanctity. The Church itself recognizes some instances of stigmata as not simply pathological but at best psychological. I think they simply illustrate the extraordinary influence the mind has over the body. What is passing in the mind can be reflected in the body, can as it were be echoed in the body, and in the case of some Christian mystics who occupy themselves in prayer and meditation with the crucifixion and identify themselves emotionally with Christ, it isn't surprising really that some of the symptoms of the crucifixion do appear. We don't do that in Buddhism. We do other things. We concentrate on other qualities, other aspects of the Buddha nature, so that [28] those aspects may be reproduced in us. There are many strange stories of bodily changes taking place as a result of mental and spiritual experiences. For instance, another kind of example, more ordinary. It does sometimes happen that a woman very much wants to have a child and she convinces herself that she is pregnant, and she starts swelling up but she is not pregnant. It's all induced by a kind of auto-hypnosis.

So there is no doubt that some Christian mystics experience stigmata. But if one is not a Christian, one doesn't attach any extraordinary significance to that, that they are especially blessed by Christ or are especially holy. No, the significance seems to be mainly psychological and the experience seems to indicate that. Mind really does have a tremendous influence over the body. After all, the body is sort of crystallized mind, according to the law of karma and rebirth. (Pali quote), the Dhammapada says The mind is the first of things. You have a mind first at a certain stage of consciousness, then you have a body corresponding to that. So it isn't anything surprising that in this life itself, mind should be able to modify body even in these quite extraordinary ways. Some Christian mystics have wounds in their sides and all sorts of things. The Buddhist would consider that this sort of preoccupation almost with death and crucifixion, wounds and bleeding is not altogether healthy. Why not instead try to reproduce the wrathful smile. If you meditated on Padmasambhava sufficiently, or

identified yourself sufficiently with him, you might acquire, in the end, at least a sort of a reflection of a wrathful smile. Much better than bleeding wounds in the hands. (Pause)

?: We were discussing terms for the spiritual evolution of the individual and we thought that the terms 'growth' and 'development' were not very satisfactory because neither of them gives any hint of other-regarding aspects of the spiritual life. We wondered if you agreed and whether you can suggest any better terms?

S: I do agree. I can't suggest any better terms though. I did some years ago, when I was in India, attempt to introduce the term 'normative'. I used it in a few articles but it didn't catch on because some translators from the Pali Texts of the schools, so to speak, of Mrs Rhys Davids translate Dharma by norm. You must have come across this in books like Some Sayings of the Buddha: norm for Dharma. So I thought that if you can translate as norm, you can also make it an adjective. So instead of saying Dharmic, you could say, well you couldn't say normic so I thought you could say normative. That is to say, conforming to a norm or expressive of a norm or manifesting a norm or norm-oriented. So normative would suggest [29] that though it does not bring out growth and development quite so strongly. But I don't know how people feel about normative. Do you feel you are leading a normative life? (Laughter)

But that is a point, I think we really do need to balance this emphasis on the subjective side of things on growth and development of the individual by some sort of reference, some sort of emphasis on the other-regarding aspect of spiritual life. You do take reality into consideration: your preoccupation with your own spiritual development isn't just (solipsistic) Subhuti will explain that word to you in Tuscany. (pause)

In the case of the Mahayana, that double emphasis or that double orientation is very well summed up in the Bodhisattva vow and perhaps we'd better start thinking more in those sort of terms because what is the Bodhisattva vow? The Bodhisattva vows to gain supreme enlightenment, that is Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. Do you see what I mean? In the first part of the vow, 'I vow to gain supreme enlightenment, I vow to gain Buddhahood', that is, as it were, the subjective side because enlightenment represents growth and development carried to the nth degree, carried right up to and including the transcendental. 'For the sake of all beings' brings into that the objective element, the world and the living beings who make up the world. The purpose of your spiritual development is not just for the sake of your own spiritual development: it is for the sake of other beings. So there is that other orientation, that other regarding reference there.

So perhaps we'd better start thinking, not trying to coin some new semi-psychological term which is what it would amount to, but fall back on the traditional terms. Maybe some of the early Mahayana sutras felt that the arhant ideal - or that the arhant ideal had become by that time - was more what we would call a matter of individual growth and development. That is what the arhant, in a sense, seemed to be concerned with, his own individual growth and development. The Mahayana introduced, or re-introduced or re-emphasised, this emphasis on other people in the other, the object. So one had the ideal of the highest conceivable spiritual development for the sake of all living beings. So again a double reference and a double emphasis. So perhaps we'd better start thinking more in terms of the Bodhisattva ideal in order to secure this double emphasis. (Pause)

?: Do you think that if a person was completely self-oriented that he would be able to grow and develop?

S: I don't think you can be completely self-oriented. I think that is only [30] a theoretical possibility because even if you want to think exclusively in terms of your own spiritual development - as the arhant, or would-be arhant, allegedly does - you would have to observe the ethical precepts, each of which includes some reference to the other, even though you are observing them predominantly for your own sake or for the sake of your own spiritual development. So that you can not ever completely eliminate the object any more than you can completely eliminate the subject. But you can try. You won't succeed. In the end you do have to come back to a balanced middle position where you give equal weight to subject and object, self and others and in the end see them as not contradictory, not mutually exclusive. See that they are integrated one with the other, as the Mahayana tried to do at the highest conceivable level. (Long Pause)

?: We had another question. This one is about meditation. We came across a passage, or I came across a passage, in a Mitrata written by Kamalasila where he was discussing discursive thoughts arising in meditation. He says that at a certain stage it is possible for these discursive thoughts to have nothing to do with the hindrances. Could you go into that, how these thoughts would arise if there are these discursive thoughts not on the subject of meditation but having nothing to do with any of the hindrances.

S: Well you could be reflecting on the Dharma itself. You could be reflecting on impermanence or death. That would be discursive mental activity from the standpoint of meditation, from the standpoint of Samatha, but that is the way in which Vipassana arises or one of the ways in which Vipassana arises.

?: I know, but the example that he gives is of a thought popping into one's mind, ' Oh, I must remember to do something '. Nothing to do with the meditation practice. A thought that is definitely irrelevant to the meditation but however which according to the text is nothing to do with the hindrances. Basically we were disputing that.

S: Well what are the hindrances? Let's enumerate them.

?: Sloth and Torpor.

S: Sloth and Torpor.

?: Restlessness

S: Restlessness and anxiety.

?: Ill will.

S: Ill will.

?: Doubt.

S: Doubt.

?: Desire for sensual experience.

S: Yes. I would say that even though the thought that floats into the mind, the discursive thought that floats in at that moment does not seem to be [31] very obviously or crudely connected with one or other of the five hindrances. I would say that it was subtly connected. I'm trying to think of an appropriate example. For instance, you might think of an appointment that you have next week. Well, there is no craving, there is no hatred. Maybe there is no sloth and torpor, restlessness or anything like that. But that thought quietly floats in. But why does it float in? It suggests a slight anxiety that you might forget that appointment or you might not make it or it might not go quite right. There'd be that very slight subtle anxiety. So that would be a subtle form of a hindrance. Do you see what I mean? Because hindrances can be not only crude but very subtle too, and no doubt, as you get deeper into meditation, various mental impressions are uncovered. Everybody experiences this. You have got various things on your mind or in your mind, things you've got to do, things you've got to remember, things you've got to think about. So as you get more deeply concentrated, these things are uncovered. I think, perhaps, I could risk a generalization. I think they are always associated with some kind of hindrance, some sort of subtle hindrance. For instance, supposing you were a father, you suddenly thought, "I must remember next week I've got to take my son to the doctors" Why would you have uncovered that particular thought? Why would that thought be? There is that subtle attachment to the son, that subtle worry about him. Do you see what I mean? So, this will be a hindrance in very subtle form. One couldn't, I think, claim that that discursive thought was hindrance-free, that it was a pure thought without effective content. Do you see what I mean? The only sort of possibility might be from thoughts arising in connection with disturbances coming from outside. Supposing that the wind suddenly started blowing and you had a discursive thought, 'Oh, its going to be a windy night' well you might argue that that was hindrance-free, but on the other hand, why should you bother whether it is going to be a windy night or even that thought, that reflection " Its going to be a windy night," is effectively tinged to some extent, even though very slightly. So I think that the most that could be said, though perhaps I need to think about it some more, but I think the most that could be said would be that you could have discursive thoughts arising which were not associated with any of the five hindrances in their cruder forms, but I think the question of whether they were not associated with quite subtle forms of hindrances - which are in some ways the more dangerous in the long run - has to be left open.

?: So, therefore, in the first dhyana, all discursive thoughts in the context of the first dhyana would be connected with the Dharma in some way or other?

[32]

S: Yes. That is to say in the case of those discursive thoughts which after a spell of Samatha you actively encourage so as to provide a basis for the development of insight. Of course, the human mind and our spiritual experience being such, that is not to say that even those Dharma connected constructed discursive thoughts are completely hindrance-free. All that is said of the basic principle is, that you do not get fully into even the first dhyana unless the five hindrances have subsided, perhaps it should be made clear that the five hindrances are of various degrees of subtlety and grossness and very subtle hindrances can persist even after that and can cling around your discursive thoughts with regard to the Dharma itself. You may be thinking about impermanence; you may be thinking about developing insight quite genuinely, quite sincerely, but at the same time there may be that subtle thought that if I understand impermanence, if I develop insight into impermanence, that will be a definite

attainment, a definite achievement on my part. Do you see what I mean? That subtle hindrance may still be there in a very, very subtle form. So it isn't at all a cut and dried business, as one would think we could detect it. But certainly there is no experience of dhyanas unless the five hindrances in their cruder forms are eliminated from the conscious mind, let us say.

?: Only in their cruder forms. So are you saying that in the first dhyana there could be hindrances in the subtle forms.

S: No, I'm not saying that. Not in the second dhyana per se, but I am say in effect that it is very very rarely that we experience the second dhyana without any admixture of any hindrance even in a subtle form. Looking at the hindrances more comprehensively, if they are, as it were, coterminous and synonymous with ignorance and craving themselves, they are not fully eliminated until you develop insight. When one says that the hindrances are in abeyance in the Samatha state, what does one mean by 'in abeyance'? In a sense they are still present otherwise they would not be able, so to speak, to come back. They are sort of latent, but their latency is a degree of actual existence. Again, beware of literal-mindedness. This was one of the lessons we learnt last year in Tuscany. The literal mind is not a spiritual mind. Literal-mindedness is itself a hindrance.

?: A little bit of sorting out. We were talking about the God realms. In Tuscany last year you gave a positive interpretation of the god realms as a scale of evolution. Most people though seem to have a very different impression of the god realms. It seems that they are usually taught of in Buddhist tradition as an evolutionary cul-de-sac. I think this even came across a [33] bit in the lecture you gave on the subject. Can you comment or is it just an erroneous impression or are there two different ways in which you can approach the god realms?

S: I think, on the whole, it is a question of two different ways in which you can approach the god realms or what the god realms represent. It is not a complete cul-de-sac because the non-returner is reborn in god realms rather special kinds of god realms, of course, and progresses from there. So in that sense or to that extent, some of the god realms, or what appear to be god realms, are part of the higher evolutionary process. Again perhaps we must beware of literal-mindedness in distinguishing too sharply between the human and god realms. There is a sort of intermingling of the human realm and the god realm and we mustn't forget that the god realms also correspond to Samatha states. So the god realms can be a cul-de-sac but so can Samatha. Maybe the image of the cul-de-sac is not quite right. What is a cul-de-sac? It is a blind alley down which you can not go any further: you have to retrace your steps but that isn't really the case with the god realms. You can enjoy all the bliss and peace and tranquillity and content of the god realms but it isn't a question of withdrawing from that experience but of realizing its limitations. It's simply the intensity of the god realm experience is such that it may be in practice very difficult for you to realize the limitations of that state. For instance, even in the course of ordinary human life, if you are enjoying something very much, very intensely, it is very difficult for you to realize the limitations of that experience, really see that it is going to come to an end and not become attached to it. So as a practical measure it may be that sometimes, depending on temperament, in order to be able to understand the limitations of a certain kind of positive mundane experience, you will have to withdraw from it a little because when you are totally absorbed in it, well you are just not able to see its limitations. Do you see what I mean? It is, in a sense, a practice, though here we go a bit beyond ordinary practice to be able to be fully absorbed in an intensely positive mundane

experience but at the same time realize its limitations. That isn't easy.

So the god realms are a cul-de-sac to the extent that the positive mundane experience is of such a degree that, practically speaking, one is not able to realize the limitations of that kind of experience. You then have actually to withdraw from that experience either by natural progression - the experience itself changes, the conditions change - or by being reborn in the human realm after experiencing first in the god realm, before you can see the limitations of that kind of experience. But it is not impossible if your spiritual motivation is strong that even when you're in the god realm [34] enjoying quite positive blissful experience, you can still come to very swift insight. You can still see the limitation of that mundane experience however positive it may be. So it does depend on the strength of one's motivation. There are some people, the minute they begin to enjoy themselves just a little bit, forget all about the Dharma; there are others who can recall and remember the Dharma whatever they are doing, in the midst of experiences which perhaps for other people would be intensely distracting or absorbing. (Pause)

One of the objects of the Vajrayana is to enable one to experience the utmost intensity of mundane bliss at the same time that one experiences the fullest possible clarity of insight. The Vajrayana aims to bring these together which is by no means an easy task. Well one could say that Buddhism itself aims at bringing these together. So sometimes you have to withdraw from the bliss to experience the insight, and sometimes you have to withdraw from the insight to experience the bliss. But eventually you achieve a sort of harmony between them but this is a very ticklish matter. (laughter) If your mind becomes overpowered by the bliss, that is samsara, if your mind becomes overpowered by the insight, that is nirvana in the one-sided Hinayana sense as viewed by the Mahayana. The bliss, of course, that is under consideration is mainly meditative bliss. (Pause)

?: We had a sort of follow up on that, didn't we? We weren't quite clear, in fact we were very confused, about the difference between the gods of the round and the gods of the path. I wonder if it comes into this point at all.

S: It doesn't but I'll make it clear. It doesn't really come in, not directly anyway. Everything comes in indirectly. (laughter) The Tibetans have the confusing practice of using the word (la?) in a very general way. (la) translates god. (Lhasa) for instance is god-earth, the place of the gods. But they also use (la) with regard to Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Any object of worship is called a (la). So if one translates (la) as god, you've got the gods of the realm and what some translators call the deities of the path. One word (la) is translated both as god and as deities, to give expression that double sense of (la). So the gods of the round are the Samsaric gods, the gods who occupy the Kamaloka heaven, the rupaloka heaven and the Arupaloka heaven, but also are not on the transcendental path. The deities of the path are those gods that embody the different stages of the path. That is to say, mainly the great Bodhisattvas and even the Buddhas. So gods of the round means the gods included in the wheel of life and the deities of the path are those transcendental figures that stand on different stages, different rungs of the spiral. Ah, but to make it more confusing, deities of the path [35] sometimes appear in the form of gods of the round. You sometimes find in Tibetan Buddhism that different prominent figures have got a Buddha form, a Bodhisattva form and a deva form. That is to say, a Buddha form as an absolute form, a Bodhisattva form as a deity of the path and a deva form as a god of the round, because bodhisattvas adopt these forms in order to contact people. That perhaps makes it a little more confusing.

?: Could you give an example?

S: Well you've got, for instance, Shinje, the god of the dead, who is really the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara.

?: What's his name?

S: Shinje, the Lord of ...

?: Is that the same as Yama?

S: Yes. It's the same as Yamaraja. (Pause) Because actually when we visualize a Bodhisattva, we visualize a Bodhisattva according to the Indo-Tibetan Iconographic tradition and in that tradition a Bodhisattva is represented as being like a deva, isn't he? And a deva is represented as being like a prince. But do Bodhisattvas really look like devas? Do devas really look like princes? Do you see what I mean? How do you differentiate usually between a deva and a Bodhisattva? I mean, those who have done visualization should have considered these things. Has the Bodhisattva simply a bigger tiara or more jewels or is there some other difference?

?: Gods of the realm don't sit on lotuses.

S: Some of them do. There are lotuses and lotuses. There are mundane lotuses and transcendental lotuses but both look like lotuses. Iconographically speaking, lotus represents apparition or birth and in the higher god heavens of course birth is always apparitional birth, so the gods of those realms sit on lotuses. Bodhisattvas sit upon lotuses but not because they come into existence by apparitional birth. Here the lotus represents their spiritual, their transcendental birth, their freedom from the impurities of the realms, but what is the difference between the lotus on which the god sits and the lotus on which the Bodhisattva sits? Does it look different? Is it bigger, brighter? Do you see what I mean? If you saw one, if a deva was standing in front of you and a Bodhisattva was standing in front of you, dressed in [36] identical jewels, both 16 years of age, all the rest of it, how would you tell the difference? Could you tell the difference?

?: Not without insight.

S: Not without insight. It's the same as what the Diamond Sutra says about the... Chakravartiraja has all the marks of the Mahapurasa, so does the Buddha have all the marks of the Mahapurasa. Who can tell the difference? Only by insight, only by wisdom. One can't go by appearances. So a deity of the path may look like a god of the realm, but it isn't a god of the realm. But you know, you can experience that, only if you have a measure of insight. So you shouldn't think that just because you visualize what is in effect a god of the realm that you are visualizing a Bodhisattva, something more is needed, some extra experience, some additional experience to make it an experience of, so to speak, a Bodhisattva. You can't see a Bodhisattva in the same way you see a god. They require a different sort of vision, a different sort of imagination, capital I.

Gerry Corr: Is that maybe one of the dangers of Buddhist iconography being done in the West. One of the things was that there's no level of insight in the person who's actually doing the painting.

S: Sometimes that happens even in Tibet.

Gerry: But it's a danger in the West.

S: Well yes one has seen some quite awful examples of pseudo-iconography.

Bernie Tisch: Could you go so far as to say that one embodies the Dharma and one doesn't although they might look the same you can see that one....

S: You could say that one represents the Dharma but the other embodies the Dharma.

Bernie: But one would be just like a mask and the other would be the real thing.

S: It is said that Mara himself can assume the form of a Buddha.

Bernie: But if you knew who the Buddha was... you'd be able to see that Mara was hollow; that the Buddha wasn't in there.

S: There are some strange stories about Mara appearing as the Buddha. I won't go into them now. Were all of those questions from Subhuti's study group?

Devamitra: First of all Greg has a question about stream entrants.

Greg Harman: The question's concerning stream entry and the fifth fetter of ill-will. It's got two parts. The first part was I wasn't quite sure of how ill-will would manifest in a stream entrant and whether that ill-will would manifest against obstacles to his further development or whether it would just manifest irrationally like anger usually just erupts.

S: Yes it is ill-will. I think one has to understand what is meant by ill-will. It's more than anger. Ill-will involves the wish and more than the wish - the actual effort to achieve the destruction, the elimination, the annihilation of some object which is not agreeable to you. So when that sort of intention, that sort of activity is directed against another living being it's what we call ill-will. It's the extreme of non-acceptance of that other living being. The wish to eliminate him. It's not just that you are annoyed with him but you just want to get rid of him. So in as much as ill-will is not really (demerited) by the path of stream entry a measure of subtle ill-will - yes is present in the stream entrant as ill-will, that is to say it's not sublimated as a seeing through of micchaditthis as it were a destruction of micchaditthis - that is highly positive - it's not a fetter. So in the case of the stream entrant he would not be capable of deliberately, actually taking [38] life, certainly not human life but he might be careless about insect life. He may not bother and there may be in his mind just sort of flashes of ill-will. It's not that he ever really acts upon the ill-will - it never becomes really settled into a sort of definite attitude towards that other being. You know yourself you can sometimes feel this little flash of ill-will. It doesn't lead to anything but it is there. Even in connection with people with whom you get on with quite well, something that they do or something that they say may irritate you quite a lot so there's that flash of ill-will. Just for the instant you almost hate them.

Sort of subtle flashes of ill-will of that nature are still present in the stream entrant but do not seriously affect his behaviour and certainly not lead him to take human life, probably not even animal life but he might also a bit unmindfully swat a fly or something of that sort. I mean according to the Abhidharma you can't swat a fly without a very small measure at least of very subtle dvesa.(dosa-pali)

Devamitra: Gerry wanted to ask a question about Ananda arising out of the lecture 'A case of dysentery'.

S: The Ananda.

Gerry: Listening to your lecture really put Ananda up in my estimation. I just thought of him as a straight guy or the fall guy for the Buddha. So you were saying that there was a great friendship between the two but I was wondering, - I was wondering if you could explore the point made in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta that on three occasions the Buddha let it be known that he could hang around if Ananda was to ask him but didn't ask him and consequently was said to go into his parinibbana and Ananda was censured by his fellows in the Sangha. Could you expand on that somewhat.

S: That whole question is full of difficulties and full of obscurities. Perhaps we should start from two undisputed facts - that Ananda was very close to the Buddha for the last twenty years of His life and that also that Ananda - I was going to say reading between the lines but not even reading between the lines - was quite unpopular with quite an influential sector of the Sangha after the Buddha's death, after the Buddha's Parinirvana. There's also the interesting fact that Ananda at the time of the Parinirvana was only a stream entrant. I think probably that can't be fully explained except within the context of the Mahayana. It's almost as though Ananda wasn't interested in being an Arhant though tradition does represent him as becoming an Arhant after the Buddha's death. It's almost as though Ananda represents a sort of proto-Mahayanic attitude. One of the things that is said is that it was possible for Ananda to be with the Buddha and wait upon him and help him so much because he wasn't an Arhant. Had he been an Arhant he would have been too detached to be able to look after the Buddha but this does seem to reflect a very Hinayanistic attitude. So it's as though the Hinayana almost would say well Ananda has exhibited so much love and devotion and served the Buddha so faithfully and was such a good companion - well someone with that amount of love and devotion couldn't possibly be Enlightened. (Laughter). But the Mahayana point of view is different. You could even say, though this is not such... - eh... that Ananda, accepting the sort of Hinayana premises that [39] Ananda deliberately gave up the possibility of Arhantship for himself, during the Buddha's lifetime, in order to be able to serve the Buddha. So in a way this suggests an even loftier conception of Enlightenment than the Hinayanists, let's say did have. There's also this whole question of the finality of Arhantship, the finality of the Enlightenment experience. It's clear that Ananda, as a stream entrant, all agree was on the spiral path, was on the transcendental path. This is all that really matters. So perhaps it does even reflect an earlier stage of tradition. The emphasis was very much on stream entry, not so much on enlightenment as a sort of fixed point that you achieve after a certain time. Ananda really was well known for his kindness. It was he who was responsible for women being admitted, I won't say into the Sangha but being allowed to go forth and form a Sangha. He was blamed for that after the Buddha's death. He was blamed for all sorts of things. He was made to undergo sort of penances almost. There's an interesting book called 'Buddhism; A mystery religion?' where the figure of Ananda is taken as the sort of archetypal figure,

archetypal initiatory figure, that is to say the archetypal initiate undergoing trials at the hands of, well, members of the spiritual community before being finally accepted. That is one point of view. It seems to me that there were people around after the Buddha's Parinirvana who didn't understand Ananda, didn't appreciate him. He certainly wasn't popular with a lot of the farers, the older monks and he had a great following. He was very, very popular with a lot of other people, maybe less influential people.

Bernie: So are you getting at that this might have been true that Ananda could have kept the Buddha here indefinitely. That it's all Ananda's fault?

S: I am suggesting that the historical legend, and we mustn't forget that half the Parinibbana Sutta is a mosaic of material of various dates. It's a compilation. We can't regard it naively as just one continuous work belonging to the date and faithfully reflecting everything that happened. There are various versions of it anyway surviving in different languages. So it is possible that the idea got around that the Buddha could have lived longer - "so why didn't he live longer - well nobody asked him to - well who was always around the Buddha, who might be expected to ask the Buddha to live longer - it must have been only Ananda. So maybe Ananda didn't ask him to live longer and that's why he didn't - It must have been Ananda's fault - so why did Ananda not ask the Buddha - he must have been quite stupid. There must have been many an occasion under which the Buddha and Ananda were together and the Buddha might have even given Ananda a hint (Laughter) Ananda didn't take it." In this way the legend grew, you see. This is the way that legends grow and bearing in mind the general unpopularity of Ananda in certain quarters. But it does seem to me that Ananda's life exemplifies much more to my way of thinking the Mahayana, let's say attitude to Buddhism rather than the Hinayana attitude to Buddhism. It's as though Ananda by virtue of his closeness to the Buddha did, in a way, see more deeply into the Dharma. He wasn't at all a systematic teacher like Sariputra but he seems judging by his life to have had perhaps a deeper insight into Buddhism than some of the others who even at that stage had begun to see the Ultimate spiritual ideal in rather narrow terms. In terms of mainly self development. Do you see what I'm getting at?

[40]

Chris Harper: In a way you've answered this question already because the first question was related to other spiritual groups and the degree of higher states of consciousness they might have obtained. I was going to ask a similar question about Gnosticism - what you thought about Christian Gnosticism if you know much about it or if you had any thoughts about it.

S: Well Christian Gnosticism... the term Christian Gnosticism covers a wide variety of cults. Each practises his tradition. Some of these early Gnostic or Christian Gnostic semi Christian Gnostics or Christian semi-Gnostic groups were sort of ascetic. Others were very far from being ascetic and so on. It's difficult to generalize. But they are certainly very interesting, some of them, they've certainly got a very different picture of the personality of Christ whoever he was, the teaching of Christ, again whoever he was - to any of the orthodox churches, so the material we have or the material that is being rediscovered apart from Gnostics in general and Christian Gnostics in particular is quite subversive so far as the church is concerned. It gives a very different picture of the origins of Christianity. For instance there's one Gnostic book which I remember where some of the disciples have a vision of Christ, well, during his lifetime he's sort of transfigured, much as he is in the gospels; there is the account of the transfiguration before the crucifixion and the three

disciples... and the figures of Moses and Elias appear with Christ and he's transfigured on the mount, well there is a sort of Gnostic version of this, well there are several, but in this particular version the disciples watching this transfigured Christ see something emerging from his side, a shining figure and this figure is a female figure and this figure emerges from his side, he separates from her and Christ then has sexual intercourse with her and they're horrified and fall down flat on their faces and don't know what to make of it so (Laughter) this is something quite different isn't it - this is in one of the Gnostic texts, so you can imagine this sort of thing being read aloud in churches on Sunday morning (Laughter). What effect would it have on the church? What does it mean? But I don't say that that is what really happened or that that was the original story but that part of the tradition if there was just one tradition certainly hasn't been preserved in any of the gospels that I've found up in our black bible. That's just one little example. But it's not unlike the Vajrayana symbolism of the male and female Buddha in the yab-yum position. Perhaps the symbolism is of the same kind. You manifest different aspects of your own being including your own anima as you unite with them, you integrate them all with yourself.

Vessantara: Our group had four questions. They're all sort of spin-offs from the text rather than directly from it. The first was Suvajra on karma.

Suvajra: This arose out of the question of eating food. Something that Vessantara said was that it's quite amazing to think that this human body is a result... this actual flesh is a result of what you've eaten, it's a result of your karma so I sort of questioned well is your body, your actual flesh body, the fact that it's six feet long. Is that as [41] a result of karma and that led us on to a couple of other areas. To what extent is instinct karma and to what extent is animal action karmic. Can animals have karma, not taking it in a too fixed sense but where does one begin?

S: I remember discussing this sort of topic with friend of mine in Calcutta years ago. He was a bhikkhu, a Buddhist monk from Ceylon, from Sri Lanka, he was also a science student so there were various occasions on which his scientific studies raised questions which tradition, Buddhist tradition as he'd studied it in Sri Lanka had no answer. Anyway we used to have some quite interesting discussions, in fact several of us used to have quite interesting discussions down in Calcutta at that time, this was in the very early fifties and one day he put this question to me. His question was 'Does an amoeba have karma?' or does an amoeba create karma? So I put the counter question 'Does an amoeba have citta?' So the point is really there. Citta meaning individualized consciousness, to the extent that there is individualized consciousness there is karma, to the extent that there is self-consciousness there is karma, to the extent that there is responsibility there is karma. So animals do not have consciousness, do not have individualized consciousness, self consciousness, do not have responsibility, a sense of responsibility in the same way that human beings have therefore animals do not have karma. That answers your question partially but what about the human body itself? According to Buddhist tradition the human body itself is a result of karma, the fact that you are born with a human body means that you've set up certain conditions, you've set up a certain state of consciousness which persists, which continues. You've set up a particular form of consciousness to which the human bodily form is appropriate, therefore you are born as a human being and not as a god and not as an animal. To what extent instincts are bound up with that human body, that particular kind of bodily form is a very difficult question. The question is raised in traditional Buddhism, is raised in the Pali Canon as to whether the life principle as it is called and the body are identical or whether they are different and the

Buddha maintains that it is inappropriate to say either that they're the same or different or both or neither so it's much the same I think with the instincts. It's very difficult to think of an instinct separate from the body. It's difficult to think of them as the same as the body or both or neither. So where does that leave one?

Suvajra: That still leaves me with the question are instincts

S: Well what does one mean by instincts? After all this doesn't correspond to any Abhidharma term and I gather that modern psychologists are quite suspicious of the term itself, regard it as a sort of illegitimate category. What does one mean by instinct? Can you give a specific example? Is hunger an instinct? What is an instinct? Is it a scientific term? Do you see what I mean? What are we talking about when we talk about instinct? There are old books on psychology which try to enumerate the instincts, how many instincts there are just like the Abhidharma but there was quite a lot of disagreement on this. I don't think that nowadays one learns about instincts when one studies psychology. Has anyone studied psychology recently at university? Can anyone say? It [42] used to be thought that there was an instinct of self-protection, that there was a reproductive instinct and there are various other ones. Also that there was a group instinct. So I think this is not generally accepted or is not accepted as a useful way of looking at things.

Suvajra: The forming of an individualized consciousness perhaps when we're quite young. To what extent is eating volitional?

S: Well the process of eating has got different levels. For instance when your stomach is empty it contracts and that gives rise to the sensation of hunger and then you start thinking in terms of food, then you start desiring food. There of course the emotional element comes in and then you start looking for food, the volitional comes in. So there are these different stages of a process occurring so to speak in different levels starting with powerful contractions of the stomach and ending up with you tucking into a good meal. So the fact that the stomach muscles contract in a certain way, the stomach contracts in a certain way is because the stomach is so built, part of the human body which is built in a certain way. One doesn't necessarily where instincts come in. Is there an instinct that one is fulfilling when one eats? Is it necessary to bring in that as a principle of explanation? The body is built in such a way that that is how it functions.

Robin Cooper: Presumably instincts at least according to the old definitions would be something like a pattern of behaviour that was genetically determined and it seems reasonable that such things could exist.

S: Perhaps it's clearer to speak of a pattern of behaviour that's genetically determined rather than instincts in that sort of quasi-mystical sort of sense. But what are genes karmically speaking? There seems to be quite a bit of work to be done in this particular area and perhaps one shouldn't rush to any premature conclusions. But how does it arise practically? All these questions ought to arise for some practical reason. They should not be of a purely theoretical interest.

Suvajra: It wasn't purely theoretical.

S: But is it a practical question that needs to be resolved by clarification of these particular

theoretical issues?

Suvajra: Well it sort of had implications in a practical way because if you said that certain functions were instinctual which you don't seem to have said, then that would sort of indicate that you have to look very strongly at certain patterns of behaviour that go on the lower evolution.

S: Well if one uses the term instinct you could use it very broadly for all those drives which inherit, so to speak, the process of the lower evolution because when you pass, so to speak from the lower evolution to the higher evolution you don't make a sort of jump [43] leaving behind the lower evolution completely. There's not a complete break. What happens is that just a little bit of you sort of passes that line dividing, so to speak, the lower evolution from the higher evolution, so all your energies, all your drives which you inherit from the lower evolution have to be redirected. Their energies have to be fed into the spiral rather than into another turn of the wheel, another turn of the round. But even if instincts are a sort of natural extension of the body or of bodily functions they are still a manifestation of karma in as much as that body itself is a manifestation of karma and you have those instincts now because you had them in the past and you provided yourself under your karma with the appropriate means of giving expression to them. But which came first would be difficult to say - the chicken or the egg. (Pause) Sometimes the question arises staying with the subject of food and eating in a practical way, that, well is hunger and is the enjoyment of food something to be eliminated? Sometime ago one of our Friends maintained that, some years ago, if you were a bit spiritually developed ... firstly if you practised meditation - all food would taste alike to you. Do you see what I mean? All food would actually literally taste alike and you would not have therefore any preferences because you will have sort of gone beyond that particular instinct. So what do you think of that? Do you agree with that statement? If so why?

Suvajra: It's discrimination amongst the senses.

S: Discrimination among tastes. It can be a form of awareness, that you're aware of the subtle differences between tastes and you can enjoy your food. We come back to this question of enjoyment - the pleasure principle so to speak but that being consistent with the actual experience of insight provided you don't become absorbed in that pleasurable experience. (pause) So it seems that the point here is that in the course of your spiritual life it need not be one of your objects to eliminate the enjoyment of food. The enjoyment of food for its own sake or for neurotic reasons yes that should be eliminated but simply the enjoyment of food and the ability to discriminate between different tastes and different flavours is not incompatible with the leading of a spiritual life.

Suvajra: So eating and enjoyment of food doesn't create karma vipakas but your own attachment, that (attitude) to food, does.

S: Of course it's very easy to say that. It's very easy to convince oneself one isn't attached. One has to watch that very much too but nonetheless it remains true that one can enjoy one's food, one can distinguish between tastes and flavours without being attached, without doing that or being motivated to do that for neurotic compulsive reasons. So a spiritually minded person should enjoy his food. This is putting it in the simplest terms, this is what that Friend was really arguing about, that a spiritual person couldn't enjoy his food. Whereas I think he can but if there's only a dry crust forthcoming he can enjoy that just as much - that's the test.

Darren Dewitt: What about things like Milarepa who apparently reduced quite considerably his intake of food.

[44]

S: Yes but why did he reduce?

Darren: To be able to meditate.

S: To be able to meditate. Just to simplify his life. Not that he had anything against eating as such but he just didn't want to waste time gathering food, cooking, even eating. He wanted to concentrate on his meditation. One might even say - we are told that Milarepa lived on nettle soup - but we might even say that Milarepa thoroughly enjoyed his nettle soup. That would not have been incompatible with his blissful meditative states. He enjoyed his nettle soup as much as anybody could enjoy any food.

Darren: Didn't he risk dying?

S: Oh yes, well he fell down didn't he in a state of collapse more than once? What are you saying - that Milarepa shouldn't have gone to extremes in this way?

Darren: I was just wondering if this is a necessary prerequisite for meditation.

S: So this raises the question of the place of extremism in spiritual life doesn't it. Because we think of Buddhism as a middle way but sometimes we seem to understand the middle way as something a bit watered down, a bit half of this and half of that and be careful don't go to extremes and don't take any risks but the middle way is not really like that at all. You could say that the middle way is a sort of razor edge. You can very easily slip off a razor's edge. I think Milarepa's a very good example of extremism in spiritual life in a very positive sense. Yes, common sense would say, yes Milarepa was quite foolish, he ran risks with his health but sometimes you have to do this because the obstacles that you have to overcome are very powerful obstacles and sometimes they only yield to drastic treatment. Sometimes you do have to take, as it were, risks. Not spiritual risks - risks with your health, risks with your life, even risks with your sanity or just not get any further. Don't take risks for the sake of taking risks but if you find you can't get any further in your spiritual life without taking risks, without going to extremes, then you have to go to extremes. Other people may find that quite difficult to understand. You may feel a profound spiritual compulsion say not to speak for ten years - well that's going to extremes because a good Buddhist ought to follow a middle path and not speak too much, not speak too little. Speak about the Dharma, speak something useful otherwise just remain quiet. Don't gossip, don't indulge in tit-tat, bibble-babble and all the rest of it but on the other hand nonetheless sometimes you may feel that you just have to go to extremes, that is what your spiritual life is. Maybe there is an existing tremendous imbalance in your whole life and to correct that you need to go to the other extreme for some time, that may happen. So that sort of spiritual extremism such as Milarepa exemplifies cannot be entirely ruled out by any means. Of course you can go to extremes in a wrong silly foolish way and you subsequently reckon well it was just stupid ... you just wasted your time but nonetheless sometimes it may happen in a highly positive way. [46 was there a 45] You may need to go to extremes or seem to go to extremes. It may seem like that only to the onlooker who doesn't understand your spiritual constitution or what you are doing or what you have to do. For instance you feel you're much too attached to the world. You're much too

fond of the good things in life, you're much too fond of parties and all that sort of thing, well you may decide the best thing for you is to go away to an island in the Outer Hebrides and live there alone like a hermit for a few years to counteract your very strong worldly tendencies. You wouldn't really be going to extremes in that case. You'd be supplying the necessary corrective. Some people outside the FWBO even think that living in a men's community is really going to extremes; being a vegetarian is really going to extremes and meditating several hours a day is really going to extremes. I was told when I first came back to England by a very eminent authority that I shouldn't take people for meditation for more than five minutes at a time because one shouldn't go to extremes and more than five minutes of meditation might be dangerous. Perhaps it was for the sort of people who were coming along in those days. (Laughter) But I'm sure there are people in the Buddhist movement in Britain nowadays who if they heard that people in the FWBO sometimes meditated seven or eight hours a day on retreats they'd sort of shrug their shoulders and laugh and say oh well these young people are a bit over enthusiastic always going to extremes. I was regarded as going to extremes during my wandering days because I didn't wear shoes, I didn't carry money and so on and so forth. Bhikkhus I met thought I was very much going to extremes but really it just seemed necessary. I think someone who goes to extremes doesn't think in terms of going to extremes but just of doing the right and natural and necessary thing. I don't think Milarepa had any consciousness that he was going to extremes. I'm sure that he felt that he was just doing the right thing that he needed to do.

Vessantara: Suvajra had another question.

Suvajra: (break in recording) ... something called intelligible concept and when he's given a sort of brief outline... (unclear mumbling from elsewhere and laughter)... it seems to be something like when you develop insight in order to fix it inside yourself, so that you can maintain these extremes of what's going on, you have to have something which you can call intelligible concept.

S: Well concept really is a tautological expression really because a concept is intelligible. Was it communicable concept?

Voice: ... illuminated concept.

S: Or the illuminated concept. (unclear voices) What I'm thinking is this. That when one has an insight experience it's something which is totally different. It's something which is totally other to one's ordinary experience. You can't reduce it to terms of your ordinary experience. So in a way, at least to begin with, a sort of gap opens between your ordinary experience and your insight experience and the question therefore arises how are you to bridge that gap. When you're not actually having the insight well how are you even to [47] remember anything about it, because it can happen that you have a sort of spiritual experience or insight experience let us say but when it is over, when it has passed and sometimes it does pass, you can remember that you had an experience, an insight experience but you can't remember the nature of that experience, the nature of that insight, the context. Do you see what I mean? It's as though there's actually a gap, a gulf, a hiatus between your experience then and your experience now. Just as sometimes there is in the case of dreams when we wake up we can feel the dream slipping away from us, we can even see it slipping away from us. We've no means of retaining it so there a gap. So one of the things that one has to do is to try when one is sort of hovering on the fringes almost of the insight experience is to try to fix it in some

way with some intelligible concept which one can carry over then into the world of ordinary consciousness and use to remind one of the nature of the insight, to recreate even, one's experience of the content of that insight experience. And also use as a means of communication to other people about the contents of that experience. Do you see what I mean? So it seems the Buddha succeeded in doing this. He not only had the transcendental experience but he was able to always create a language, partly out of existing language, partly by using old terms in new way, to communicate what he had experienced, what he had discovered but it is a quite difficult task because it's a bit like what we were saying about the deva of the round and of the path because the one looks like the other. We might talk about growth and development but the Pope is also talking about growth and development. Are we talking about the same thing? The pope was talking about openness and even creativity I believe and lots of other Christians are using all the terms that we use - commitment - they use that term too. So one has to be able to distinguish between the actual words, the contents of those words and perhaps one can only do that by contact with, communication with, the person using those words. If you've got just the word dead or cold on a page, there a no difference. If you read say a report of a talk by the Pope you read perhaps a transcript of a lecture by me you'll see the same words appearing. So if you just encounter on the page 'openness', 'commitment' you can't distinguish between them. You can take into account the context but most of all you have to take into account the person using them and that you can only do properly if you're in contact with and communicate with the person using them. So that your experience of the person gives you some clue to the way in which you're supposed to take the meaning of the words. I was thinking about this a bit recently because I've been thinking about something I'm supposed to be writing at the request of Mr Christmas Humphreys. Christmas Humphreys () is very interested in what I actually teach and this is apparently a big question around the Buddhist Society - 'what does Sangharakshita teach?' Apparently they're not satisfied with knowing he teaches the Eightfold Path and all that sort of thing. 'What does he really teach?'. So Christmas Humphreys wrote to me - he wanted a short statement from me of what I actually taught so that he could include some reference to it in a new edition of Buddhism in England and maybe it would go into the 'Middle Way' but then I thought to myself well you can't really deal with it like that, you can't ask somebody to set forth on the printed page what he teaches. It isn't as simple as that. The essential thing that people have this tendency to look at it in that sort of way because one would have thought, thinking along traditional lines that if you wanted to know what somebody taught you went along to him and listened. Do you see what I mean. It seems very strange that you should want [48] to know what he taught quite divorced from the teaching context. It's as though in taking teaching out of the teaching context you falsify it. So one might say, oh you know what Sangharakshita teaches depends upon the people he's teaching. He might not say the same thing if Christmas Humphreys was sitting there, he might if he was not sitting there. So it's not that teaching is a fixed something, a fixed form of words which remains the same in all contexts, in all situations, in all circumstances. It can't be boiled down, the Dharma can't be boiled down. Anyway that's going off the track a little bit but it is perhaps illustrative of it's significance. I'm not going to be able to write a little piece along those sort of lines. I'll have to do it in some other way making my own points, giving the gentle hint that [he] can't really know what someone teaches unless you listen him in a receptive sort of way. He can't hand you a little sheet on which it's all printed. (Pause) I'm not going to go into this I'll just make the connections and you can follow it up for yourself - this is why it's said in the Vajrayana that the Guru refuge is the esoteric form of the Buddha refuge.

Suvajra: Just one last bit to go with that intelligible concept. Could it also be like a visual

concept. Could you fix the experience within yourself so you could communicate it in a sort of visual way?

S: Well one could fix it in any way that one can, any way that one pleases. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra there is a Buddha world in which teaching is carried on by means of different kinds of perfume. I was reading something in a book review the other day to this effect - I'm not sure if I can get it right - yes - music stimulates memory. Someone apparently had forgotten what he'd written years and years ago and was trying to remember what he's written but couldn't for years and then one day he heard a few bars of a certain piece of music and he at once remembered what he had written all those years ago. There was some sort of intangible connection between the two. So you could say yes it can be words with meaning, it can be visual symbols, it can be sounds, it can be perfume though it does seem that words with meaning are the most flexible of these instruments of communication. I mean if you wanted to convey impermanence to someone or give them an understanding or experience of impermanence which piece of music would you select? So that once you've played this person would go Ah, the experience which was expressed was that all mundane things are transitory. It's said that Asvaghosa, the great Buddhist poet was also a musician and when he played - presumably on the vina - he could imbue people with a sense of dukkha, anitya, anatta. I don't know whether you could select a piece of Wagner to convey the experience of impermanence; but after listening to that little piece of Wagner if they just went and sold their houses and gave away their motor cars and left their wives and families because they just felt everything was impermanent. That would be the test, that it did have that sort of effect. It's said in the same way that the music of Mozart and Haydn has the capacity just to lift you above your cares into another world. It isn't saying to you in so many words, so to speak, well it's stupid just to get depressed and wallowing in negative emotions, well come on be more positive but this is the effect of the music if you can bring yourself to listen to it. That you're not in such a negative state you don't want even to hear Mozart but if you are sufficiently positive at least to switch it on well almost any [50 no 49?] piece of Mozart, any piece of music written by Mozart will put you in a better, more positive mood. It's a great service to humanity that Mozart has performed. You can't help feeling better and healthier for having listened to a bit of Mozart. If you can't tolerate Mozart I think you must be in a pretty bad sort of way. If you can't tolerate Haydn you don't have a sense of humour. (Laughter) Some people find Haydn trivial. I think that's a great misjudgment, I think he's got a great sense of humour, a very great awareness. Haydn is very aware of the audience, he's always playing little games with the audience. There's a subtle play going on between Haydn and the people who are listening to. It's very interesting because a lot of musicians, most of them I think don't have that (other great composers). They are not very aware of the audience but Haydn seems to have been constantly aware of the audience. He must have had a very highly developed awareness I would have thought. Has anyone ever noticed this? He's in a way playing little jokes at the expense of the audience. He's always doing things which he knows you're not going to expect.

Voice: (Unclear - the name of a piece of music)

S: Yes well that's an obvious example but he's doing this all the time, little surprises. Just to increase your awareness of his music. He doesn't want you to () He was writing his music mostly for aristocratic patrons, played at aristocratic supper parties. He didn't want them to go on just chattering and not listening to his music so apparently he was doing little things to call back their attention to the music and get them to listen to it again. So that's quite interesting.

Chris: Would you say the same thing of Bach?

S: Well Bach is Bach, Mozart is Mozart. I don't think Bach has quite that effect of uplifting the spirit in the way that... especially the youthful Mozart, some of the slightly lesser known earlier symphonies are very very good in this respect. They're so joyful. Some which he wrote when he was sixteen, seventeen, very very beautiful - Numbers twenty-two I think and twenty-nine especially. Very very joyous... they go even beyond that. They're so joyful. It's like a sort of spring of joy just welling up just like almost in the second dhyana - it comes bubbling up from some deeper level - that is the sort of feeling one has. Very beautiful, very unspoiled by the world. It's a song of innocence, not a song of experience. Mozart doesn't yet know unhappiness - that comes later - that comes in the later symphonies but not in his early ones.

Vessantara: Adrian had a question about the dhyanas.

Adrian Macro: It seems to follow on from what you were just saying. We were discussing the nature of dhyana which arose from a quotation in 'Peace is a fire' and the quotation is, "Dhyana is not a state in which we are but a way in which we reorganize our being". In the Ti Ratana Vandana seminar when you were talking about Enlightenment you stressed the fact that we shouldn't see it as a fixed state, a fixed point but that the Buddha's experience [51] of Enlightenment sort of continued to develop as he went on. The question is "is the Buddha's dhyana experience of the same order as our experience of dhyana or is it of a completely different order?"

S: Well dhyana experience is not Buddha experience as such because Buddha experience as such is Vipassana experience, but the fact that dhyana or samatha is experienced in conjunction with vipassana obviously transforms the nature of the samatha experience itself. In the case of the Buddha the two are almost inseparable though again if one looks at some of the Pali texts they speak of the Buddha not being simply in the samatha state all the time. There's a reference in the Parinibbana Sutta to that. So the Buddha's experience of samatha can change, it can vary but the experience of insight never changes. There's a lot more that can be said on this topic but I think we'd better leave it for Tuscany. Especially on that quote from 'Peace is a fire'.

Graham Steven: We were discussing the activities of the Bodhisattva and out of this arose the question "do you know why Dharo has decided to work specifically with children as opposed to working with the more spiritually committed?"

S: Well he didn't decide to work more with children. They were literally on his doorstep so he thought he just had to do something about them. It wasn't that he thought earlier on 'I'd like to work with children' or was asking himself 'what could I do, what would help me to develop? Well I guess if I worked with children it would help me to develop' - no he was just sitting there in Kalimpong getting on with his pujas and meditations and so on and he saw all these children around with no proper means of education and getting alienated from Tibetan culture and from Buddhism so he felt something had to be done about it. So that [was] how it was, but as for working or not working with the more spiritually committed he did that whenever he had the opportunity, but there weren't all that many opportunities with committed people but whenever he did encounter them he certainly did whatever he could for them. I'll tell you just a little story to conclude - There were other friends of mine in Kalimpong - one of them

was a Tibetologist and another Tibetologist came to visit him and they were very interested in the Tantra, Tibetan Tantra especially the sexual aspect I think (Laughter). The resident Tibetologist suggested to the visiting Tibetologist that they should go along to Dhardo Rimpoche because he being a great Tibetan lama he'd surely be able to tell them all about the Tantra and the sexo-yogic practices and maybe even give a few demonstrations. (Laughter, Laughter, Laughter!) So along they went to Dhardo Rimpoche and I heard about it also afterwards from him. So apparently they put various questions about the Tantra and even about the sexo-yogic practices but all they got from Dhardo Rimpoche was a sort of Tibetan version of our saying 'you shouldn't throw pearls before swine'. (Laughter) So anyway they didn't get what they wanted from him so they went away and I heard that one of them had said to the other 'Ah well I guess he doesn't know anything about the Tantra anyway.' (Laughter) I told this back to Dhardo Rimpoche because when he told me that this was what he'd done I said well this is what they said afterwards and he was very very amused but also he was a bit sad because they were not at all open to him. They didn't realize that you just can't ask about the [52] Tantra in that sort of way, you can't just go and ask a Rimpoche questions without any sort of spiritual preparation on your part. You can't expect to have it all just explained to you outside the context of a proper teacher-disciple relationship. It's an absolute presumption on your part to think that you're ready for Tantric teachings. They hadn't even gone for refuge because neither of them were Buddhists or had any sort of real interest in spiritual life. To think that they'd go and ask about the Tantra was the height of spiritual presumption. So all they got from Dhardo Rimpoche was as I said the Tibetan equivalent of don't cast your pearls before swine. The Tantric teachings are not to be given to all and sundry who just ask for them without understanding really what they're all about or even with entirely the wrong motive. So yes he was willing to help the more committed when he met them but he didn't often meet them.

Bernie Tisch: This sort of going looking for the more spiritually developed is quite a wrong view. It's not a very good way of approaching teaching the (more spiritually developed). You just come into contact with the spiritually developed wherever you are and if you do you teach (them).

S: Well sometimes you need to go looking, sometimes you do. Some teachers do. They go out sort of talent spotting.

Bernie: So it's whether you have this desire in you or not. It doesn't really matter if you don't.

S: Some teachers it seems do have a strong desire to communicate whatever they have experienced or realized and go out looking for people to whom they can communicate it. I've known stories about this sort of thing. It's not a compulsion in the ordinary psychological sense. It's definitely a sort of spiritual urge. They feel they really need to share what they've experienced or even one might say they feel they haven't fully experienced it themselves unless and until they've shared it with others because there's still a limitation, there's still a sort of subject-object duality which they're trying to overcome. It's almost as though they feel they haven't fully experienced it themselves until they've passed it on to other people. Because it can't be just your experience. It's not your experience unless and until it's somebody else's experience too.

Bernie: It seems that Dhardo doesn't have this desire to go out. He's quite happy to...

S: Well you might say he's quite happy that I've gone out You can work as a team so to speak. He certainly is very happy that I've gone out, there's no doubt about that. It's not for me to say that he thinks that that is enough but perhaps he does, perhaps he feels well Sangharakshita's doing it out there in darkest England or darkest Europe, it's not necessary for him to do anything. He can stay there and look after the Tibetan children. (Laughter) which is also necessary.

Gerry Corr: Do you ever wish to go and see him?

[53]

S: I can't say that I feel any need for that, yes you could say wish, but I certainly feel quite in contact with him and he's quite aware of whatever I'm doing - whatever we're doing and he's very happy with that. He's always very happy to see any visitors from the FWBO - they're always very very welcome. He's always very pleased to hear further news of me and the FWBO and of course he gets the Newsletter.

Devamitra: Does somebody translate or interpret it for him so that he can understand what its contents are?

S: This I can't say definitely - he certainly looks at the pictures. (Laughter) I think in a way that's enough - he's no fool. It may be that his young assistant does translate for him things of special interest. I don't know. I'm quite sure that whatever he needs to know he finds out in one way or another pretty quickly. Is that all?

END OF SESSION

[54]

Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Subhuti, Vessantara, Ratnaketu, Aryamitra, Surata, Ken Chandler, Mike Quaif, Tony Wall, Adrian Macro, Robin Cooper, Alan Morrow, Gerry Corr, Richard, Bippin Patel, Greg Harman, Darren DeWitt, Robin Collett, Tony Bowall, Bernie Tisch, Paul Holloway, Graham Stephen, Kennet Nolkrantz, Chris Harper, Kenny Mackay, Cambell McEwan.

Question and Answer Session on the Mitrata Omnibus Tuscany 1982

S: How many days have you been studying and what ground have you covered?

Vessantara: Four days and slightly different in different groups but mainly the meditation section of the Omnibus.

S: And all three groups have got questions?

Subhuti: I think so.

S: I think we will start with Subhuti's group.

Subhuti: Ratnaketu has two questions, one dealing with culture and New Zealand, I believe. Would you like to put that one first?

Ratnaketu: In New Zealand, primarily we have got two cultures, we have got the English and European derived culture and the remnants of the Maori culture. I just thought that in some ways, I personally couldn't feel that much for the English culture and I wondered if this was because it was that English culture came out of a country that was flat, the weather conditions of that place, the type of people that lived there before, the Puritans and Calvinists and all that sort of stuff. And it is quite different in New Zealand, there is not the same sort of environmental conditions and I wondered if; at the same time I am not a Maori, and so the Maori culture is in a way just as alien to me and other people in New Zealand, and even a lot of the Maoris are quite cut off from their cultural roots. And I wondered if you had any thoughts about culture in places like New Zealand where it hasn't had much before?

S: Clearly in time new culture is needed. One might say the FWBO culture is in a way in a fortunate position because you can't take refuge in what you call English culture, nor can you take refuge in what you call Maori culture so you have to create a new culture for yourself, or help to create a new culture for yourself. That seems to be the short answer to your question, but having said that one might enquire what exactly do you mean by English culture? And to what extent do you distinguish, or to what extent one can distinguish between English culture and the Western culture? What do you mean by English culture? Do you mean Keats [55] and Shelley, or do you mean English cooking?

Ratnaketu: I sort of meant the sum total rather than... I have found as well that I heard about, say, Greek culture, with (?) outside and wandering story tellers and things like this and it seemed to be quite an outside thing and quite to do with the nature outside?? and I got the impression that English culture is a bit more indoors. Music was written indoors to be heard indoors, stories and plays and so on.

S: So this isn't so much a question of English culture it is more a question of Northern European culture as opposed to or at least as distinct from Southern European culture. In New Zealand, as even Italy, certainly Greece, one can live more out of doors and therefore the culture is, we may say, to some extent more out of doors oriented. This is also true of India, this is true of Indian culture, in India you can live more out of doors. I remember in the course of my first visit to New Zealand we did have an FWBO retreat and on that retreat we had study and we had that study out in the open air, under a tree beside a river and we were doing, I believe, the Udana. And it seemed completely appropriate, because it seemed that the very way in which the Buddha lived and taught living and studying the Dharma, they seem to overlap. In England though we have studied out of doors it is not such an easy matter, for reasons I need not go into.

So I think, it could well be that, even in (developing?) this new culture that we need, so far as developing it in New Zealand is concerned, no doubt, note will have to be taken of the fact that more out of door life is possible in New Zealand, and therefore a new culture that is developed, let us call it the FWBO culture, in New Zealand at least, would or could be more out of doors than in, than might be the case in England.

Ratnaketu: But you do use, in a way you have an aspect of English culture there and an aspect of the Maori culture still there and in producing a new culture do you take, do you use or build on the old culture or is it something that you try as you go (?) in quite a fresh radical way?

S: Well this raises the question, really, of what is the source of a new culture, what is the ultimate source of a new culture? I know when one speaks in terms of FWBO culture one is really thinking in terms of a culture whose source is purely spiritual, whose source is a spiritual ideal and in giving expression to that culture, formulating that culture one may take or may utilize elements from any source. And it would be only natural, it would be only right and proper in fact to use any (?) which arise ready to hand if they in fact were suitable and appropriate. There is no reason why one need discard everything from the culture in which you have grown up or to which you are accustomed provided it can be, so to speak, incorporated into that new culture that you are trying to develop as a direct consequence of your spiritual vision.

But if there are elements which don't fit, which are irrelevant or inappropriate, then one mustn't just cling on to them just out of nostalgia. I think nostalgia is one of the great English diseases, I think we are far too much [56] - speaking with regard to most English people - we are far too much occupied with the past. As though anything which is a Sixteenth Century stone cottage with a thatched roof has got to be preserved whether it is beautiful or ugly or whatever. (?) knock down a few more and put something even better in their place, not big blocks but something better than those stone cottages, maybe also built by hand, by craftsmen. It does seem that in England people have this tendency to look back, at least that is something you can't do in New Zealand. If you can't look back further than 1860, your ancient history is only what happened in 1860. (Several sentences unclear)

Anyway, that's the question about culture. Basically we need a new culture and in a way it is to your advantage in New Zealand, that you don't feel that you belong to the English culture there, or the England derived culture or to the Maori culture so you have got to create a new culture. But one can create that new culture only by deeply immersing oneself in the spiritual ideal and trying to give birth to that new culture as a result of your immersing yourself in the spiritual ideal as that spiritual ideal finds more and more outward expression in different spheres of life and activity.

V: What exactly is meant by culture? What is the definition?

S: There isn't really. Culture is connected with tillage. I think I have gone into this in some lecture or other, we have agriculture, we have horticulture. Agriculture meaning the development of crops, horticulture the development of flowers. So culture, in a more general sense, in a broader sense is the development of all the higher human faculties and the objective products which result from that sort of development. So when one speaks of culture one thinks in terms of languages, literature, the visual arts, music and things associated with the whole way of life which makes that cultural activity possible.

One might say, if I am improvising a definition, one might say culture represents all those higher human activities which are not necessary for actual survival. In that sense culture is play. I have referred before - culture is what you do with your surplus energy - I have referred before to that fact that in India, in the Indian language, in Sanskrit one doesn't speak of the 'fine arts', they don't have that expression. They speak of lalita art, which means the playful arts. Lalita is playful, lila is play. So when you have finished the business of earning a living and you have got leisure but you have still got energy, what do you do, you play. And culture is the product of this playful energy, things you produce, things you create above and beyond the necessities for living, above and beyond the necessities for survival.

So culture, from the survival point of view, from the utilitarian point of view, culture is completely useless. This is its great (?), its great advantage, just like spiritual life is completely useless. Someone once said, I am not sure if it was More or if it was someone else who I quoted, but 'Enlightenment is having (?) you can't do anything with it, it is useless'.

So culture is play, it is creativity, it is what you [57] produce out of your sheer delight in existence above and beyond utilitarian needs. Maybe culture starts with utilitarian needs, you have a pot. A pot is necessary, it is of practical necessity, but do you need to embellish the pot? No, that is completely unnecessary, but you embellish it. Why, because you have some extra time, some extra energy left so you paint a few leaves on it. From the utilitarian point of view that is a complete waste of time but that is what (??) when you doodle in that sort of way, wasting your time, wasting your employers time, art begins.

You think (??) more beautiful, but whether it is beautiful or not from a utilitarian point of view makes no difference. But for you it begins to be important that the pot should be beautiful, (??) aesthetic sense.

Of course in order to produce culture you have got to have surplus energy, you have got to have leisure, you have got to have time left over from the business of working, earning a living and supporting yourself in this way.

Subhuti: Perhaps I ought to explain that the next two questions came out of our discussion of the formality and informality. I think actually it is probably best if we have Tony's question first because in a way it is quite connected with the whole question of culture.

Tony: In the Omnibus you are talking about etiquette and our own formality, creating our own formality. At one point in the extract you said, 'sooner or later we have got to create our own forms, our own formalities and etiquettes for ourselves', that is for the FWBO. First of all, do you think we have actually done any of that since that seminar?

S: My impression is, it may be mistaken but my impression is practically nothing.

Tony: Following on from that, the second question would be, have you any suggestions or guidelines that you think we should start following? Ones that are more needed at the moment.

S: I think if it is a question of manners and etiquette, that relates primarily to people and I think before one can develop any new formalities or new etiquettes, one has got to have an awareness or a feeling for other people. For instance one particular area in which this sort of question arises, an area of which I am very, very conscious is that of guests and visitors. Supposing for instance you live in a community, let's say a men's community and a visitor comes. Now it is very important that you do receive that person properly, very important that you should make that person relax and at ease. As yet we haven't developed, so to speak, any standard procedures for doing that, so people feel at a bit of a loss. But what is important is that you should be aware that a new person has entered the community, a new person is on the premises. You should have some feeling for that person, some empathy, how might he feel, he might be feeling a bit awkward, perhaps a bit shy, a bit nervous a bit embarrassed. So what could you do out of the goodness of your heart to put him at ease. This is the way in which our new, as it were, formalities, [58] are going to develop and going to evolve. Just

through that sensitivity to other people.

Sometimes people have got rid of their old, let's say old middle class manners, of middle class origin, so they don't feel like going up to that person and saying, 'good afternoon, how are you, are you on a visit to our community?'. They don't feel like approaching them in that way on the other hand they don't know quite how to approach him. Sometimes they adopt this deliberately casual approach, sidle up and say, 'hello, hi'. (laughter) He may actually be quite a straight square sort of person and may not feel that this sort of treatment is very friendly, it may feel it is a bit off hand, he might feel quite discouraged. You have got to learn to tune in with each new person and proceed from there, and I think this isn't easy, it requires a lot of hard work.

So if, for instance, you have made contact with a new arrival, well introduce him to other community members, he probably hasn't met them before, he doesn't know who they are. He doesn't know who is an Order Member, who is a Mitra. As other people enter the room, introduce them, 'this is so and so, he's (??)' -make him feel a bit at home so that he knows his way around. This is quite important.

Tony: So in a way you are talking about a basic just awareness and politeness of people, it's getting back to that.

S: Yes, I think this is the beginning. I am not thinking in terms of elaborate formalities or anything of that sort. The same applies at centres, when someone turns up at the centre someone should welcome them but not in an officious, overbearing way that they are even more ill at ease than they were before. But show them the ropes, show them where they can put their coat or where they can leave their shoes or where the toilet is. People are very, very shy, they are often (??) and they may be dying to go to the toilet but they don't like to ask where it is, things like that.

So explain some of these things, empathize with that new person, that new arrival. Maybe he has never seen a Buddhist centre before. Maybe he's secretly aghast at all these golden images and that smell of incense, just as Surata was telling us yesterday, relating his life story. So bear all that in mind, try to set him at ease. If the tea is going don't grab your cup first, look to see if he has got a cup of tea, if he's got a biscuit. I'm sorry to have to mention these very elementary factors but I am afraid it is necessary.

Subhuti: Again, this question came out of the extract on informality and formality. We were in fact discussing the question of...

Ratnaketu: We got on to the question of criticism. I was conscious of a few things that you had said. I remember that once you were talking about Dharo Rimpoche and one of the things that you said, what stuck in my mind was that you had never heard him say a bad word about anybody. I was aware of that and then there was a thing in the Mitra [59] Omnibus where you said that when you are in a church you should behave in such a way as not to upset the other people that are in the church or hurt their feelings. At the same time I was aware of that I was also aware of criticism, that it is sometimes very necessary to make criticism and the point I (??) was this Newsletter on fierce friendship and that I had felt that certain things in that were a bit, almost rude. Especially in relations with other (??)

And I wondered if you had any comments giving criticism and rudeness and at the same time trying to be... In a way how can Dhardo Rimpoche never say anything rude about anybody but give criticism? Did he criticize people?

S: Yes he did criticize people but in his own way. It was done very gently and in a sort of humorous way and with good will. For instance Dhardo Rimpoche and myself often talked over the attitudes and the activities of some of the Tibetan Government officials, especially those who were with the Dalai Lama. And some of those were really, well I can only say dreadful, they just wanted to keep all the Tibetan refugees including all the Lamas, the incarnate Lamas including Dhardo Rimpoche under their control for their own selfish purposes in the name of the Dalai Lama. So we often talked about and yes I must say Dhardo Rimpoche did actually criticize their attitude but he certainly did it with good will and with humour.

For instance, I remember him saying that they are so devoted to the Dalai Lama, these officials, that they never do anything without asking his permission. Even if they are in Kalimpong and they want to go to the toilet they send a cable to the Dalai Lama (laughter) When he says it in this sort of way you definitely feel humour.

So I think that yes, certainly one must not criticize for the sake of criticizing. One must certainly never criticize with anger or (??) or anything of that sort. But one can criticize in the sense of pointing out some existing (objectively?) which is not skilful, one can certainly do that. In that particular issue of the Newsletter you referred to, I think fierce friendship, I think some people put the emphasis on fierce and others put it on friendship. In the context of personal relations and personal communication there must be the friendship first. If you are really friends with someone, if you really feel goodwill towards them you can say anything, you can be as fierce as you like. But I think you have to be very careful not to be fierce with people with whom you don't have that relation of very positive friendship. Because they may well react quite negatively, they may just experience the fierceness but not the friendship, I think you have to be careful of that.

So perhaps it is better to think in terms of friendship more than in terms of fierceness. Because if you really care about somebody you won't let them get away with things, just out of friendship. You won't need to be particularly fierce, you will be so concerned that they should get something right if you think they have got it wrong that you will just pursue that, you won't let them get away with it. You won't let them make that mistake if you can possibly help it. You are quite prepared to fight it out [60] with them if need be. That's because of your strong feeling of friendship and you can do that because they also, perhaps, feel your feeling of friendship for them, maybe they have a very strong feeling of friendship for you. So within that sort of context you can say anything you like. It doesn't mean that you are rude, it doesn't mean that you are blunt, there is no need for rudeness in that sort of relationship, you just say what you really think without pulling your punches. And that comes over as a really genuine friendly concern for the other person.

But fierce friendship doesn't mean just going around puffing your chest and blurting out what you think is the truth to all and sundry without consideration of how they may take it.

Subhuti: That applies, obviously, on a sort of personal level, what about when it is a question of in the Newsletter criticizing groups and movements other than ours.

S: I think we can do that but I think we must make it clear that we do that out of our genuine concern for the good of others. Our criticism may be as a result of our outrage that the Buddha Dharma is being profaned, as it were, and misrepresented. And that we feel very strongly about that because we care for the Buddha dharma. But that also must be I think we have to be very careful not just to jump off the deep end and criticize immediately without establishing satisfactorily why we are doing that, and the spirit in which we are doing that. But we need not pull our punches, we need not mitigate our criticism.

But an additional word here, I did go so far as to say recently and you may be having this in mind, that there are occasions when we might even be justified in being rude. But I would suggest that you be very, very careful about this, maybe you had better leave it to me. (laughter) Maybe you shouldn't venture on this. But the sort of situation I have in mind is when perhaps it is a public class or meeting of some kind and someone is asking questions which are not only foolish and time wasting but even perhaps not positively motivated. I have said there are two extreme ways of dealing with that situation, you can make a joke of the question and turn it in that way or you can just be rude. If someone is going on and on, well you might be justified in saying 'I'm sorry that is such a stupid question that I am not going to bother answering it'. Even then you need to be able to be rude with good will, but occasionally it is necessary. But I wouldn't advise to really, any of you, not for another ten years or so. This is something you have to be very careful about doing, for obvious reasons.

Sometimes people almost force you to be rude and I think (??)

Subhuti: No more questions from my group.

V: We've got three questions. Two of them from Robin Cooper. The first one didn't actually arise directly from the study, it is connected with the Buddha's last meal.

Robin: It did actually arise from the study because we [61] were talking about food and the effect of the way a meal is prepared. The effect this may or may not have on people who eat the meal.

I was wondering whether there was any significance that you could draw from the Buddha's last meal and its poisonous nature. Was this a purely objective thing or is some legendary meaning behind the incident, do you think? This is the meal that poisoned him and gave him, perhaps, dysentery.

S: It's a very strange story, there has been a lot of discussion about it. I take it that everybody knows this story, knows the incident, that the Buddha's last meal consisted of or contained what in Pali is called (sukara madita ?) about which there has been much discussion. It literally means boar soft. It used to be understood to mean the soft flesh of the boar but more recently (??) scholars seem inclined to understand it as what the boar finds soft or what was delectable to the boar, in other words some kind of mushroom or truffle. The Chinese translations say that the Buddha had mushrooms; so clearly by the time those translations were made it was understood in that way.

But there it was, it disagreed with the Buddha and gave him dysentery in fact, and he died as a result of this, at least that was the immediate occasion of his death. So the main question that arises in this connection, the Buddha for instance asked that what was left over from what he

had been served with by Chunda the Smith should not be given to anybody else. So clearly the Buddha had some apprehension of the fact that it wasn't a wise thing to take. There's also the fact that he was a smith. Smiths are usually magicians aren't they, in primitive times the smith is often a magician. Because his work seems almost magical, he heats up the iron or he smelts it, he has the secret of fire, maybe certain chemical processes, all that is very magical to primitive man, to early man. And even down to quite late culturally speaking Smiths had a reputation for magic and witchcraft, this was certainly so in Northern Europe. It is so for instance among the Nepalese, the iron workers, the Blacksmiths, the Goldsmiths, these have got a reputation for witchcraft and magic. (??)

So there is that too. Whether there was any sort of spell on the food or anything like that, there are all these questions that can be made. But it is a very mysterious not to say murky business this question of the Buddha's last meal. Clearly Chunda, I think it was Chunda not Chanda, serves the Buddha with great faith and devotion. It seems that he did not intend to do the Buddha any harm and the Buddha made the point that he should not have any regrets that it was after eating food from his hand that the Buddha passed away. He said that there were two meals that were served to the Buddha were of special significance and merit. One was the meal served to him immediately before his Enlightenment, and that served to him immediately before his final passing away.

One can look at it in a purely naturalistic way I suppose, that the Buddha ate mushrooms and maybe some poisonous toadstools were mixed in with those. The Buddha (??) he realized that there was something wrong with what he had eaten and therefore (??) etc. etc. [62] One can look at it like this but on the other hand there are certain odd features about the whole business.

There are other instances of food which the Buddha partakes of and then asks for the rest to be buried or thrown into water. (??) thrown into water, water emits steam bubbles and boils. It's as though something is transmitted. The Buddha also says in the Parinirvana sutta that he sees nobody else who could digest that food, (??) Tathagata. Whether this is meant humorously, only the Buddha could digest this food, (laughter) or whether it was meant as a serious statement it is very difficult to tell. But nonetheless coming back to one of Robin's points, it is a widely held belief, certainly in India, that the quality of the food that you eat is affected by the mental state of the person who cooks it. This is axiomatically (??) therefore the very best food is food which is prepared by the guru or at least which is handed to you by the guru, or which the guru has partaken of. This is the significance of what Indians call (??) the food is offered to the Guru, he just takes a little of it and the rest is given to the devotees or disciples therefore they partake of it as his leavings. So they believe that the blessing of the Guru has impregnated that food by virtue of the fact that he has partaken of it and that blessing is communicated to those devotees and disciples who partake of the food. This is a very (??) in India, a very cultural belief (??) That anything that is touched by the Guru (??)

And of course, following on from that remember that in Zen monasteries for instance the cook is always a senior monk. That is the tradition, a monk who has spent many years in meditation, and from this point of view that would make sense, that he should prepare the food. Another thing is that in India women are not allowed to prepare food at the time of their monthly periods because they are in a disturbed mental state and Indians believe that this does affect the food which they prepare. So they are not allowed to touch or handle or even see food during that period. So if one accepts this basic principle obviously that is sensible

precaution. Also the woman at that time has a rest from cooking duties as well as from other duties.

Again in India it is very strongly believed that if you can't find someone at least at the same spiritual level as yourself or higher to prepare your food if you are on a retreat you should just prepare it yourself. But you should not take food which has been prepared by people who are following unethical occupations or whose minds are not in a very positive state. Of course this is a marginal thing, one mustn't again put too much emphasis on it. In some forms of Vajrayana it is an actual practice to eat any food taken from anybody, even a drunkard, even (??) because you are so confident in the strength of your own spirituality, confident in your own emotional positivity that you can transmute that or transform it. But for a relative beginner precautions have to be taken, or in the case of a beginner.

So this whole question in relation to food is considered quite important in India (??) Strange to say this idea does crop up in Western literature too, (Strindberg?) has this idea, he seems to have intuited this. Does anybody know about this? Strindberg, I think he mentions in his play (??) he was obsessed with the idea of the cook, the cook who was employed by the family [63] and who hated the family and because she hated them she drained, so to speak, all the goodness out of the food that she cooked for them so that they just wasted away. He had this quite bizarre idea, but from the point of Indian tradition it wouldn't have been considered so bizarre at all. It would be really a dreadful thing to eat food prepared by someone who hates you. I think if you were at all sensitive you would find it difficult to eat such food. This is also one of the reasons why in India, let's say orthodox people, for want of a better term, they don't like eating in public restaurants, they say you don't know who prepared the food. There is this question of caste which comes into it, but that's not the only reason, it may be someone of the same caste as yourself which would be technically all right. But what about their mental state. You don't know about the mental state of the person preparing the food. So from this point of view Indians advise people who are beginners on the spiritual path to avoid eating in public restaurants, they don't think that at all a good thing. Because you don't know who has prepared the food that you are eating. They think it is very important that the food that you eat if you are meditating, especially, should be prepared by somebody in a positive mental state and who feels good will towards you.

V: Do you think this accounts for the success of the Cherry Orchard in London?

S: I don't know, I wouldn't like to express an opinion on the mental state of those preparing the food, I don't know them. It might even vary considerably from person to person, from time to time, I don't know.

V: When you said it is a dreadful thing to eat food from somebody who hates you, is this from your own experience or just from the Indian attitude?

S: I can't recollect any instance in my own experience where I actually have eaten food prepared by someone who didn't like me or hated me. But thinking it over I think I would be sensitive to that. I might even instinctively avoid eating food from that person. For instance if you go and see someone, you go to someone's house, it may be that you have gone on some business and maybe it hasn't gone very well or very pleasantly, even if that person invites you to stay to dinner you don't feel like staying. You don't feel like eating with them, do you see what I mean? Maybe one almost instinctively avoids that situation.

V: Robin had a second question which is related to meditation.

Robin: This is a rather technical question to do with dhyana, it was to do with perception, perception in the dhyanas.

The first part of it which I think we probably cleared up but I may as well raise anyway was to do with whether perception in dhyana, in other words the experiences one has in dhyana are mediated by the skandha of samjna. The second thing is, is it sense perception in dhyana? In other words, is the perception, despite the fact that you are no longer in a kamaloka could one call it, as it were, [64] sense perception when one sees Visionary forms or something like that?

(end side one)

S: The first point to be made is that sense perception, (physically as (??) only in the fourth dhyana. In the other dhyanas, even though they are quite deep, especially the second and third, there is a sort of peripheral sense consciousness. Though of course from the second dhyana onward there is no mental activity with reference to that sense consciousness or those sense perceptions.

So where does that leave one with regard to this question about samjna?

Robin: Well I think we decided that samjna, being one of the five skandhas is operating when one is in dhyana or not, so to speak. (S: Yes) And it is not directly to do with whether it is sense perception or not. Is that correct to say that?

S: One could say, supposing for instance that has experienced fourth dhyana, there would not be any sense experience, there would be no sense consciousness at that time. But nonetheless sense impressions would be impinging and they would be registered. So that one could say that samjna was operating. But when one emerged from the fourth dhyana one would become conscious, so to speak, of what had happened while one was in that state of fourth dhyana. Do you see what I mean? (V: Yes)

Because the impressions would have been registered, one might even say that they would have been recognized but one would not have been conscious of that, not been aware of that because one was in the fourth dhyana state and not aware of the whole process of those sense perceptions being registered or being received. But one would become conscious of that as one emerged from that dhyanic state.

So, yes, the skandha of samjna would be operating all the time.

Robin: And related to that, I was wondering, I was hoping that we could clear up the difference between mind, in the sense of the mind that is still operating, if you like, even in the fourth dhyana, and mind considered as one of the sense organs. As a sixth sense organ. I didn't quite understand how that is more limited.

S: Well in the Yogacara they do distinguish between the manovijnana and the klistomanovijnana. The manovijnana would not be operating in the dhyana states, in the fourth dhyana but the klistomanovijnana would still be operating, there would still be

consciousness of oneself as oneself. The ego consciousness would persist even though you weren't conscious of external forms, you are not thinking about them and you are not even thinking with reference to internal mental objects. So the manovijnana would not be operating but the klistomanovijnana would be operating inasmuch as there would be a sense of ego identity upon that stage. In other words the subject/object distinction would still not be transcended.

You also asked earlier about visionary forms. (V: Yes) [65] Visionary forms in the ordinary sense, as (??) will be perceived by the mind as the sixth sense. They will be dhammas, they will be mental objects. But then what about images in another sense, images (??) metaphorical sense. They aren't just perceived by the mind in the ordinary sense, there the organ for the perception of such images is insight, or wisdom itself. Which is a transcendental faculty.

Robin: So what exactly is the mind as a sense organ, in that sense, just a sixth sense? It seems to be a much more limited idea.

S: According to the Theravadin, probably the other schools too, 'mind as a sense organ is first of all what is called in scholastic terminology, the common sense'. That is to say it co-ordinates the impressions being perceived through the different physical senses and refers them to a common (object)? And also it is capable of thinking of mental objects in the sense of images of physical objects that might be present and even, so to speak, imaginary objects, things that don't in fact exist in the external world at all. This is all the work of the mind in that sense. (??) abstract ideas.

V: What do you mean by an image in the metaphorical sense?

S: Well there's image in the sense of something that occupies space. One can speak of an eidetic image, that is to say you can look at a material object and you can close your eyes and you can reproduce that object, you can see it perhaps as vividly with that inner eye, with your mental vision as you can see the external object itself with your ordinary eyes. So that the object that you can see then, that eidetic image is perceived by the ordinary mind.

But then there is the image in the metaphorical sense. That's much more difficult to explain. That is, as it were, a (sought?) perception of truth, or a sort of perception of reality taking on, as it were, a 'form' (inverted commas). You don't actually see it as you see an eidetic image, that is why I say it's a 'form', metaphorically speaking, it is an image - metaphorically speaking. It's a sort of (whole?) and you perceive that, not with your ordinary mind but with a higher faculty which we call wisdom or which we can also call the imagination. It is not an image in the literal sense, in the sense that you may not be able to draw a picture of it, but at the same time, paradoxically it is a form, it is an image; one can't perhaps say more than that.

V: Is that perhaps what you..., when you start a visualization, that's what you ...

S: You end up with. You start off with something more of the nature of an eidetic image and you end up with something more of the nature of the kind of image that I have just described. There is a much stronger feeling element.

(Long pause)

[66]

Ratnaketu: This arose out of the subject around, I think it's the (maham ?) We were talking about the magical themes of the different elements and an experience I had in Spain, while in the mountains, I felt I didn't handle it very well. And mainly what I wanted feedback on was a better way of handling what I experienced. I was with Devaraja and we were quite high up in the mountains and it was getting late, just before evening and we were looking for somewhere to camp. It was quite (?) about ten thousand feet up, so it was quite high and I got a feeling of... it wasn't a very happy place. It was very harsh and there was something heavy about it, the atmosphere was quite violent and there were a few dead carcasses lying around giving it almost this burial ground feeling. And I was aware of this force there, this being that was quite wrathful and I, as I have done for quite a few years, I made offerings to the valley of water and food. But how I wanted to come across to it was more from myself, so I felt very insecure because the energy outside me felt very powerful and anyhow I made the offerings, but by making myself aware to what I felt this being around me (?) was like I became vulnerable to this force outside me. So I was quite scared and I went to sleep, I meditated and then went to sleep and half way through the night an incredible lightening thunderstorm broke out. It poured with rain and then to bring it to..., we more or less got blown off the side of the mountain the next day. And I felt that I had disturbed this force, almost upset it by the way I acted, and I was wondering. In all other cases I have felt comfortable in making myself known to the deity, to the beings of the valley but in this case I felt I handled it wrongly and...

S: Well I would almost say that there are some non-human beings that are difficult to get on with just as there are some human beings. (laughter) You can't expect everyone to like you!

Ratnaketu: I felt that. But I was wondering whether there was a better way of handling these more wrathful, more...

S: With non-human beings as with human beings you can't make another person like you. It's not that you do your little bit of metta bhavana the other person has got to like you. Sometimes one has to accept that one doesn't get on well with all non-human beings, you can't please them. Maybe you didn't make the right offerings but supposing for the sake of argument it was really something negative he might have wanted a blood offering, he might have wanted a goat or a cockerel. Do you see what I mean? And you can't make those sort of offerings for obvious reasons.

So I think maybe one just has to accept and maybe, also, before one thinks perhaps of sending out one's goodwill towards beings and forces of that sort, think initially in terms of protecting oneself.

Ratnaketu: I did think of that.

S: And maybe one needs protection, more, first. Which is of course traditional, by going for refuge and reciting the sutras and maybe (??) oneself. [67] Do you see what I mean? Not assume that you can straight off develop metta towards that being and he is going to be affected by that and like you. Maybe the force is so powerful you can't influence it you can only protect yourself from it.

Ratnaketu: That's more what I was wanting to know. Was there some sort of ritual to perform which would be more suitable when you came into contact with something that I felt was

wrathful?

S: A ritual is only a means of helping you focus your force. One can, as it were, appeal for protection to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas by reciting the refuges and mantras and so on. Maybe one should consider (??) escapes with one's life without necessarily having converted that demon or whatever it was.

Maybe one shouldn't think that one can act like Padmasambhava.

Ratnaketu: In a way I wanted to call on Padmasambhava but I was a bit frightened of what (??) (laughter).

S: (?) is quite a popular character (?) but he's not necessarily a popular character with everybody?

So sometimes one needs to think in just of protecting oneself and leave the conversion of those influences or forces, or whatever they are, to a later or date or to somebody else. Even Sariputra couldn't completely protect himself from the unwanted attentions of the yakshas and so on.

Anyway.

Suvajra: Our group had four questions. I'll ask the four questions and I'll give slight background to each of them. The first three all rose out of our discussion of the five skandhas. We seem to have gone over it two or three times and each time we always somehow come unstuck at the five skandhas.

The first one was with relation to emotions and the five skandhas. Do they come under only the samskaras?

S: They are usually classified under vedana. Feeling in the sense of (??) feeling and also as a sense of emotion.

Suvajra: Then what about the actual active part of emotions, the part that makes you move? The more karmic part.

S: Well perhaps one should be beware of dividing up or separating the skandhas too much from one another, there is an interplay between them. One overlaps another or influences another, one colours another. Also there is the question of the transposition of terms. What we think of as emotion in the West, we speak in terms of say emotion, intellect and volition. What we call emotion would probably be covered partly by vedana and partly perhaps by samskara. Because we recognize it as a sort of driving force. But is that actively (?) [68] very strongly?

Perhaps you shouldn't get too much bogged down in the details of the skandhas. It is a highly analytical teaching and it is mainly to draw attention to the fact that what we think of as 'I', 'myself', is not completely homogeneous, it's quite complex. It's made up of a number of different factors interacting, it's not static, it's something dynamic, something that is changing all the time. That is the sort of picture, that is the sort of feeling you are trying to get.

Perhaps (??) do treat the skandhas far too much in a sort of scientific way. As though all the different parts and subparts are neatly laid out side by side so that you have got a comprehensive and (??) of the entire human organism both physically and mentally. But it isn't really quite like that.

Suvajra: That really affects the second question which was where (??) But maybe we were thinking of thought as being too isolated. Thought as opposed to (??)

S: Again, in Western terms one might say that what we think of as thought or thinking is covered partly by samjna and partly by vijnana. Vijnana is the element of awareness and samjna is the element of recognition of this or that. That is a tree or that green round thing in the distance is a tree, this is a function of samjna.

Suvajra: ???? the sense perception rupas involved in that (??) Is there a rupa that goes with thought and if so (??)

S: A rupa that goes with thought in what sense, so to speak?

Suvajra: In the sense of, if there is something left over.

S: I would say that one mustn't be misled by this distinction between what is thought and what is non-thought. Rupa is the objective content of the perceptual situation in general. It is not matter as opposed to mind.

So in a sense, wherever there is perception, there is consciousness, there is rupa. There is something which is not reducible to the perceiving subject, whatever that something is, and that is what is usually referred to as rupa. (??) rupa-loka, rupa-dhyana. So (??) with these are purely mental states, (??) in terms of rupa.

You might then say, well what about the arupas, that's another story. You might just say that that is a state of extremely refined rupa because subject/object distinctions (still?) pertain. And therefore that is still an objective (??) a very refined point of (??) Rupa is the general term for the, as it were, objective pole of (??) [69] whether it be sense oriented or whether it be mentally oriented or spiritually oriented. It is not matter.

Suvajra: The next question on the skandhas arose in connection with (??)

S: I don't know whether this question ??? it would have samskara at least in (??) and it would have some dealing with vijnanas, some (??) with. But it will not have self consciousness, which is a special development of consciousness. It would not know that it knew or be aware that it was aware. It would have simple consciousness not complex consciousness.

So one could say that even in the animals they have all five skandhas, though not in the case of the fifth one in its fully developed form, that is to say its form as (??)

V: Is it the samskaras though that (??) evolutionary terms?

S: Samskaras also include instincts. Drives, unconscious as well as conscious. So in that sense one would say that all five skandhas are present in the animals, certainly in the higher

animals.

It is self consciousness that differentiates man from the animals. There are some researchers who maintain that the rudiments of self consciousness are found in at least certain chimpanzees. That is not unintelligible, one might say, if one posits a sort of continuity between animals and human beings, but it is a very very rudimentary one. Even that is a matter of dispute, some investigators believe there is, some don't accept that and interpret (??)

Suvajra: The last question is quite unformulated. I apologise for it, it is more like an opportunity. We have been thinking about, reading about stupas for the last few days and we are bringing stupas into Practice today and we have been discussing the philosophical basis of meditation, Mahayana sunyata philosophy, Hinayana Abhidharma philosophy, Tantric symbolism etc. Can you say anything on stupas, about the visualization?

S: I am not quite sure what I am being called upon to do. About the symbolism there is a yellow cube and ... (laughter) a white disc. What more can one say, in a sense?

Suvajra: Well the first aspect of the questions arose up when one of the group asked what was the philosophical basis of the stupa. We had been discussing previously practices under Mahayana sunyata philosophy or Hinayana Abhidharma philosophy. So the question was, is the stupa a Mahayana sunyata practice, and then there are other [70] aspects too. Then we thought maybe we should, since we are doing the stupa today and involving ourselves we could ask you if you had any thoughts on the stupa.

S: I can't say I have any special thoughts on the stupa at this moment. Someone did mention to me that I would be expected to lead a stupa visualization in the afternoon so I in a sense I was trying to not have any thoughts about it so I could lead the actual visualization (??) any thoughts getting in the way, so to speak.

But one could say that the stupa represents, or embodies rupa generally. Because for instance, the Theravadins (??) what does rupa consist of. It consists of earth, water, fire and air. By which are not meant, of course, earth water fire and air in the ordinary sense. They represent, what shall I say, different variations of that objective content of the perceptual situation.

It can be experienced in different ways. It can be experienced in terms of resistance, that is to say experienced in terms of (??) , or solidity. It can be experienced in terms of fluidity, it can be experienced in terms of radiation, it can be experienced in terms of expansion, or undulation. So the objective content of the perceptual situation can be experienced in these various ways, symbolized so to speak by these (??)

So one is not only (??) concentration exercise from (??) point of view, one is also from a more philosophical point of view bringing into perspective, bringing into ones purview the whole of the so-called (??) universe; which is all rupa, which is all earth, water, fire and air in that sense.

The next step of course is to realize that all that is Sunyata, (??) point of view. So the visualization of the (??) of the truth, is the rupa half. Later on you have to acquaint yourself with the other half which is the Sunyata half, and realize (??) So one could say that the stupa visualizes the whole of existence, the whole of creation, if you like. The whole of the central

objective universe, that is visualized in that stupa. Whatever is referred to in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra as a rupa, (??) rupa which is identical, rupa non-different from Sunyata. You could of course say that the blue sky in the midst of which you visualize the stupa is Sunyata. You are just surrounded, it's non different from it, which is quite (??)

So that is broadly speaking the philosophical significance of the stupa visualization. The different (theoretical?) forms represent the different ways in which one, as it were, encounters the objective content of the perceptive situation. Sometimes it is something that resists, that is solid and heavy, sometimes it is something that just flows. Sometimes it is something which just expands. Also, of course there is the correlation (??) energies. (??) You could even say that as you experience yourself so you experience the universe. If you are feeling dull and heavy and solid well the universe is made of earth and rock. If you are feeling quite flowing (??) water free and movement, undulate. If you are feeling very inspired you seem to see the whole world as if it is made [71] of fire and is moving upwards. (?) If you are feeling in a very expansive mood it is as though you are just moving outwards in space in all directions. Just air.

Anyway perhaps we can leave it there. Is that the lot then?

(end tape 1)

Next Session:

S: So what ground have you covered and what questions have you brought?

Subhuti: I think we were mainly dealing with the Dhyana and Prajna sections of the Mitrata Omnibus, but we don't have all that many questions between us. Devamitra is going to start.

Devamitra: We've just got one question. It didn't actually arise out of the study of the Mitrata Omnibus, because we finished that early. So to make up we've been studying one Sutta from the Majjhima Nikaya and it is from this that our question comes. We were studying, in fact, one of the discourses to Rahul, the particular discourse in which the Buddha says that of anyone who is capable of deliberate intentional lying, without shame, of such a person, I say there is no evil he cannot do. So we were concerned in the discussion about truth and falsehood. Eventually we started discussing skilful means and as part of this discussion we started talking about what I believe is a Jesuit doctrine of Mental Reservation. And we wondered if somebody came along to a centre, they may not be very familiar with Buddhist philosophy, it could seem, if you were talking about skilful means, it could seem and this Catholic doctrine of Mental Reservation were quite similar in several respects. In what way, what would be the distinctions that you would point to?

S: Well first of all, perhaps, general observations or general comments with regard to the Buddha's original statement. We did go into this whole question of truthfulness fairly thoroughly on some recent study retreat, I can't remember which one it was. Especially we went into this question of breach of contract, failure to observe one's undertakings and even to perjury. I think the point that mainly emerged, the point that I was mainly concerned to emphasize that was the lack of truthfulness or actual lying to another person represented above all else, perhaps, a complete breakdown of communication. That was why it was so harmful and so disastrous and so unskilful.

There was much else that emerged in the course of that discussion, perhaps it isn't all immediately relevant here. But it is significant that the Buddha says this, that for one who lies deliberately and without shame. I am not sure what the word here for shame would be. It could be hiri, without regard for what his peers might think of him, well there is no sin that that person might not commit. In the first place if there is a complete breach between you and other beings, if there is no communication between you and other beings, say other human beings, if you have no feeling for them well you could well steal from them and might even murder them in the end. [72] And in the same way if you were devoid of shame, if the restraining influence of the peer group that you respect is not there, well then again you may do anything. So the Buddha is no doubt right in underlining the importance of and the significance of truthfulness and abstaining from untruthfulness. Without truthfulness, without keeping one's word, there is no human communication, there is no human society. Without observance of the, for instance, law of contract; without keeping faith no human (?) is possible. So that seems to be sufficiently clear.

But then come on to this other point, that is to say about human communication, someone coming to the centre. You mentioned this, I think it is actually Jesuitical doctrine of Mental Reservation, I am not sure if it is a Catholic doctrine as such. The Jesuits had a number of (casuists?) beginning with the famous Suarez and (Escopa?) who were Jesuits who went especially into the casuistical aspect of moral theology. They worked out a whole system of casuistry which was quite famous but which was not necessarily accepted by other Catholics. I am inclined to think that this doctrine of Mental Reservation in the communication of Catholic truth is one of those doctrines, I would have to look it up to be quite sure.

There was a lot of controversy about it in England in the last century when organized Catholicism started creeping back and a hierarchy was set up. You may remember that Charles Kingsley accused Newman of intellectual dishonesty; called forth his famous reply (?) - 'what (?) for the life of my soul'. In which (?) got the better of Kingsley, I'm not so sure. Anyway, Kingsley comes across as the bluff, honest, outspoken Englishman and Newman as the rather fine, subtle distinction making, ecclesiastic who perhaps can't be completely trusted. But this doctrine of mental reservation, with regard to Catholic truth, well if someone asked you about Catholic teaching and if you thought he was beginning to become interested but if at the same time you thought that if you told him the full and complete Catholic truth he may lose his interest or even be shocked, then you should not impart or reveal that to him.

That was the Catholic doctrine, or that was the Jesuitical doctrine of mental reservation in the communication of Catholic truth. Now this implies or suggests that there is a sort of body of truth, formulated truth, doctrine.

For instance, take an example, supposing one takes the example of the Catholic, undoubtedly Catholic doctrine of eternal punishment. That is certainly part of Catholic teaching. Someone might ask the Catholic priest, while beginning to be interested in Catholicism, about Catholic truth and he might ask him about such things, 'what happens after death?'. So the priest might explain about purgatory and how your sins could be gradually purified and you might go to heaven. He might not say anything about the Catholic doctrine of eternal punishment because he might feel that the person is not likely to accept that at that particular time. He is sort of keeping something back. So Catholics believe that is acceptable, this does not amount to telling lies, I have given this simple example, no doubt there are much more complicated ones which could involve, technically, even the telling of lies.

So what about Buddhism, what about our communication of Buddhism. I think here one has to bear in mind that one isn't concerned so much with the communication of a body of formulated [73] doctrine. Do you see what I mean? One is concerned initially, one might say, with opening up communication with other people, one is concerned with what emerges in the context of that communication. This is what one essentially is concerned with. So it is a question of whether one can communicate at all; I would see it more in that light. It's not that there is something in your mind which you could say, which the other person could understand but which he might reject. That is not the position at all, I would say, so far as we are concerned. There is perhaps something in your mind but you feel that you are unable to communicate it. So because you feel that you are unable to communicate, which means unable to communicate the spirit of it, you refrain from merely pronouncing the words which in fact would not constitute a communication, which would not enable the person concerned to understand the spirit of what you were saying or the spirit of what you had in mind. That is a very different kind of thing.

Supposing someone asks you: 'Is Sunyata the Void'. Well how can you say that yes, Sunyata is the Void. In a sense it is true that Sunyata is the Void but you might know that that word Void, if you pronounce it, would not communicate to the person concerned your intuition and your understanding of what was meant by Sunyata. The communication would therefore be a non-communication. So if you refrain from saying that Sunyata is the Void, you are not telling a lie, you are not concealing anything that you could just as well have imparted, you are recognizing realistically the limitations to that particular communication. (?) But can you think of any other examples that might give difficulty which I have not covered in my reply.

Devamitra: It may be, actually, that I have misunderstood the doctrine of mental reservation. I came across it, in fact, reading one of Joseph McCabe's books and I took the impression that actually in practice a number of Catholics had actually deliberately lied and used that doctrine as justification for their behaviour.

S: That may well be, I wouldn't put it past them.

Devamitra: I suppose I also had in mind the example in the White Lotus Sutra when the elder called out to the children and said that, all those things that they most loved were outside, come and get them - to get them out of the house. The question in that particular passage is raised, does he actually commit a falsity, and the answer is no because he has their own good at heart.

S: That doesn't actually answer the question though, does it, though maybe it is the Sutra's answer?

Devamitra: No it doesn't. My point is that presumably a Jesuit could argue the same with regards to this doctrine of mental reservation.

S: It raises questions about what is good. It raises also questions about what is 'good' in respect of human communication. As I mentioned (?) brought into communication, can it be good from the point of view of communication, therefore, never to tell a lie? With what sort of 'good' are you concerned, [74] with what sort of 'good' of the other person? Can you think in terms of the other person's 'good' in such a way that a violation of communication with him is involved? You might find it very difficult to think of it in that way. There may be

limitations to what you can actually communicate, but I think there is a distinction to be made between that and information deliberately withheld. I think that the Catholic is thinking more in terms of information about the Catholic faith. For instance about the number of heretics burned at the stake, they might deliberately, perhaps, falsify or reduce that figure so as not to put off a prospective convert.

So that would be the actual withholding of information which could be communicated. But in the context of Buddhism I think it is more a question of what cannot be communicated anyway because the person is not able to understand it. Even though you may pronounce the relevant words the message doesn't get across. But I think under no circumstances should information be withheld, if that information is sought. Because that would be a breach of truthfulness. If someone, for instance, says 'is it true that in Japan in the medieval period there were fighting monks and that they did attack one another's monasteries?' Well you have to admit that yes, that was the case. Even though you may fear that statement may put somebody off. You may hasten to add that it was a very rare occurrence, and that sort of pattern was repeated in very, very few parts of the Buddhist world etc. etc. But you cannot withhold the information in the so-called interest of that persons developing involvement with Buddhism. Because you would introduce a note of falsity into your communication with him, which would corrupt the whole relationship itself. And it would perhaps (?) putting him off Buddhism more than anything.

So if for instance he asked you, 'what is Nirvana?' Assuming you know and could communicate it, if you had a suitable person to communicate it to, if you felt that he wasn't that person and you couldn't communicate what you had intuited about Nirvana you would not be withholding anything from him.

In the case of the Saddharma Pundarika parable the situation is complicated by the fact that it is a parable. I think that the details of a parable cannot be taken literally, as a guide to spiritual life. I mean the elder, if you take the details of the parable literally is dealing with children. That is quite a different matter, perhaps, than dealing with adults. The children are not fully responsible, you are responsible for them. You are responsible for their good, for their welfare. I think that the fact that the elder in the parable tells what is technically a lie, let us grant that point, that could be debated, I think that the fact the elder in the parable tells a lie for the good of the children cannot be understood as meaning that for the sake of their spiritual benefit you are justified in telling lies to other human beings. I don't think that conclusion can be (?) drawn.

In any case, we have to weigh what the Buddha says, let's say it is what the Buddha says, in the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra against what he says in the particular passage. I think also, sometimes, our own subjective feeling is a safe guide. Whether we feel that we are being completely honest with someone or whether we have an uneasy feeling that we are not being particularly honest or not being open. If we have that sort of uneasy feeling then something is wrong.

But can you think of an example, the sort of question that someone might ask, some newcomer coming along to the [75] centre where one might be tempted to withhold the full Buddhist truth, so to speak? As distinct from recognizing one's inability to communicate or recognizing limitations as to what one can communicate. As distinct from withholding information which could just as well be communicated.

Devamitra: I'm afraid I can't.

S: So it is important to recognize the distinction. The distinction itself is a very important one. That failure to impart factual information, whether about doctrine or anything else which could be imparted. That is one thing. But a recognition of one's inability really to communicate something which one wishes to communicate but which one sees one is not in a position to communicate, that is quite a different thing.

Subhuti: We had some questions arising out of study of the Dhyanas and the samadhis. Darren has a question on the samadhis.

Darren: In the Mitrata Omnibus is a section on the Three Gateways to liberation. I was wondering where those teachings arose from, what school?

S: As far as I remember these teachings are common to all schools, are found in the Pali Canon, the Pali scriptures; these gateways, or doors to liberation.

Darren: So they have been existent since the time of the Buddha?

S: They seem to be traced back to the time of the Buddha, to the Buddha himself, as far as one can see.

Darren: Then there are, what it says there were a number of these samadhis, that those -were the main three?

S: Well the word 'samadhi', here is used in a somewhat different sense from the way in which samadhi is used in other contexts. For instance one has got the famous triad of Sila, Samadhi and Prajna. Here samadhi is something mundane, that is to say it is not transcendental. It doesn't pertain directly to Nirvana. But when samadhi is used in the context of these three doors to liberation it represents a higher spiritual experience, in that sense a samadhi-type experience, an experience involved in concentration and integration of all ones energies, but at the same time with a content of insight, a transcendental content corresponding to the particular aspect of the unconditioned that is being approached. So here samadhi is used in a somewhat different sense, samadhi used in the sense of one's meditative experience at the time of, or as conjoined with one's experience of a particular kind of insight.

Darren: Would they be... were these gateways actually incorporated as part of a systematic teaching or were they just...

S: In the Theravada they are. I mean they are dealt with [76] in the Abhidharma and in Buddhaghosa's (?) dealt with them in the Visuddhi-Magga. They do represent standard, one might say, Hinayana teaching which was taken over by the Mahayana also. But as far as I remember that particular teaching wasn't made very much of, from a practical point of view. It was there, it was recognized, it was included but it wasn't exactly enlarged upon or developed. That might have been because the Mahayana was more concerned with the elaboration of the teachings on Sunyata, though of course Sunyata is one of the Vimoksas.

But there is a sort of difference of usage, or difference of meaning even, to be observed with 'samadhi' in this context, the context of the Three Vimoksas, 'samadhi' as meditation in the

ordinary sense, meaning samadhi in the sense of the dhyanas.

Darren: And they are also spoken of as being gateways, which implies... it seemed to from the Mitrata Omnibus one seemed to get the impression that they weren't actually... they weren't just pure dhyana experiences as still within the subject/object duality. But they also weren't full experiences of...

S: Well like a gateway itself, a gateway is in between outside and inside. It is a means of access. So it is, in a sense, not only a gateway but it is also a bridge, a link between the conditioned and the unconditioned. This is made quite clear, that for instance through the penetration of the anatta nature of the conditioned, one arrives at the Sunyata nature of the unconditioned. So you have, as it were, the conditioned impinging on the unconditioned and the appropriate vimoksa forms the door, the gateway by means of which you pass from the one to the other. You get so deeply into the conditioned and you emerge from that into the unconditioned. You go from anatta to Sunyata. In the same way you go from anitya to dukkha, or you go from dukkha to (appanihita ?). You go from a particular aspect of the conditioned to the corresponding aspect of the unconditioned. And that is considered as a samadhi in the sense that in order to develop insight to that degree one needs a very high degree of concentration. So the spiritual experience is spoken of, as it were, in both terms. One speaks of the Sunyata-samadhi, the samadhi half suggesting that there is a high degree of meditative concentration and the Sunyata part suggesting that there is insight at the same time, into that particular aspect of the unconditioned attained by penetrating into the corresponding aspect of the conditioned.

Darren: So could there be, the gateways to liberation would they actually be used by the person perhaps when he attained a certain level of dhyana?

S: I think the Mitrata Omnibus makes clear... well perhaps it is necessary to see the samatha and the vipassana alternately (?)

Subhuti: Alternately?

S: Hmm. It's gone into in the Dhyana for Beginners seminar if I can remember that. But the sort of standard procedure is that one has, say, an experience of dhyana to begin with, one practices, say mindfulness of breathing or metta bhavana or one practices the Kasinas or whatever it may be. But one has some experience of the dhyanas, that is to say all one's [77] psychical energies, conscious and unconscious, they do begin to be unified and clarified. Emotions become more and more positive. So in this way one has some dhyana experience. Then having obtained that dhyana experience, on the basis of that, on the basis of that samatha experience one then starts reflecting. One then starts developing vipassana.

So one starts developing vipassana by, so to speak, coming down to the first dhyana where mental activity is possible and starting up mental activity with regards to the nature of existence. Using perhaps the traditional Buddhist formulas, that is to say reflecting on impermanence or reflecting on the insubstantiality, anatma. In this way insight develops.

Now among the characteristics of the conditioned, say that it is dukkha, anitya, anatta, one can take up one particular characteristic one particular attribute rather than another and dwell particularly on that. And then that becomes one's gateway or door into the unconditioned, that

is to say the corresponding aspect of the unconditioned.

If you are dwelling, very much say upon the selfless, the anatta nature of the conditioned sooner or later you pass beyond, as it were, the framework of the conditioned. The insight remains but the conditioned framework of the insight is no longer there, that sort of drops away. So you are left with the insight going further and further and going, so to speak, into the unconditioned through that gateway as it were, of the reflection or development of insight into that particular aspect of the conditioned. So you go from anatta now to Sunyata and you go deeper and deeper into that and that is, of course what the Mahayana did. They were especially interested in exploring Sunyata, levels of Sunyata, types of Sunyata. So they took up this whole question of Sunyata so much that these other gateways were rather lost sight of. That is to say the gateway of (appanahita?) and the gateway of animitta. Maybe the gateway of animitta was made some use of but not as much as was made of Sunyata. So it could be that in that way the Mahayana, the teaching of the three gateways, the Vimoksas, as such lost some of its significance, because of this very heavy emphasis on Sunyata in particular.

One could say that the Lankavatara Sutra goes back a bit to this question of (?) but I don't think it uses that term.

Subhuti: You premised what you said by saying that the standard procedure is to reflect upon reality using one of these forms.

S: Ahh yes, I didn't quite complete what I was going to say. After one has, for instance, spent some time trying to develop vipassana, trying to develop insight into reality, perhaps with the support of one of the traditional formulas, it may be that you just start thinking in the ordinary sense. Your mind becomes a bit distracted, you then need to go back and practice meditation, practice dhyana. And then again, have another go, so to speak, at developing vipassana. This is what I call the standard procedure. This is the central, traditional practice of Buddhist meditation, leaving aside things like Zen which has an approach of its own. This is the practical, central, as it were 'safe' method.

Subhuti: You have talked about the Brahma Viharas as a sort of alternative path. (S: Yes) To what extent is the [78] rational reflection necessary?

S: Well a certain amount of rational reflection is necessary, as when, for instance, you develop metta. You just think of it, think about or reflect on the beings to whom you are developing it. At least you have to recall them, perhaps their names and where they are. That represents a certain amount of subtle mental activity; maybe not so subtle. But the (?) that eventually you are generating a stream of metta which has no reference to any particular object. Then you go beyond that traditional framework and it is then that I suspect, though this is not Theravada teaching, you emerge into something unconditioned. But again that isn't in Theravada teaching though in fact (I think they are probably wrong about this ?) Anyway that is why I said they have undervalued the Metta Bhavana (?) So it could be that the Brahma Viharas are a means of access to the unconditioned. Perhaps one could tie it up with the (?)

Darren: Relating to that, I don't know whether this will be gone into later on in the course, but about visualization practices. Are they a combination of concentration and insight practices?

S: Yes. These are, or they should be, in their full form a combination of samatha and

vipassana. If you just... for instance you close your eyes and you visualize just a yellow cube or a yellow square on a blue sky, this is just a concentration exercise. This will just give you (Section missing due to aeroplane noise) ... you can make the yellow square appear or disappear. So because you are able to make the yellow square appear and disappear you can say that yellow square is impermanent, it arises in dependence upon causes and conditions. So if I make the effort (?) appears, if I cease making the effort it disappears. So the yellow square is impermanent, it is conditioned. Then you can go on to reflect that everything is like that, whether it is a yellow square or a blue square or a white one, whether it is a tree or a house or anything. And in that way it becomes a means of developing vipassana or insight.

Then hopefully since you have been concentrating on the yellow square since your energies are very much together hopefully your reflection on the impermanent nature of things in general will not just be of the nature of intellectual but you will actually start seeing that in a more effective way. So even a simple visualization exercise can contain elements of samatha and vipassana.

Just to dwell on the six element practice a little. The six element practice, that is to say in terms of earth, water, fire, air, ether and consciousness. This is definitely a vipassana practice all the way through. But the standard form of visualization practice is of course the visualization of a Buddha or Bodhisattva and this definitely embodies elements of both samatha and vipassana, to use those terms, which actually aren't used in the Tantra at all. Because, first of all, to visualize the form at all just as a form, requires a great effort of concentration, so concentration, [79] samatha is there. But then it isn't just a form, like a geometric form, it's a form of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva and that embodies, so to speak, the unconditioned, embodies reality. Because the Buddha or the Bodhisattva is represented or regarded as having realized ultimate reality. So when you are contemplating the visualized image, you are not just concentrating on a pretty picture, you are contemplating an embodiment of reality itself. And you are occupied with it, so to speak, in that way, and you reflect upon it in that way or you are drawn to it in that way. So it becomes, one might say, a means of developing vipassana or a means of developing Prajna. You could say that here you are concerned with the subha aspect of reality. Remember the four viparyayas, three of them correspond to the three laksanas, do you remember these? (V: Yes)

So one of the viparyayas asubha, it corresponds, in fact with subha. Subha is pure beauty, asubha is relative ugliness. So one could say that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are visualized in this visualization type meditation are different aspects of the unconditioned under its aspect of subha, that which is pure and beautiful. Not under the aspect of the Void, not under the aspect of signless, not under the aspect of the directionless, but under the aspect of the purely beautiful. The other aspects are there, of course but that is the one upon which one is especially concentrating.

Darren: But the other one's... I thought when you spoke of the signless and the directionless, that was looking at... that's actually...

Bernie Tisch: Yes, it's like another gateway, it's another liberation. (S: Yes) It's not negating the other gateways it's just another...

S: You can look at it quite literally, almost. In terms of the Mandala, the Mandala has four gateways. You can say the Mandala represents Enlightenment, it represents Buddhahood and

it has got four gateways. There is a gateway through Sunyata, there is a gateway through appanihita, there's a gateway through animitta, there's a gateway through subha. One could look at it in this way. But regardless of the gate through which you enter you enter the Mandala, you enter Buddhahood. Do you see what I mean?

Which particular aspect you concern yourself with seems to be largely a matter of temperament or natural interest. The Mahayana seems to be especially fascinated by Sunyata, that particular approach, that particular gateway. That is why we have all the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras dealing with it, (?) Sunyata.

Bernie: Our aspect, or what we seem to be concentrating on in visualization practices would then be this beautiful?

S: Yes, one could look at it in that way.

Bernie: Generalizing (?) (S: Yes) Facing this gateway (S: Yes)

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Darren: That would imply that you are looking, you're actually looking... if you are looking at the purely beautiful you are looking at the unconditioned. (S: Yes) Rather than observing the conditioned and seeing into the conditioned. Like seeing it's characteristic of impermanence.

S: Well, you are in fact seeing the asubha nature of the conditioned. Because in order to feel strong attraction to those visualized forms you have to, so to speak, neglect or overlook the lower degrees of beauty. You have to detach yourself from those, you have to see through those. You have to see that they are in fact asubha in comparison with the subha nature of (voices drowned by aeroplane noise)

S: ... you see the question is that in the case of... concerning oneself with the subha aspect of the unconditioned one does not, apparently, arrive at that through penetration into the asubha nature of the conditioned. But I am saying that in effect you do. But it isn't just a question of seeing a pretty picture of a Buddha, it is a question of feeling, whether that picture is on the wall or in your mind, it's not just a question of seeing a pretty picture but it is a question of being moved by that picture, by being moved by that beauty. And this can only happen if your affectivity, if your emotions are no longer tied up with the lower degrees of beauty. Do you see what I mean? And they can only cease to be tied up with the lower degrees of beauty if you actually see that those lower degrees of beauty are lower degrees.

In other words you see their asubha nature. Only then can you genuinely appreciate the subha nature of the unconditioned. So, for instance, this is why I have emphasized with regard to visualization practices, it is not enough to be a good visualizer. It is quite easy, comparatively, to be a good visualizer and make up quite a vivid eidetic image of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva - you can do that. But it can leave you cold, it's just a concentration exercise. It doesn't become subha in the true sense, it doesn't become a means of developing an insight, it doesn't become an embodiment of the unconditioned unless your emotions are transferred to it, you have a strong emotional response to it. And you can't have that strong emotional response to it unless your emotions are at least for the time being, detached from the lower levels of

(reality?). And you can only detach from this particular part by seeing that those lower levels are asubha in comparison with this which is truly subha.

So this is why I emphasize that it's not enough just to visualize the image of the Buddha or Bodhisattva, to see it clearly in one's mind's eye, one has got to actually develop very strong feelings for it and towards it.

Darren: So that the form is asubha in comparison to the nature behind the form.

S: The form is subha or asubha?

Darren: Asubha in comparison to the... what is being expressed through the form. In relation to what is being expressed by the form.

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S: The form is only a form. If you visualize, say, an image of Avalokitesvara, that is only a visualized form. It is an object of concentration, it has only a dhyanic significance. It only becomes an embodiment of the subha in the effective sense when your emotions, your emotional energy is transferred to it and you start appreciating it as an embodiment of the unconditioned. When you see that that really is subha in comparison with other things which are asubha.

In other words it is a question of the transference not only of emotional energy but the drive of one's whole being. Your centre of gravity has to shift towards that or on to that for it to become significantly an embodiment of subha or the unconditioned under its aspect of subha.

Darren: So in a way, it's got to shift from just seeing beautiful objects that delight one in a beautiful way to actually seeing something relating to the nature of (?).

S: Of course in the course of the visualization practice what eventually happens is that the subha, if we go on using that term, detaches itself, so to speak, from the actual image. There is a parallel here to what I was saying in connection with the Metta Bhavana. For instance you do the Metta Bhavana and you come to the fifth stage and you are developing metta to an expanding circle of people. In this way you develop a very, very strong metta. So this metta is so strong perhaps that in the end you stop thinking about people, you are no longer thinking about people, you are no longer conscious of people, of individuals, but the metta is still there. And it even goes on developing more strongly than ever, even though its original objects are no longer present. It goes beyond that particular framework.

In the same way your perception of, or appreciation of subha can go beyond a particular form, a particular embodiment, so you, so to speak, no longer see the image Avalokitesvara or Manjusri or the Buddha or whoever or whatever it may be, but you are still perceiving subha, though paradoxically it is a sort of formless subha. You've left behind all specific forms. If you were asked, is it red or is it yellow or is it green?' you couldn't say. 'Is it square, is it round, is it male or is it female?', you couldn't say. But you would be perfectly certain that it is still an experience of subha, in fact more subha than ever. But you use the, (one might well ?) say relative form of a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva with certain colours and insignia, mudras as a support. You see that, initially, as embodying subha but eventually your perception leaves that behind.

That is the distinction in the Vajrayana between the samayasattva, as it is called jnanasattva.

Darren: Would that sort relate... I have heard a story about a Japanese monk who apparently had developed to the extent that in the middle of winter he apparently used his Buddha image for wood on a fire. Because in a sense he didn't need it, or this is what is said.

S: Well that's one of those Zen stories. (laughter)

Darren: But that would be a sort of ...

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S: Well, there is a lot that could be said about that story. It's a very popular one with Christmas Humphreys, (?) and various other people.

That story has got significance or value only really in a very strongly traditional society, with a very strong sense of reverence. Because the point here seems to have been that, yes one should have regard and have respect for Buddha images and so on as means to an end. But it could be that your respect for them was of such a nature that... or your outward respect, your show of respect was of such a nature that you just forgot what the meaning and purpose of the Buddha image was. So a Zen master might come along and just remind you of that by shocking you by (iconoclasm ?), by even burning your Buddha image and using it for fuel. But that would have significance, that action, only within the context of a society and culture where Buddha images are highly revered. So to do it in the West has got no significance at all. In fact it's not only useless it is harmful, because it undermines what little reverence we already have. So to do something like that in the West, thinking that you are thereby showing what a great Zen Master you were would be the height of stupidity. We just need to cultivate more reverence for these sort of symbols.

It's all right to quote Zen sayings like, 'if you meet the Buddha kill him', but you have got to meet the Buddha first. And here people who are quoting these stories, these sort of Zen, who far from having met the Buddha, are not within a million miles of him, have no idea what he is like, wouldn't recognize him if they saw him and here they are (?) 'if you meet the Buddha kill him'. It's perfectly ridiculous.

Kenneth: What about contemplating the beauty of nature, beautiful scenery and so on?

S: Beautiful scenery appears, usually in traditional visualization as a very accessory factor. That is you have your Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the centre and you have your lotus thrones and all that, then you have some hills and flowers in the background. It does seem that we can encounter reality very easily, so to speak, in a human (words drowned by aeroplane noise). One might argue first of all, could a tree for instance be as much a symbol of ultimate reality as, say, a human figure, say the figure of a Buddha? I think it would be quite difficult to generate that sort of emotion, that sort of devotion towards a tree as you could generate towards an Enlightened human being. Even though you might, at the same time believe that the tree also, ultimately, has a Buddha nature and is Sunyata etc. etc.

This is only to say that a human being, in the last analysis, moves us more deeply than a tree. So if you want to involve all your feelings all (?) use any natural symbols at all while the human figure, the figure of Enlightenment is the most appropriate, the most effective.

Ratnaketu: Presumably that's why at first they started worshipping stupas, before they had Buddha figures and [83] the stupa as a symbol of the Buddha. And then they ...

S: Well in the beginning it was a reminder of the Buddha rather than a symbol of him. Eventually it developed into a symbol of him, yes.

Ratnaketu: And then they changed from that to actual figures of the Buddha.

S: Originally, of course, there was no Buddha figure in sculptures for instance there were... like at Amaravati there were scenes depicting the life of the Buddha but the Buddha himself was absent. It has been realized more recently that that is not due to lack of artistic skill but simply to the feeling that the Buddha, being one with the unconditioned, could not in fact be represented at all. A little later they started thinking differently, or other schools started thinking differently. Not that the Buddha as embodiment of the unconditioned could be represented but he could be symbolized, symbolized by his own human form.

But we will have to come back to this question of visualization from, perhaps, several points of view before this course is ended. It is (?) quite an important topic, (?) And I think there is still a lot of unclarity about it.

Subhuti: We had three more questions which are all related to the Akasa. For some reason we were fascinated by the Akasa. Robin is going to put the first.

Robin Cooper: We were studying the stupa and we came on to space, symbolized by the flaming drop and we started talking about the Akasa. And the first question is:- Could you clarify what the difference is between the Akasa and the usual Western concept of space?

S: Perhaps one would have to say that the main difference is that the Western concept of space, the modern Western, scientific concept of space is just a scientific conception. It has no emotional resonance, it has no symbolical significance, it has no metaphysical depth. Also it is sort of inert, it is sort of dead, it's just an abstract form, a framework. In the case of the... not just Buddhist, but Hindu and Buddhist, or Indian conception of Akasa, Akasa was something that you saw, something that you experienced. Something that you experienced as alive. Not only as shining but even as creative. So the Akasa took on the overtones of the absolute, of reality. For instance if you want to transpose that image into Western terms in the West people have never thought of God as space, have they? They have never thought that space symbolized God or anything like that. How could space symbolize an anthropomorphic person anyway? But in India Akasa often symbolizes reality itself. So this, I think, is the principle difference.

Coming back to the stupa, coming back to this flaming jewel. The flaming jewel, yes, symbolizes Akasa but not Akasa just as a material element. Not even Akasa so much as a conditioned thing. Here in the symbolism of the stupa, earth, water, fire and air, represent the conditioned, represent rupa and Akasa, here, represents the unconditioned, or symbolizes the unconditioned. [84] It's not one material element among a number of others. So when you visualize the stupa one can say earth, water, fire, air, these are the conditioned. The flaming jewel, the flaming drop or the (?) drop is the unconditioned and what is that surrounding blue sky? Well that is the Mahasunyata, which contains, so to speak, both the conditioned and the unconditioned, it goes beyond the distinction, the duality between them.

Berni: I thought Akasa was more the blue sky? So it's the unconditioned...

S: You can look at it like that too, it is not rigid and fixed. You can, if you like, if you choose, regard the flaming drop as representing another, albeit the subtlest, material element. Yes, you can look at it like that. In which case the Akasa, the blue sky becomes the unconditioned. In which case, earth, water, fire, air, ether are conditioned and the blue sky represent the unconditioned. But one can also look at it as being earth, water, fire and air, conditioned; flaming jewel, unconditioned; and blue sky, the visualized blue sky, as Mahasunyata.

The symbols are... what shall I say, (?) what is significant? It doesn't have to represent one thing and never represent anything else.

Robin Cooper: The other thing, which does lead on quite directly from that is:- How does the Akasa, in the stupa visualization, at least, come to symbolize consciousness? Or is that correct, that it does also symbolize consciousness?

S: No, in the six element practice there is earth, water, fire, air, Akasa and consciousness.

Robin: No, in the five element practice, not the six element practice, in the stupa visualization. Where does consciousness come there?

S: It doesn't come in at all, it isn't included, it isn't mentioned.

Robin: So there is no connection between the flaming drop and consciousness? (S: No) Ahh, I have got the wrong end of the stick then.

S: Well one can make a connection if one wished, but... (laughter)

Subhuti: Isn't there a correlation between the elements and the skandhas?

S: I think not directly. There is a correlation between the (?) sets of fives. In that case yes, one could make out a connection between the vijnana skandha and Akasa, one could do that, yes. But that is not actually specifically done in the context of this particular visualization. Though again, there is no reason why one shouldn't link up in that way if one wished. In which case, the earth, water, fire, air and ether would all represent the conditioned. And if you had the blue sky background, that would represent the unconditioned. [85] So you would have conditioned and unconditioned rather than conditioned, unconditioned, and Mahasunyata.

Robin: Then there was a third point leading off from that which maybe, really, has been made redundant by what you have already said but I will put it to you anyway.

I believe in the Abhidharma classification of dharmas and what have you, the Akasa seems to occupy a rather unusual place in that it is said to be uncompounded and is the only uncompounded thing apart from Nirvana itself. So I couldn't quite come to grips with what this implied, it seemed almost as if it occupied a position intermediate between the conditioned and the unconditioned.

S: Well no school actually says that but as you say, it does seem rather odd. Maybe this reminds us of the fact that the Akasa, (?) is not quite our space. Yes, I mean, what the term

we render as unconditioned is asamskrta, which literally means not put together, not made up of parts, impartite. So the Akasa is regarded by all schools as the impartite.

The Theravadins seem to regard it as impartite because it is not a thing at all but a form of perception, a way in which things are regarded rather than a (?). The Sarvastivadins seem to have regarded it as an objectively existing reality but which was impartite. And which in that respect resembled Nirvana, and was therefore, so to speak, very close to Nirvana, which seems to us distinctly odd.

But perhaps we should revise our ideas about space or at least revise our ideas about any identity between what we call space and what they call Akasa. I have got some thought of my own about this. I think there's probably some semantic confusion. Originally in Buddhism, perhaps, as in pre-Buddhist Indian, thought, Akasa did, so to speak, stand for the absolute, did stand for absolute reality. But then perhaps Akasa the concept of Akasa became degraded, Nirvana took it's place as a concept of ultimate reality. But you were left with Akasa which has something of its old prestige but not quite (?) in between, so to speak. But from a Western point of view it is a distinctly odd and unmanageable idea. Doesn't really fit in anywhere.

Robin: The way that Subhuti was talking about it it seemed... (laughter) Well one idea that he put forward was the Akasa could be seen as, as it were, the medium in which the subject/object duality took place. So you had the subject and the object and the medium between them, so to speak, was a way of looking at the Akasa. Do you think this is...?

S: What is this medium? (laughter) It sounds a bit like Eighteenth Century ether or (words lost in laughter) or something of that sort.

Robin: I may be misrepresenting what Subhuti said.

S: But there is, if one goes into Akasa from another point of view, what about the Arupa dhyanas? The first of these is of the infinity of space and the word Akasa is used here. Beyond Akasa there is vijnana, beyond that there is... are still two other Arupa dhyanas. Maybe here Akasa has been degraded still more.

[86]

But again, one might say in the Vajrayana, Vajrayana visualization, Akasa reappears with something of its old meaning. It's the permanent, the sky, and it appears as the background of all your visualized forms. It represents Sunyata. So it's as though Akasa has been reinvested with something of its original spiritual significance. It represents, one might say, the impersonal absolute whereas the figures of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas represent the personal or the personalised absolute and you have to take both together, so to speak.

Greg Harman: Bhante, you were talking about Akasa may become the term Nirvana. I was wondering, does the actual term Nirvana, did it arise purely from the Buddha or was it a term current before the Buddha?

S: It seems not to have been used much before the Buddha. It was used more in its verb than in its noun form. For instance you might have noticed, if you didn't you should have done, that when I was reading that chapter from the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra the other evening at the last (?) there was a reference to 'extinct Buddhas'. Did you notice that? (V's Yes) Did

any of you wonder what an extinct Buddha was?

(confused voices)

Well the English for extinct translates a Chinese word which translates the Sanskrit or Pali parinibbuto which means (?) having passed away into Nirvana. The word originally seems to have meant something like becoming cool. There is a suggestion of the fires of passion dying down, you become cool, you become spiritually cool. And because it is the fires of lobha, dvesa and moha which bring about rebirth so one, by becoming cool has become free from birth, old age, disease and death and rebirth. So it wasn't so much that there was a state called Nirvana, an entity called Nirvana that you attained. It was more that there was a sort of process or certain things died out, especially fires died down and you becoming cool, parinibbuto, or extinct because the fires were extinct, not that there was total extinction.

So gradually, it seems, that from speaking in terms of nibbuto - died out - they started thinking in terms of more Nirvana, the died out state, the died out entity even. Eventually in the Abhidharma Nirvana is regarded as a dhatu, an objectively existing reality. Space is also regarded as a dhatu, an objectively existing reality.

So yes, the short reply is that the word Nirvana or Nibbana, though originally a verb rather than a noun seems to have been peculiar, more or less, or seems to have been taken up and used more by Buddhism.

So in the early texts the Buddha is spoken of, not as having gained Nirvana, as though Nirvana is a definite positive state, but as having become nibbuto, as having become... dies out in respect of the fires of passion.

The dictionary will tell you all these things if you take the trouble to look up the terms Nibbana, Nibbuta, Nibbuto, and so on.

Is that all the questions, from all the groups?

[87]

Suvajra: The third group, we felt we didn't have any real questions which we would like to ask you.

Gerry Corr: Can I ask you a question, it is nothing at all to do with the study?

S: Well if you are not going to mind a very short reply, if of course a reply is possible at all.

Gerry: I have just been reading The History of Western Philosophy by Bertrand Russell and he mentions Buddhism occasionally, and he says that it is less of an evil than Christianity. Would you have any expansion on that (laughter drowns words)?

S: I would say it was more of a good than Christianity.

Gerry: (?) I'm just asking (what you thought of Russell's theories?)

S: Well. Bertrand Russell's 'History of Western Philosophy' is generally regarded as readable

but unreliable. And he is well known for these witty little remarks which perhaps shouldn't be taken too seriously. No doubt he regards Buddhism as having done some evil, clearly he does, but it has done less than Christianity so logically speaking it might have done some. It might have been interesting, had he been around to ask him what evil he thought Buddhism had done. But what reply he might have given to that I can't imagine. But certainly if it has done any evil it's done less than Christianity. If it's done any good it has done much more than Christianity, I'm sure.

Did he say evil or harm? You said evil.

Gerry: He was more on about the dogmas, (?) bad effect.

S: I'd have to consult the passage. But as you relate it it sounds as though Bertrand Russell might have been guilty of some woolly thinking about dogma. Perhaps he thought that dogma... well that raises the question of in what sense Buddhism has dogmas at all. I mean (?) dogma's are necessarily a bad thing. Perhaps that itself is a dogma, that dogma, that dogmas are necessarily a bad thing. So it ends up with Bertrand Russell himself becoming dogmatic.

He was a highly intelligent man, not a very balanced one and I think more noticeable for the brilliance than for soundness of his views. (laughter) I used to have a certain respect, definitely circumscribed for Bertrand Russell, but I am afraid it was all exploded when I read extracts from his autobiography in one of the Sunday Newspapers. One can't have any respect for a man who allows himself that sort of love-life. (laughter) That degree of emotional imbalance. It just doesn't bear contemplating. I've no respect for any words of wisdom that he might (?) He needed very much to put his own house in order.

No, there was something very seriously wrong with Bertrand Russell which D.H. Lawrence saw. He wrote him a very violent letter after they had had a meeting. And this letter from [88] D.H. Lawrence was so devastating that after receiving it Russell seriously considered committing suicide. Because it utterly undermined everything that he stood for and believed in. So there was this tremendous collision between these two people. And Russell ended up, towards the end of his life, years and years, even decades after Lawrence died, almost with a hatred of Lawrence. Perhaps as some kind of defence, but it seems that Lawrence really put his finger on a basic weakness in Russell. He basically attacked him for his one-sided intellectualism, basically that. And Lawrence thought that probably everything he said and did and thought about and wanted to do was utterly superficial and worthless. This is basically what he said. But he said it as only Lawrence could say it, and it seems to have shaken Russell to his foundation. Though he seems never to have seriously heeded Lawrence's (?) He recovered and he became more brilliant and more unsound than ever. (laughter) Even more unsatisfactory (?) In fact he seems to have become more and more (?) the older he got, till by the time he'd reached the age of ninety he'd really reached the ultimate in unsatisfactoriness in this respect. I hope all of you will do better. (laughter)

Anyway, I think that's all we've got time for.

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