

## 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*

## **SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR**

### **Questions and Answers: Tuscany, 1982**

#### **THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH**

Note from the Transcriptions Unit: Although these question and answer sessions were held immediately prior to the ordinations of those attending the following sessions, their order names are used throughout this transcription. At times Sangharakshita or members of the Order Team refer to a person by their old (pre-order) name so these names have been included in the list of those present.

Present: Sangharakshita, Amoghachitta (Chris Harper), Amoghavajra (Kenny McKay), Amoghavira (Paul Holloway), Buddhapalita (Bipin Patel), Chakkhupala (Alan Morrow), Chittapala (Robin Collett), Dhirananda (Kennet Nolcraz), Gunapala (Bernie Tisch), Harshaprabha (Graham Stevens), Jinavamsa (Campbell McEwan), Khemananda (Tony Wall), Khemapala (Mike Quaiff), Khemavira (Ken Chandler), Prasannasiddhi (Darren DeWitt), Ratnaprabha (Robin Cooper), Silabhadra (Tony Bowall), Silaratna (Greg Harman), Shantiprabha (Adrian Macro), Bodhiruchi (Gerry Corr), Richard Clayton.

Order Team: Vessantara, Devamitra, Aryamitra, Subhuti, Suvajra, Ratnaketu, Surata.

Day 1

[Bhante explaining spellings. Groups say how far they got.]

Subhuti: We first of all wondered about the Dharmacakrapravartana Sutta, from which the Eightfold Path and the commentaries come. How early is that sutta?

S: It's very difficult to actually date any Pali sutta. I think it is now generally agreed among scholars - and this is certainly my own view - that on that notable occasion when the Buddha got together with those five bhikkhus, let's call them, in the Deer Park at Visipatana near Varanasi, he didn't just straightforwardly deliver a discourse enumerating the Four Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The Four Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path are clearly a codification of the teaching or of some aspects of the teaching, a codification which may well have been carried out by the Buddha himself. But I have [2] referred somewhere - I think it must be in a lecture, a quite early lecture, possibly a Dharmacakra Day lecture - to the fact that there are accounts of the Buddha's initial meeting with those five bhikkhus after his Enlightenment and of the subsequent happenings, where no actual mention is made to the Dharmacakrapravartana Sutta and to the Four Truths and Noble Eightfold Path, but where it simply says that day after day, week after week, for the period of three months of the rainy season, the Buddha exhorted them; that there was discussion between them.

My own view is that very likely it was not known what exactly passed between the Buddha and those five bhikkhus. After all, it was at the very beginning of the Buddha's ministry. Ananda wasn't around. And it may well be that there was no clear tradition about what actually did pass, except perhaps that it seemed obvious that the Buddha in the circumstances should have spoken about a Middle Way. So when, later, what became the scriptures came to be compiled, the compilers must have thought, they must have reflected, that on an occasion

like this, his first discourse, the Buddha must have mentioned something quite important, and by that time, by the time that the compilation was made, obviously the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path were quite important; they were a well-known codification of the Teaching; so the compilers might well have assumed that the Buddha must have spoken about the Four Truths, he must have spoken about the Eightfold Path. And in that way the content of that original discourse, that first turning of the Wheel of the Law, came to be regarded in that way and eventually compiled and edited in that way as we have it. Do you see what I mean?

But despite that fact, despite the fact that it is very doubtful, to say the least, whether the Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Path as such were the content of the Buddha's teaching to those five bhikkhus, there's no doubt that that particular codification is a very early one, probably attributable to the Buddha, and also a very useful one that does codify much of the teaching.

The fact that, for instance, the codification of the Path as eightfold may well be comparatively late is the fact that it's mentioned, for instance, only once, I believe, in the Sutta Nipata, which is a quite ancient text. So clearly, in those early days, it wasn't at exactly the forefront of the Buddha's teaching. Yes, clearly the Buddha spoke about Perfect Vision; clearly he would have spoken about [3] perfect means of livelihood; clearly he would have spoken about Perfect Samadhi. But it was only somewhat later, it seems, probably in the Buddha's own teaching career, that all those angas, all those things which were helpful to the spiritual life, were collated in that particular way, codified in that particular way, no doubt for teaching purposes.

Subhuti: You have at times said that you thought that the image of the Path presented the spiritual life only from one point of view, and you have suggested other images, images of unfoldment. At one time you were saying that you thought that we needed to come up almost with a new image, which would incorporate both the aspects of the Path and of unfoldment. Have you thought any more about that?

S: I can't say that I have. It's as though the Path as a symbol, as an image, has its limitations, as all symbols, all images, have; because if one takes it literally, which of course one shouldn't, one thinks of it as leading to a clearly defined goal, just as a path has a destination, and one thinks of the person walking the Path as quite distinct from the Path itself; whereas the person is the Path, the Path is the person. The Path presents the spiritual life, one might say, in terms of time - unfoldment or growth or development in time - whereas the other kind of symbol that one has, that is to say of the lotus, or even of the rose or of the mandala, represents the spiritual life as an unfolding, so to speak, from a static centre, provided one goes deep enough. It's not that you go forward as you go in the image of the Path: you stay where you are, but you go as it were deeper and deeper - the image is spatial rather than temporal - and unfolds more and more from that deeper centre.

You could - though I tend less and less to bring in this sort of terminology - say that the one approach was masculine and the other feminine, but obviously you need to have both.

Vessantara: Does not the Eightfold Path include both, inasmuch as it's the Astangikamagga?

S: One could say that, because in a way, yes, you are going forward on the Path. As regards the mundane Eightfold Path, it is a path of prajna, sila, samadhi, prajna, so you are

progressing from one stage to another. But, on the other hand, as the Transcendental Path, you have attained, so to speak, the Path of Vision; that vision is there, that's the centre; and [4] you have as it were to go deeper and to unfold from that centre. The shoots have to come forth from that centre, the angas have to come forth, representing different developing aspects of your life or different unfolding aspects of your life. I think it would be possible - I don't know whether this has ever been tried - not only to represent the mundane Eightfold Path as a path of successive stages but to represent the Transcendental Path as a sort of flower, a sort of lotus flower, with perhaps the Path of Transformation, Perfect Vision, at the centre, at the calyx, so to speak; and the other angas as petals rather than angas, arranged around that central calyx. Someone might even care to do this, undertake this. That would give one another view of the Eightfold Path, one which was no doubt equally useful.

It does occur to me just now as I speak that you could combine both in a single image. You could have the mundane Path represented as the stalk, with successive segments, and it would culminate in Perfect Vision, which would then become the calyx around which would be ranged petal-wise the remaining seven angas of the Transcendental 'Path', inverted commas, so you are going up and then you are as it were going round. I think playing about with images in this way enables us to realize not only the limitations of the images themselves but certainly the limitations of concepts and even the limitations of words. It helps us to realize that we need to get beyond these sort of limitations if we are really to get very far in the spiritual life. We need continually to transcend our own limitations or, in the terms that I was using yesterday, go beyond, outgrow, our original framework, our original framework of reference.

Subhuti: We had another question arising out of something you said about Perfect Vision being intuitive. Richard had a question in that connection.

Richard: Could you define intuition as related to the arising of Perfect Vision? Is it synonymous with that which you previously termed the imaginal faculty?

S: The traditional terms in this connection are vipasyana, which is Sanskrit, or vipassana which is Pali, and prajna, which we usually translate as wisdom, or panna; or even jnana or jnana. If one wants to reproduce those terms in English, or if one wants to find English equivalents, one is hard put to it. Usually one speaks of Insight with a capital I or Wisdom with a [5] capital W, but these are really only makeshifts. One needs to go back to the originals in Pali and Sanskrit, and of course even further back than that - one needs to go back to the experience behind even those Sanskrit and Pali terms. If one uses the word intuition, one is clearly not using it in the sense in which it is usually used in English discourse. One uses the word Insight, if one uses it at all, to draw attention to the direct, immediate, non-logical, supra-logical, supra-rational character of vipasyana or prajna. One uses it to draw attention to the fact that it does not represent any going through a logical process. It goes, so to speak, straight to the point. It's more in the nature of vision, because it sees directly. So one uses the word intuition to draw attention to that fact, in fact to emphasize that fact.

But perhaps one needs to put a capital I here too, just so that one isn't thinking of intuition in

the ordinary sense [of] just a purely subjective feeling, a whim or a fancy or something like that. Perhaps one needs even a qualifying adjective, something like Transcendental Intuition, in order to make the meaning fully clear. If one wasn't careful one could end up with all sorts of confusion. You could say that Insight and prajna, intuition, were all the same. It's well known that women have got more intuition than men, so maybe women have got more Transcendental Wisdom than men. You could end up with those sort of semantic confusions if you weren't careful; especially if you discovered that, grammatically speaking, the word prajna itself was a feminine gender (Laughter). But we won't go into that now.

Subhuti: Robin has a question relating to the relationship between micchaditthi or mithyadrsti and samyakdrsti.

Ratnaprabha: We were talking about Perfect Vision, which in Pali is sammaditthi, and I had been reading recently about wrong views, micchaditthis, and their replacement by right views, sammaditthis. So I was wondering what the relationship is between right views, in the sense of what one uses to replace one's wrong views, and the Path of Vision or Perfect Vision. The same terms are being used in both cases.

S: Well, 'right views' would be those conceptual formulations of Perfect Vision which act not only as expressions or means of communication for that Perfect Vision, but also for those who haven't yet attained that Perfect Vision, as supports, [6] as bases for reflection, in such a way that from Right View one can progress to Perfect Vision. For instance, the Buddha gains Enlightenment; as part, so to speak, of that Enlightenment which he has gained, he has Perfect Vision, so he sees things as they are. But then there's a question of communicating that Perfect Vision to other people. That means perhaps speaking; that means perhaps giving expression to what he has seen by way of Perfect Vision in terms of concepts. So he says such things as 'All conditioned things are impermanent'. So that all conditioned things are impermanent is a Right View. To hold or accept that all conditioned things are impermanent is to hold or accept a Right View. So you have a Right View. And then, when, with your concentrated mind, your mind purified and integrated through your dhyana experience, you reflect upon that Right View, then you develop Insight; and that Insight leads to development of Perfect Vision.

Ratnaprabha: This is Perfect Vision in the Transcendental sense, it's part of the Transcendental Path?

S: Yes. In other words, the function of the Right View is to express in conceptual terms, on a conceptual level, the content of the Perfect Vision, to the extent that that can be so expressed. And not only to express it, from the point of view of the person with Perfect Vision, but to be a means of access to it for the person who doesn't have Perfect Vision but who does have, or comes to have, or accepts, Right View.

Subhuti: The same word, presumably, is used in both cases? There's no distinction in the original Pali or Sanskrit between Right View and Perfect Vision?

S: Yes, there's no distinction in the original Pali or Sanskrit. Originally, of course, it was always Perfect View. But when the words with which Perfect Vision was expressed came to be understood - correctly on the intellectual level - by people without Perfect Vision, then it's no longer Perfect Vision, it's Right View. So I find it necessary to make that distinction, to

draw attention to that distinction, by translating the expression differently in the two different cases. The Pali and the Sanskrit do distinguish by referring to one as mundane Right View and the other as Transcendental Right View. So Perfect Vision means Transcendental Right View, and Right View means mundane Right View.

Vessantara: Is this a distinction which has been generally [7] caught on to in the West? ...

S: I think outside the FWBO people are hardly aware of the distinction, even though it's there in the text in the terms that I have described. No, people even write books or chapters of books about the Eightfold Path without understanding that there are two Eightfold Paths at all; without understanding how they are connected or what the relation between them is. It is extraordinary how something so basic should be what is really such gross ignorance (?). So the reason for this is that people have never thought very seriously in terms of practising that Path; that's what it really comes back to or comes down to. If they had thought seriously about practising, then these questions must have occurred to them. Especially if you don't meditate, you're unable to distinguish between Right View and Perfect Vision.

Darren: You speak of two paths, two Noble Eightfold Paths, in the series.

S: In a sense, yes: you could almost place them end to end, if you are thinking simply in terms of a path, or continue to think in terms of the image of a path or extending the image of a path. Because, as I've pointed out in the Survey - in fact, I have given a little diagram there - the Eightfold Path is reducible, so to speak, to sila, samadhi and prajna. You really ought to have this at your fingertips. Do you remember this? So you've got sila, samadhi, prajna as the three trainings, as they're called. So how do these correspond to the Noble Eightfold Path? Well, there you've got really prajna, sila, samadhi. So you've got prajna, sila, samadhi leading to prajna, leading to sila, leading to samadhi. That is your double Eightfold Path; you can work out the subdivisions in terms of the Eightfold Path for yourselves.

So what you've got in this sort of double Eightfold Path, or extended Eightfold Path, is: first of all, you've got prajna in the sense of an intellectual understanding of the teaching. Then, on the basis of that intellectual understanding of the teaching, you practise sila as a discipline. Having practised sila as a discipline, you practise samadhi in the sense of mental concentration or experience of the dhyanas. Having practised, or on the basis of the practice of dhyana, or samadhi in the sense of dhyana, you develop Transcendental Wisdom, you develop Perfect Vision. You come now to the second part, so to speak, of the Eightfold Path; you come to the Transcendental [8] Eightfold Path. Then, with your Perfect Vision, with your Transcendental Wisdom, you are able to transform your behaviour into as it were Transcendental behaviour; you are able to practise sila in the higher sense, and similarly your samadhi also, your dhyana, is completely transformed; that becomes, so to speak, Transcendentalized too. So in that way you have a Path of prajna, sila, samadhi, prajna, sila, samadhi; and then you can divide all of those - or at least you can divide the sila and the samadhi sections - according to the angas of the Eightfold Path. In that way, you have your Eightfold Path laid out, so to speak, double. You get two Eightfold Paths, two sets of sila, samadhi and prajna, one succeeding to the other.

So you don't get this full picture if you don't to begin with appreciate that there is a difference between the mundane Eightfold Path and the Transcendental Eightfold Path.

Usually the Eightfold Path, in little books about Buddhism, especially those emanating from the East, is explained simply in terms of sila as the discipline, samadhi as the experience of the dhyanas - at least they are enumerated - and prajna - well, they know that it isn't just rational understanding, but inasmuch as there's no real experience of sila and samadhi, no real understanding of what Perfect Vision is like, it amounts in effect to just, again, an intellectual understanding of the teaching. You get nowhere near the Transcendental.

So, for all practical purposes, in many parts of the Buddhist East, sila becomes the purely formal observance of rule, samadhi becomes a forcible fixation of attention, and prajna becomes an intellectual understanding of the (...) of the Abhidharma. So what sort of Buddhism do you have there? This is what some people try to export to the West for our edification. No wonder it doesn't catch on very well.

Amoghachitta: Can you make a ... between what you said before about conventional morality and natural morality to the two series as you've just defined them?

S: Not quite. Conventional morality is more a matter of ethics, of good manners: as, for instance, you take your hat off when you enter somebody's house. But what is called natural morality is that which has karmical significance; that which involves skilful and unskilful mental states, and therefore, under the law of karma, either happiness or suffering. That is natural morality. Conventional morality is not a matter of the Path at all, not even of the mundane Path.

[9]

You could even introduce - I don't know whether this is done, in effect - you could introduce a threefold category. You could speak of conventional morality - which is not morality at all, strictly speaking - natural morality, and Transcendental morality. One could perhaps give quite a useful little talk under these three headings, with examples of things which are matters of conventional morality, things which are matters of natural morality, and things which are matters of Transcendental morality. Anyway, that's just by the way.

Subhuti: This is probably along the same theme - the distinction between the mundane and the Transcendental Path - but the examples you give of the ways in which Perfect Vision arises - it isn't altogether clear exactly at what point Perfect Vision can be said to have arisen properly, if you like ...

S: This is quite a point: at what point? One wonders, in a sense, whether there is a point. I have made the point recently that perhaps one can know only in retrospect. It's not unlike being ready for ordination. It is not that one arrives at a point at which one is ready, and thereafter, indefinitely, until such time as one is ordained, one is ready for ordination: it isn't quite like that. It's much the same, one might say, with Stream Entry. We had a discussion in a study group very recently about this. The point that I made was this - I am trying to sort of recapitulate it - I think I gave the example of a pair of scales. Ah. I was speaking, I think, more in terms of Stream Entry as the point at which the pull, the gravitational pull, of the Unconditioned started preponderating over the gravitational pull of the conditioned. You are familiar with this way of looking at things, familiar with this sort of terminology? So it's as though at that point, that point of Stream Entry, that point of no return, the scale tips. So what makes it tip? It's your Insight; you have a flash of Insight, another flash of Insight, another flash of Insight (I'm mixing metaphors, but you'll no doubt appreciate what I'm getting at.)

But - all right, let's go back and dwell upon this image of the scales. Instead of speaking in terms of flashes of Insight, let each flash of Insight be a grain of dust which is deposited on the right side of the scale. So before your scale was like this, weighed down towards the conditioned, because of the gravitational pull of the conditioned. On the other side, you're depositing grain after grain of dust of Insight, or [10] attempted Insight. So gradually it goes down. Now a point may come when, just as one grain of dust, so to speak, is deposited, the scale turns. But do you think you'll see that with the naked eye? No. (Laughter) There is a point at which the scale turns, but you may not see that. It's only after several more grains have been deposited that there is a noticeable tilt, and you know that the weight has shifted.

So it's rather like that with Insight, with Stream Entry, with passing the point of no return. No doubt theoretically there is a point, an exact point, but I think it can be located, so to speak, only in retrospect, in the same way.

Subhuti: So the mundane path which one experiences are the grains of dust that are deposited up to that point of transition?

S: Yes, they have as it were the form of Insight. They constitute Right View. Your meditative concentration is increasingly behind them, but it's only when the scale tilts and the Stream has been entered that, strictly speaking, one can speak in terms of the beginnings of Perfect Vision. Of course, if you look at the matter too literally, in too exclusively a Heraclitean way, you will conclude that Stream Entry is impossible - logically impossible - and you will be at a loss to decide when, or at which point, Right View becomes Perfect Vision. It is very difficult to tell; just as it's difficult to tell at what point exactly the scale turns, it's very difficult to tell at which point Right View becomes Perfect Vision. You may be not clear whether the thought that is passing through your mind is Right View or is Perfect Vision; you may not be sure (...) It's only when there have been successive increments of Perfect Vision, with the force of what will now be Perfect Samadhi increasingly (...) it is only when there's been that sort of increment to a sufficient degree, that you will be able to recognize that that is Insight in a real sense. But you will know that, so to speak, only retrospectively.

I think this is what is technically called reviewing Insight. You know that Insight has been attained. You can have Insight, that is, and not know that Insight has been attained.

There is a separate Insight which knows that Insight has been attained: I can't remember the technical term for that at the moment, but some Theravada texts do mention this kind of experience.

[11]

Ratnaprabha: Is this similar to the reason why the destruction of the last fetter corresponds to the knowledge of the destruction of the asravas rather than just destruction of the asravas?

S: Yes. One could certainly look at it in that way, because you may not know that they have been destroyed. And in the same way, the point is that they have been destroyed: well, I won't say the difference is so slight, but the change that has brought about that tremendous difference may itself be so slight that you can't recognize it when it happens. You recognize it subsequently, you recognize that the asravas have been destroyed; you recognize that Insight has been attained.

Prasannasiddhi: So could you equate having a flash of Insight with having a flash of Perfect Vision?

S: It may be a question of terminology, because one could say that insight with a small i corresponds to Right View, and Insight with a capital I corresponds to Perfect Vision; one could say that. One has to be careful in which way, in which sense, one is using the term: whether one is using it as an equivalent for Right View or using it as an equivalent for Perfect Vision.

Subhuti: It is a little unclear in the lecture, in that series of examples, whether they are mundane or Transcendental. In so far as you talk of it being possible to lose the Insight, then they must be mundane.

S: Yes, they must be.

Prasannasiddhi: So could you still call them visions, perfect visions, if they were only mundane?

S: No, I wouldn't.

Prasannasiddhi: So these people who have had these Insights into the suffering bodies, they've seen the suffering - they haven't actually had Perfect Vision?

S: No, I am giving examples of the sort of context within which both Right View and Perfect Vision might arise. In those cases, in a particular context, where it was only Right View, it could be lost; in those cases where - and I don't deny that [12] this possibility may exist - it is actually Perfect Vision, it will not be lost.

Gunapala: So you only use Perfect Vision in the second stage - what do we use in the first stage?

S: Right View.

Ratnaprabha: It does give one the idea that the first stage is more of an intellectual process, Right View - intellectual understanding of the goal so to speak. But your examples somehow are far more emotional - a very strong experience of bereavement, for example. It doesn't seem somehow like Right View. I can't quite link between that and Right View as opposed to wrong view.

S: I think one has to beware, despite the nature of the Indian terminology, of thinking, say, of prajna - to take that example - as something which is strictly or even literally intellectual rather than emotional. Because, at that level - at the level of the Transcendental, at the level of Transcendental experience - what we call intellectual and what we call emotional are as it were fused. So one could just as well speak of prajna in emotional as in intellectual terms. So what we would regard as an emotional experience is just as likely to be a basis for the development of Perfect Vision as an intellectual experience.

Ratnaprabha: What should we call those experiences, do you think, when they are simply mundane experiences, part of the mundane path? 'Right View' doesn't seem to fit, quite. Or do

you think that's an adequate term for the emotional experiences that might lead one on later to Perfect Vision?

S: Yes. I don't know that there is a generally accepted term. One might say that they are, so to speak, profound emotional experiences which make one think, but only for the time being.

Subhuti: Are they are bit like sraddha? Sraddha doesn't imply Stream Entry. There is a depth of emotional response, ...

S: Well, I'll give you an example. Someone came to me, only three weeks ago, I think it was, and he was very deeply upset because a woman with whom he had been involved had just [13] committed suicide. And his reaction was he just wanted to dedicate his life, commit his life, to the Dharma: he wanted almost to Go for Refuge on the spot, he almost asked for ordination. I think, in his own way, he did. But I could not help feeling it wouldn't last. All right, I gave him whatever advice I could: I suggested he got into contact with the appropriate local Centre. He knew some of the people there, I hope he will do that. But I could see that it could be a passing phase. I'm not going to say that it definitely was - I don't know; I hope it wasn't a passing phase. But I could certainly see the possibility that even though he had that quite genuine experience, even though he had been made to think, though he was quite deeply affected, it could be that it was just a sort of thinking(?), it was just a sort of Right View that he had developed. What he said, the Right View was that the only thing that ...

Tape 1, Side 2

- Perfect Vision: that is not impossible.

Jinavamsa: You say that the mundane path is more to do with reflection; the Transcendental Path is to do with action.

S: Did you say 'motivated'?

Jinavamsa: More to do with action.

S: Well, the Transcendental Path is also to do with reflection, inasmuch as there is an actual understanding, a deeper understanding, of things as they really are. But it's also to do with action, in the sense that as a result of that Perfect Vision, as a result of that Transcendental Insight or Wisdom, there is an actual change: not just in one's actions, not just in the things that one does, but in one's whole being, and in one's actions, because of the change in one's being. In a way that is the characteristic mark of Perfect Vision. This is the only way in which you or anybody else can be sure that Perfect Vision has been attained: that there is a practical change. You are a different person from what you were before; you behave differently, think differently, act differently; seem to feel differently, perhaps.

But to go back to the point I was making: despite the predominantly (Calvinistic) nature of Indian Buddhist terminology, we must beware of thinking of prajna as something [14] that is intellectual, in the ordinary sense, rather than emotional. There is in Western thought something which is called intellectual intuition - I don't know if anyone's heard of that expression? Right View is, in a sense, more like intellectual intuition. Because sometimes you just see things so clearly, even though you're still on the rational level, you haven't

attained Perfect Vision, but you see things very clearly. You come to the end of your rational processes; you have thought things out and you now see them clearly, in a sense intuitively. But it isn't Intuition with a capital I. You could call that intellectual insight. We might even coin the expression and speak of emotional insight for the emotional counterpart of that intellectual insight.

Aryamitra: You used the terms intellectual intuition and intellectual insight. Was that just a slip, or - ?

S: Mm?

Aryamitra: What's the distinction between intellectual intuition and intellectual insight?

S: I'm using the two terms as synonymous. If it was intellectual insight, the insight would have a small i. It corresponds to Right View, as well as being synonymous with intellectual intuition. One is feeling around, so to speak, for English equivalents for some of these terms which might be helpful.

Amoghavira: So even the mundane Right Views like the fusion of the intellect and the emotion - there's got to be both of these together?

S: Hm, unless there is a fusion of the emotional and the intellectual, there is no - well, unless there is an integration of the emotional and the intellectual, Transcendental Wisdom or prajna doesn't arise, doesn't develop; so despite the fact that prajna is called prajna - and sometimes we should try to think what prajna is apart from prajna - despite the fact that prajna is called prajna, it's no more intellectual in a narrow unintegrated sense than it is emotional. Or it is as much an emotion as it is a concept; it is as much an emotional experience as it is an intellectual experience. So therefore I have on other occasions made the apparently bold statement that Faith, presumably with a capital F, is the emotional [15] equivalent of Wisdom, with a capital W.

But, say, to go back to the examples - I gave the example of someone bereaved. We might have a feeling, a sensation, an experience, of bereavement, of utter bereavement; and that would be sort of equivalent to an understanding that in the last resort one is on one's own. You might not put it in those terms, those conceptual terms, but that would actually be your experience: that one is left on one's own, that one is alone. You wouldn't conceptualize it, perhaps, at all; you would just be feeling it, just experiencing it, but the experience would be something of that nature.

Any more questions from you on that?

\_\_\_: We have another question, but possibly it's a little off the point, so it would probably be better to do it if we've got time.

Devamitra: Questions that we might have are associated with what we have been discussing - I don't know - they may have been made redundant. Ratnaketu had a question he's holding very close to his (...).

Ratnaketu: All doubt has been removed from my mind. The obscurations have gone.

(Laughter)

Devamitra: You don't want to put your question. Gerry?

Bodhiruchi: This question came up in relation to just vision, without capital Vs or Perfects in front of them. Hitler had a vision of an Aryan race and the Buddha had a vision of an Enlightened being. My pet theory is that the actual vision itself is in a sense neutral: you just see something beyond you, and the mental states, or the state that you are in, the translation of that vision, decides whether it's good or bad vision. So Hitler just wanted to obliterate lots of Jews, and his vision hooked on to that, whereas the Buddha actually did want human Enlightenment. Could you say something on that?

S: I'm not sure what you mean by 'vision' here. I'm not sure what you mean by 'good and bad' here. Maybe you should elaborate a bit more.

[16]

Bodhiruchi: Well, vision is just seeing past oneself. You just have a vision of, say, building an opera house here, doing opera here, for example. And good and bad vision: whether it causes harm or not.

S: I think the word 'vision' here is being used in a quite different way from that in which I have been using it - almost in the sense of a good idea or a bad idea. If it's a good idea, well, it's good to act upon it, and if it's a bad idea it's not good to act upon it. So it would seem to be something rather different from Vision in the sense of drsti; something more subjective, if you like, more psychological.

Prasannasiddhi: Couldn't you say that Hitler had more than an idea? He actually had feelings, but ...

S: Oh yes, he did.

Prasannasiddhi: - something quite strong, but on the other hand it was quite distorted.

S: Well, some people - maybe Hitler himself - would even speak of his vision. But I would say that this would be, from my point of view, a misuse of the word, not to say a misappropriation of the term; because, yes, it was a sort of envisagement, let us say, of some future possibility, but that was associated with negative emotions of such an extreme nature that one couldn't speak of his envisagement of that future state of affairs as being anything of the nature of a vision, in the sense in which we use this term in talking about Buddhism.

Ratnaketu: Would that be because - I remember in the lecture you talk about samyak, and one of the things you said it could be translated as was 'whole' and 'integral', and that it couldn't be just an intellectual idea, though some people could argue that, as they say, he had a vision of a perfect society, but the rest of his being wasn't integrated enough - well - to make that a vision. It was merely something else and not a vision in the sense of samyakdrsti.

S: Any other points?

Amoghachitta: I'm not quite clear on the distinction we are making here between a vision and

what you called an envisagement of how things might be. You said that -

[17]

S: Well, an envisagement - I was thinking of something which takes place, so to speak, within time. It refers to a future possible state. You envisage something happening in the future or something that could be brought about in the future. In the case of a vision, it is not merely something that could be brought about in the future; it represents a higher possibility at the same time: a possibility of growth and development in the future. You could speak of a vision of, say, Sukhavati. I would speak of, say, a vision of Sukhavati, not of an envisagement of Sukhavati, because it's not simply something to be achieved within time, not simply a possible future state, but a higher state which might at some future time receive embodiment, so to speak, on earth. So I would speak of, say, Hitler, having an envisagement of the Third Reich, the thousand-year Third Reich, but not a vision of it. I would distinguish between those two things, because his thousand-year Third Reich did not represent any higher spiritual possibility, not so far as I am concerned. So I would not speak in terms of him realizing his vision, or trying to realize his vision, but only of trying to put his envisagement of that Third Reich into effect. Some people might go so far as to say: 'What essential difference is there between a vision of the Third Reich and a vision of Sukhavati?' I would say there is a profound difference, a fundamental difference; so great that you need to keep separate terms to describe these two kinds of things or envisagement and vision.

Any further questions from the actual study? If not, we can have the extraneous questions.

Vessantara: The questions, inasmuch as they are questions, that came out of our study group were really extraneous. We were talking about, for instance, in one of the examples of what vision is from Bucke's Cosmic Consciousness. We were talking about how such visions arose in people who didn't appear to have planted any meritorious seeds in the past. And we mentioned something which I haven't heard you talk about but have heard at second-hand, that you talked about the Tathagatagarbha as being, if you just looked at the Wheel of Life, it's very hard to see what would actually motivate one to get out of it, ...

We hoped that you would say something about that idea of the Tathagatagarbha, and also whether you could see the spontaneous mystical experiences that people have as examples of it in operation.

[18]

S: I don't know that I can say very much about the Tathagatagarbha at the moment. I'm not sure I have said very much about it in the past; it's a very obscure concept of Buddhist 'philosophy'. But with regard to this question of spontaneous mystical experience, you say that in the case of certain people it would appear that they didn't have many - what was the expression you used?

Vessantara: That they hadn't planted any meritorious seeds.

S: I think the word 'appear' here is significant, because if one looks at the question within the purely traditional Buddhist context, it's unlikely that good roots should always appear or be evident or be obvious. There's one's previous lives. You may see what a person is like now; you may know him very well as he is now, but do you know him as he was then in those previous lives? Do you know what good seeds, or bad seeds, he might not have planted?

So I think if one does accept the traditional Buddhist teaching about karma and rebirth and all the rest of it, it's not in the least surprising that there should be such things as spontaneous mystical experiences. One might even say that such things are, in a certain proportion, a certain percentage, of cases, only to be expected. So they should occasion no surprise at all, and are just a reminder, whether one believes in karma and rebirth in the Buddhist sense or not, of the complexity, the hidden depths, of human nature. And also, perhaps, a reminder that perhaps one doesn't know other people as well as sometimes one thinks. One says that the most unlikely people have mystical experiences: well, 'unlikely' is a very subjective term - who says that they are unlikely? They are unlikely to have mystical experiences as far as you can see, as far as you can see them; but how far, after all, do you see them? Probably not very much further than the end of your own nose.

Anyone who takes communication, even ordinary human communication, seriously knows that it isn't easy to know any other human being. One should perhaps always remind oneself of that fact.

Amoghachitta: So you feel that you can't really have spontaneous mystical experiences? Mystical experiences always really depend on ...

S: Well, what does one mean by spontaneous? No such [19] mystical experience, I would say, appears, so to speak, out of the blue, out of nothing. If the antecedent cause is not in one's present lifetime, presumably it is to be found somewhere else. Or there may be even in this present lifetime things going on of which other people may not be very aware.

Amoghachitta: I suppose I was thinking in general terms of whether you can have mystical experience which doesn't depend on seeds that you've sown personally, as it were, some time in the past. Do you see what I'm getting at?

S: I don't think that there could be such a thing as a totally gratuitous mystical experience. I think, in a sense, mystical experiences have to be earned - of course, we are using a very vague term here, 'mystical experience' - they have, so to speak, to be earned. The antecedent conditions have to be foregoing, otherwise I'm afraid you lay yourself open to all sorts of insoluble problems, because then the question arises: why should some people have these mystical experiences and not others? Because, if they don't depend upon causes and conditions, why should not everybody have them, because in everybody's case the causes and conditions are absent. And if they do happen to some people and not to others, there must be some cause, some condition, why they happen to some people and not to others, in which case they cease to be spontaneous.

Ratnaprabha: I don't know how literally one should take this, but the reading last night about the operation of Avalokitesvara in the world spoke not only about people being saved from very desperate situations simply by calling on the name of Avalokitesvara, but even of, say, a whole shipload of people being saved from a storm by only one who called on Avalokitesvara. Is that relevant in any way?

S: I was wondering whether anybody would raise this. (Laughter) Sometimes people take it without a murmur, and you expect (...) Sometimes I think that either people's faith is unlimited, or they don't have very active minds, but I would say - I can give here only my own personal opinion - I don't personally believe that the mere invocation of the name of

Avalokitesvara can save you in these situations of material difficulty. So then the question arises: how do you interpret it? And I would personally interpret it by saying that you are saved, so to speak, by invoking the name of Avalokitesvara, if you can do it with sufficient sincerity, you are saved in the sense that you are put into a state of mind where it doesn't matter whether you are shipwrecked or not. So you are, so to [20] speak, well, you're not shipwrecked; because it doesn't matter to you. If it doesn't matter, you are not shipwrecked. I look at it in this way. I wouldn't be able personally to accept the as it were magical possibilities which seem to be suggested here.

On the other hand, there may be other situations, not just of purely material practical difficulty, where other people, other minds, are involved, where it might work, quite literally. I can cite an experience of my own in this connection where invoking the name of Avalokitesvara certainly helped; but it wasn't any such occasion as being shipwrecked or devoured by wild beasts or executed or anything of that sort. But it goes back to Kalimpong. I have related the story before; some of you may have heard it. Someone came to stay with me in Kalimpong - it must have been 1953 or 1954 - and he was very (...) He was of a well-known family, he must have been to public school. And he was about 24, 25, quite good-looking, quite well-dressed, well-spoken, the perfect young English gentleman. But it transpired, in the course of conversation, that he was up to his eyebrows in black magic. You can't trust these public schoolboys! (Laughter) And he told me all sorts of hair-raising things about black magic going on - the main centres were London, Paris and Brighton (Laughter). He really told me some dreadful things about deaths being brought about by black magic and contests between black magicians, and all that sort of thing. It was really quite horrific, quite hair-raising.

Anyway, he was going on talking and talking about these things, and we were eventually left alone together, and he started talking about this subject. There was nobody else staying with me at that time, he was just staying for a few days, and my cook at that time lived outside. So after serving us with our meal, the cook left and we were left talking about black magic; and it was getting later and later, and darker and darker, and he was telling me more and more horrific things. My hair wasn't standing on end because I had didn't have any! (Laughter), but I started to get a rather uneasy feeling. I wasn't reassured when looking at him I saw that in the pupils of his eyes there appeared a little green flame, a little bright green flame in each eye. I thought, 'That's odd!' (Laughter) It was vivid green, emerald green, like two little green lamps, right in the centre. So as we talked, the little green flame got bigger and got brighter. I thought, 'That's very odd, it must be the reflection of something in his eyes.' I just glanced around the room: but no, it couldn't have been a reflection. To cut a [21] long story short, this green flame got bigger just like the flame of a lamp that you turned up - bigger, brighter; big, green flames, and eventually they engulfed the whole room. So I thought, 'Something is going on.' (Laughter) I had heard - I think I must have read it in the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, I'd read it by that time... 'There's something going on here' I thought, so I'd better do something about it.' So I just repeated 'OM MANI PADME HUM' to myself once - and the green flames vanished. And so it worked, you see.

So there are certain circumstances, one might say, under which, yes, it works, apparently, where another human mind is involved which can be influenced, but I really doubt whether the invocation of the name of Avalokitesvara would influence in the same way inanimate things, rocks and stones and trees - well, not trees - ships and so on, I'm really doubtful; even animals I'm quite doubtful about.

There was another question. That was the first part of what you were asking about. What was it?

Ratnaprabha: The second part was a whole shipload of people being rescued by only one of them ...

S: Quite an exaggeration! (...)(...)(...). But I can't really take this literally. But there was another question still, wasn't there?

Aryamitra: Just a point. I remember you saying once - I think it was a Roman Catholic church, it might have been a Hindu thing, where you said you could actually see the prayers, the power of the prayers. And once when you were on a bus in India or something where people were praying - I think it was there - you said you thought that it was actually having an effect.

S: Yes. I do think that there is such a thing as thoughtforce, and prayer is a form of thought. I don't mean just that it is a form of thinking; it's mental; but I did, on my first visit to Europe - it was in - when was that? 1966, it must have been. This happened in Luxembourg; I went into the cathedral of Notre Dame in Luxembourg and I actually saw this, and I could see the prayers almost flying through the air, I could see the currents of mental force, one can only say, going through the air in the direction of the image - it was of the Virgin Mary. I don't think - I remember the instance you are referring to about this trip probably to Poona - and I don't think I actually saw prayers on that occasion. I sort of felt them. But there [22] was that previous occasion on which I actually saw the prayers, as it were, flying through the air.

So, yes, thought is a force. When I say that I can't believe that the invocation of the name of Avalokiteshvara could produce those sort of effects - not just a casual invocation that somebody might make who wasn't a great yogi. I'm not saying that a great yogi couldn't do it, though I don't think any limit could be set to the power of thought. But certainly just the repetition of the mere words, without corresponding mental force, I think wouldn't do it.

Aryamitra: The story that you related here: did you at the end, when you did actually say the mantra, say it aloud or to yourself?

S: To myself. He didn't know, though he must have known something had gone wrong.

Silaratna: Don't you think he meant to cause you harm, or -?

S: Well, I consulted a knowledgeable friend of mine about these matters some time later. He said that the chap was trying to hypnotize me. I didn't feel that I was being hypnotized; I certainly didn't feel that I was coming under his influence, but this is what this friend of mine thought, and he may well have been right.

Prasannasiddhi: Did he change after you had - ?

S: He just went on talking, and I went on talking as though nothing had happened. After all we were both English! (Laughter) He was an ex-public schoolboy, even if I wasn't.

Devamitra: Would you say that on that occasion in any sense you were beginning to come

under his direct influence?

S: I didn't feel that I was at all, or that I was even beginning to come under his influence.

Devamitra: It's just curious that you should have seen that flame.

S: Two flames, one in each eye; vivid green.

Devamitra: I think you have said that you don't feel personally that it's possible for any one person to come under [23] the influence of another unless they deliberately ...

S: Unless they want to.

Devamitra: Yes. So, in actual fact, presumably, what they ...

S: To the extent that they are an individual. If you're just a group member, you can come under all sorts of group influences.

Devamitra: Yes, but in that specific context, presumably there was no way you would have wanted to come under his influence, therefore there could have been no way that he could have actually done any harm to you.

S: Mm. This is... I didn't feel that I was actually coming under his influence, I didn't feel I was in danger of succumbing to anything. No; but I just wanted to put an end to this performance.

Prasannasiddhi: Do you think he was consciously trying to hypnotize you or bring you under his - ?

S: I think that is quite likely. I think he was telling me all these stories about black magic to create the sort of atmosphere and get me interested, hooked on it, and then he would have tried to influence me and bring me under his control. I think that is quite likely.

Is that the lot, then?

Day 2 Tape 2, Side 1

Suvajra: The first question our group has is on the first paragraph of 'The Nature of Existence'. Vessantara's got it.

Vessantara: Perhaps I should say that in a way, in studying the lecture up to this point, we've had some difficulty. It seems that most previous commentators about the Eightfold Path viewed Right Understanding from both the mundane and Transcendental (...)and that's where the confusion is. In this lecture, you don't make the distinction between the two Eightfold Paths, so it seems that you are using Perfect Vision to cover both the mundane and the Transcendental, both what you were calling yesterday Right View and Perfect Vision; and

that, [24] in a way, we have also found quite difficult. But the basic question here was just: in these first two paragraphs on page 5, where you are talking about the nature of existence, are you talking about Right View or are you talking about Perfect Vision?

S: Well, to the extent that one is speaking about sammaditthi, one is speaking about both. In the one case it would be an intellectual understanding, and in the other case it would be an actual spiritual experience, an Insight.

Vessantara: So when you say 'this vision is something quite simple, direct and immediate, and more of the nature of spiritual experience than intellectual understanding', on what level are you speaking?

S: Well, this is clearly referring to Insight, to vipassana, to Vision. Because a logical process is not simple, direct and immediate; logical processes would be involved in Right View or Right Understanding, at least in the early stages.

Vessantara: When you say it's more of the nature of a spiritual experience than intellectual understanding, that implies that there is an element of intellectual understanding taking place in the Insight.

S: Because the intellectual understanding provides a basis for the, one might say, intuitive Insight itself. It's not as though that is completely superseded; it remains at least as a sort of medium of communication of one's own Insight to oneself; communication between one's own as it were intuitive level and one's own as it were intellectual level, as well as a medium of communication to other people. It's through the conceptual formulations that one makes as it were clear to oneself, on one's own intellectual level, what one has experienced spiritually on a quite different level.

Vessantara: I think when it says 'this vision is something quite simple, direct and immediate', that seems to be referring to the actual moment of direct vision. But if one then goes on to say: it's 'more of the nature of spiritual experience than intellectual understanding', that seems to imply that you're still somehow, at the time that you're having ...

S: No, I think what is happening there is that, having used those words, I am safeguarding against the possibility that [25] they may be understood intellectually rather than experientially. Just read that again, let me explain it a little more.

Vessantara: 'We must emphasize here that samyakdrsti is Perfect Vision, and that this vision is something quite simple, direct and immediate, and more of the nature of spiritual experience than intellectual understanding.'

S: Yes, the words which I used - 'simple, direct, immediate' - these are to be understood as referring to a spiritual experience and not to anything of the nature merely of intellectual understanding. Not that they are sort of two-thirds spiritual and one-third discursive; not that.

Prasannasiddhi: When you say 'more in the nature of a spiritual experience', is that more Transcendental or - ?

S: Here the implication is Transcendental, not just a superconscious experience in the sense

of a higher dhyanic experience.

Suvajra: We had a second question which arose out of yesterday's discussion. It's one on the Bodhicitta and Insight from Kenny.

Amoghavajra: Yesterday you were saying that Insight could arise gradually by drops at first, on the scales. In the text the Bodhicitta ...

S: Though I was using that - no, I wasn't using that to illustrate the gradualness of Insight. I was using it to illustrate the fact that the fact that Insight had in fact been attained might not be evident at the time that it was attained. I wasn't using that illustration to establish that Insight is attained gradually, regardless of whether it is or is not. So does that modify the question?

Amoghavajra: It does, actually. I could put the question that you seemed to come to the conclusion that Insight could arise gradually, and that it could also arise dramatically, in a moment. I wondered if that was due to character or temperament.

S: There is a passage in the Pali scriptures where the Buddha says that there is no sudden attainment of Insight, and the illustration which he gives is that of the shore which he [26] says slopes down gradually stage by stage into the sea; there is no plunging by way of a sudden precipice. In the same way, he says, Insight is gradual. On the other hand, in the Pali scriptures there are instances where people seem to attain Insight almost immediately, instantaneously, when they have listened to the Buddha. So it would seem that there are cases where people develop Insight gradually, there are cases where people attain Insight suddenly, instantaneously; and very likely this is due to a difference of temperament or to the degree of previous preparation. It isn't easy to say.

But I think, speaking more generally, this whole question of sudden or gradual attainment, which you may remember was much discussed in Ch'an circles in China at one stage, and this whole question of when precisely it occurs, is to some extent not a real question at all. It arises out of - I did refer to it yesterday, in a way - the sort of Heraclitean situation in which you think of something which is continuous as divided into discrete bits or sections. If you take this too literally, then of course it makes attainment neither gradual nor sudden but in fact impossible; it doesn't take place at all. So you end up with a situation in which it's impossible for attainment to take place at all, but at the same time it does take place; so how does it take place? Well, clearly your ways of looking at it have their limitations, whether one looks at it in terms of something gradual or something sudden, something instantaneous.

If you look into it a little further, it does seem very strange. If, for instance, you distinguish the mundane completely from the Transcendental, presumably you have the last mundane instant followed by the first Transcendental instant. So you've got mundane, mundane, mundane, mundane, and then suddenly Transcendental, Transcendental, Transcendental. But is it possible to have a complete and absolute switch-over all at once from the mundane to the Transcendental? After all, the mundane is mundane, which means the mundane is completely mundane, and the Transcendental is completely Transcendental. So if there is this absolute and total switch-over from the mundane to the Transcendental, how is the switch-over possible at all? How is it possible to make that tremendous leap? Surely it must be a gradual process? But once you introduce the notion of a gradual process,

you are up against a difficulty, because, all right, you can't have just mundane switching over to just Transcendental; all right, so you've got something which is half mundane and half Transcendental, so in what sense, in what way, is it half mundane and half Transcendental? Can [27] one have such a category at all? One gets into difficulties of this sort.

So perhaps it's best to look at it in a quite common-sense way, and not try to establish too closely, too categorically, whether the attainment of Enlightenment is a gradual or an instantaneous process. If it's almost instantaneous, it isn't a process at all. But just quietly accept the fact that it does happen, somehow, by one means or another; and perhaps it isn't completely explicable or understandable in conceptual terms.

Prasannasiddhi: We do seem to have an instance from the Buddha himself. There seems to have been definitely one point at which he suddenly realized something which he didn't know before, having experienced which he could then say that he had freed himself from the rounds of suffering.

S: But even in the Buddha's case, even if one starts looking at his experience logically, trying to understand it in conceptual terms, these same difficulties will arise: whether the Buddha did in fact attain Enlightenment at one particular point; whether by way of gradual approach or instantaneously. Whether there was, in fact, as it were, a sudden switch-over from a totally mundane to a totally Transcendental mental state. Because if one wants to introduce something in between the two, neither mundane nor Transcendental, that also gets one into a difficulty. In what sense is it partly mundane and partly Transcendental? Is such a thing possible at all?

Gunapala: A being like this, half way between two stages, is called something ...

S: There is a term, gotrabhu, which is used both by the Theravadins and by the Sarvastivadins, in a somewhat different sense. The Sarvastivadins changed the use of it in the sense of the determination of a particular 'spiritual destiny', inverted commas - that is to say, determination of whether you were going to become an arhant or pratyekabuddha, or a samyaksambuddha. I've gone into this somewhere - gotrabhu - I've either written or spoken about it quite recently.

But what I was thinking was that there's the question also of the arising of the Bodhicitta - it's open to the same intellectual difficulties; because the question arises whether the Bodhicitta also arises gradually or whether it arises instantaneously. Shantideva - I don't know whether you're going [28] to quote that verse again - says something about the arising of the Bodhicitta being rather like the discovery by a blind man on a dark night of a jewel in a dung-heap. So this suggests that what happens, that is to say, the arising of the Bodhicitta, cannot be foreseen, cannot be predicted, cannot be explained in terms of any antecedent circumstances. None the less, preparation must be there.

It is as though, in a sense, if one accepts the dualistic point of view, one has to accept an absolute discrepancy between the mundane and the Transcendental, an absolute discontinuity, an absolute breach. But at the same time preparation is necessary. So what is preparation? Preparation seems to consist in the progressive refinement of the mundane, and it would seem

that the most refined reaches of the mundane act as a basis for the realization - one might say the instantaneous realization - of the Transcendental, even though they do not, strictly speaking, represent a gradual approach to it; because even the most refined levels of the mundane, as mundane, are as remote from the Transcendental as its grossest levels.

So one ends up with a rather paradoxical situation. Preparation is necessary, in terms of a progressive refinement of the mundane, but that preparation, strictly speaking, doesn't bring you any nearer to the Transcendental; but in some mysterious manner, or for some mysterious reason, it is possible to attain the Transcendental, so to speak, from those higher, more refined reaches of the mundane. That's about as near to it as one can get. It is not that there's a sort of intermediate state, half mundane and half Transcendental; the attainment of the Transcendental (...) happens instantaneously, but there's been a long prior preparation, not, strictly speaking, by way of approximation to the Transcendental but by way of progressive refinement of the mundane. Even the most refined mundane, as I said, is as remote from the Transcendental as the grossest and crudest level of the mundane; but nonetheless, as we see in practice, as it actually happens, that even though there is no more connection between the most refined mundane and the Transcendental than there is between the least refined mundane and the Transcendental, when you get to the most refined levels of the mundane and reflect, and direct your mind in a certain way, then something happens which we refer to as a Transcendental experience or Insight or whatever.

Aryamitra: Could it be possible that it's because one's being is refined that, although the Transcendental is quite [29] different from the mundane, because one's being is refined the possibility of the Transcendental coming about, so to speak, - is it possible for one to absorb ... ?

S: Yes. But one has to be careful not to conclude that the more refined mundane, because it is more refined, is, so to speak, more of the nature of the Transcendental. It isn't. Because, inasmuch as it is mundane, it remains mundane. So one has to be careful, I think, how one explains or describes, even, what happens when, so to speak, in dependence upon the most refined level of the mundane, there arises the Transcendental.

Shantiprabha: You couldn't say, for instance, that the most refined level of the mundane is as distant from the grossest level of the mundane as it is from the Transcendental?

S: Well, the most refined level of the mundane is very, very far from the grossest level; one can measure it how one likes. But, however far, it is measurable. But the distance between even the highest levels of the mundane, the most refined levels, and the Transcendental cannot be measured at all. It is incommensurable.

Silaratna: Is it because one operates in time and one operates completely outside time?

S: One could put it like that. Because one could inquire: how does one go, so to speak, from time to eternity, let's say? Supposing one speaks in terms of the realization of the eternal, that which is outside time; is that a process which takes place in time or not? If it takes place in time, how can it be a realization of the eternal? But if it doesn't take place in time, how are you to realize the eternal, because you are in time?

So it seems that here again you need an intermediate category - which is a logical absurdity -

of that which is neither in time nor out of time to get you from that which is in time to that which is out of time; from the temporal to the eternal. But none the less, mysteriously, somehow, involved though we are in this temporal process, we manage, in time but yet not in time, to realize the eternal.

Dhirananda: You said that because Insight does not arise in dependence upon anything - but what about the Spiral conditionality and the Spiral Path? Because there it does arise [30] in dependence on ...

S: No, I didn't say that it didn't arise in dependence on it; in fact, I said that it did arise in dependence on it. That is the Buddhist formulation: that, in dependence upon the most refined level or most refined degree of the mundane, there arose the experience of the Transcendental, there arose Insight. But then we must remember what the Buddhist teaching or Buddhist doctrine about dependent origination is, whether as regards the round or whether as regards the spiral. The succeeding nidana - let us use the technical term - is neither the same as nor different from the preceding one. In the same way, the experience of the Transcendental Insight arises in dependence upon that last, subtlest link, nidana, of the mundane, but without being either identical with it - because although it's not Transcendental, it's mundane (?) - or totally different from it; because if it was totally different how could there be an arising at all?

Dhirananda: This would apply equally to mundane conditionality, wouldn't it?

S: Yes, this would apply equally to mundane conditionality: neither the same nor different, nor both nor neither. It's as though we can do justice to situations of this sort only by combining, so to speak, logically contradictory terms.

Suvajra: The third question comes out of the section entitled 'Conditioned Existence is Devoid of True Selfhood'.

Vessantara: Here you are talking in terms of - I'll give you the passage: '... nowhere in conditioned existence, including ourselves as conditioned beings, will we find true being, true individuality, or reality of any sort. If we just look at ourselves we become aware very often just how empty, unreal and hollow we really are. We experience that our thoughts are not real thoughts, our feelings are not real feelings, our emotions are not real emotions. We do not feel real, genuine or authentic with ourselves. We will not find genuineness, authenticity or true selfhood on the level of the mundane or the conditioned. We will only find them on the level of the Unconditioned, in Reality.'

I was just a bit concerned that somebody reading that could take it that, through experiencing their sort of psychological alienation from their beings, they might feel they were [31] experiencing anatta or penetrating into anatta. It seemed there was a danger that it could be taken psychologically.

S: Yes, I think that terminologically I hover between the psychological and the metaphysical. The expression 'true selfhood' is ambiguous; not totally Buddhistic. Let me go into this a little. I used the term quite deliberately; one might even say I was waving a red flag in a certain direction quite deliberately. This goes back to the viparyayas, really, or at least to the three laksanas and their corresponding vimoksas. Let me just take one of them as an example.

Conditioned existence is dukkha; all right, so unconditioned existence is - ?

Voices: Sukha.

S: Sukha. There is certainly no doubt about that! So: conditioned existence is anitya, so unconditioned existence is anitya so unconditioned existence is - ? It's nitya, nicca in Pali. Then, of course, conditioned existence is anatta, therefore unconditioned existence is - ?

Suvajra: Atta.

S: Yes, well, that's the logical conclusion in the light of the previous laksanas. But actually, Buddhism, historically at least, says not at all: as you know, not only are all samskaras, not only are all samskrta dharmas, anatta, but also all asamskrta dharmas are anatta: this is standard Buddhist Theravada-cum-Sarvastivada-Hinayana teaching. None the less, there are traces of the more logical view even in the Pali Canon. I believe there are two passages where the term maha atta (?) is used, and in each of these passages this term seems to bear some metaphysical significance. It all depends what one means by selfhood - what is selfhood?

I think one reason why I used here this term 'devoid of true selfhood', or the term 'true selfhood' at all, I felt we shouldn't be afraid of the term 'self'. I myself in my early life - when I say 'early' I mean in all the things I wrote in India - avoided it most scrupulously. I never spoke in terms of true or real selfhood, however loosely or poetically. I think no doubt that was correct, that was conforming to the greater part of Buddhist tradition. But then it occurred to me that one should not be too bound by words, even Buddhist words, even traditional words; and also I had become aware that there [32] was this sort of other, very minor trend in Buddhism. For instance, there is the Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra. In this Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra - I say Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra to distinguish it from the Hinayana and especially the Pali counterpart, the so-called Mahaparinibbana Sutta - in this, nirvana, or the state of Enlightenment, is spoken of as sukha, as nitya, as attam, and there's a fourth term - I can't recall for the moment what that one is - but it definitely speaks in terms of a sort of Transcendental selfhood.

Some scholars and some Buddhist authorities therefore have serious doubts about the as it were authenticity of this sutra, if one can in fact even think in terms of the authenticity or inauthenticity of a sutra; but I think that, even though the general trend of Buddhism is undoubtedly anattavagga, and though undoubtedly Buddhism does not speak in terms of selfhood or true selfhood or Selfhood with a capital S, I think it useful that we occasionally permit ourselves to use this sort of terminology, so that we don't get bound by our correct or orthodox Buddhist terminology, however more desirable or more appropriate, on the whole, it may be. So this is what I meant by my waving a red rag by using this term.

But there's no need for us to be afraid of this term. For instance, in some Theravada Buddhist [circles], if you even use the word atta, in however innocuous a way, they just hold up their hands in horror. I have recounted an incident of this sort in The Thousand-Petalled Lotus in connection with one of my own teachers, Bhikkhu Jagdish Kasyap, who, when he was in Ceylon, happened to point out in a lecture that you couldn't understand what anatta meant, non-atta, unless you first understood what atta was. When he made this statement in the course of a lecture, there was an uproar, and bhikkhus were shouting: 'We don't want that Hindu philosophy here!' There was no question of his introducing Hindu philosophy, he just

wanted to clarify what was the meaning of anatta, what was actually being negated, by clarifying the meaning of the term negated; but they thought 'It's one of these clever Hindus trying to smuggle in something of Hindu philosophy.' So he was shouted down, he wasn't allowed to proceed. So this isn't really very intelligent. So we shouldn't be afraid of these words. Yes, we know that Buddhism isn't an attavada, no, it's a sunyavada; well, we need not be scared of words like 'true selfhood'; just using them occasionally.

But, to go back to this point. What was the ancient Indian [33] understanding of atta - leaving aside more etymological matters in connection with (...) and all that? One of the leading characteristics of selfhood, of atma or atta, Buddhistically speaking, was called asvarya. I don't know whether anyone is familiar with this term. It comes from isvara - another nasty word that we usually avoid; isvara, of course, means God. So let's be very cautious here! Isvara - what does the word literally mean? Isvara is more like 'the lord', or 'the ruler', 'the master', if you like; so 'God' is obviously the ruler, the lord, the master of the universe. But there is this abstract noun, asvarya, which means something like 'rulership'. Rulership. So asvarya characterizes atma; rulership characterizes atma, self.

What does one mean when one says that rulership characterizes self? It means that you are completely master of your own self. You have asvarya over your own self. And you can say to your own self, as it were, 'Be this and you are that; be something else and you are that'. But can you do that? No. Therefore you have no self. And the Buddha actually uses this argument in a number of passages in the Pali Canon.

So this would seem to suggest that if you possessed asvarya you would have selfhood. And, presumably, in the state of the Unconditioned, the Enlightened Being, the Enlightened One has asvarya, so could it not in a sense be said to have selfhood?

So perhaps there is some justification for introducing a sort of quasi-metaphysical notion of true selfhood, at least when we allow ourselves a sort of terminological holiday. Well, you've of foreign(?) holidays, so here is a terminological holiday.

I think also it's time we reminded ourselves that if the Unconditioned - I won't say sunyata - transcends all opposites, transcends all dualities (and Unconditioned itself is part of a duality, even sunyata is as a term), then surely it should also transcend the duality between self and not-self. So that it ought to be possible, at least occasionally, to speak of Reality in terms of selfhood, just as it is possible to speak of it in terms of no-selfhood. So we need not be scared of these terms. Anyway, having said these things, having covered the ground, perhaps you would not mind reading that passage again, so I can maybe sort it out a little more in the light of what I've just said.

[34]

Vessantara: '... nowhere in conditioned existence, including ourselves as conditioned beings, will we find true being, true individuality, or reality of any sort. If we just look at ourselves we become aware very often just how empty, unreal and hollow we really are. We experience that our thoughts are not real thoughts, our feelings are not real feelings, our emotions are not real emotions. We do not feel real, genuine or authentic within ourselves. We will not find genuineness, authenticity or true selfhood on the level of the mundane or the conditioned. We will only find them on the level of the Unconditioned, in Reality.

S: I think one can view that passage or that statement in the light of an attempt to say something about the Unconditioned from this particular point of view for the sake or for the benefit of people who were very much concerned with this question of true selfhood or authentic selfhood, and who were thinking of it perhaps in predominantly psychological terms.

One can say that - well, yes, most people don't possess true selfhood. I think that is obvious. But I think one can say that even in an ordinary psychological sense true selfhood is not attainable. Let me go into that a little more. There's no such thing, say, as purely psychological authenticity. If the attainment of true selfhood depends upon, say, the achievement of complete authenticity, then the attainment of true selfhood, in a merely psychological sense is not possible; because, in order to attain, in order to experience, authenticity, with all that that means, all that that implies, one has to go beyond the psychological, beyond the merely spiritual, beyond the mundane. One has to introduce a Transcendental element. So therefore one can make the statement that true selfhood, if such a thing is possible at all, is not possible on the psychological level, it's not possible on the mundane level, but only on the Transcendental level.

Of course, by the time one gets there, even though one has spoken of true selfhood only being attainable on the Transcendental level, by the time one gets there one may well feel that the very conception of true selfhood is not really applicable to what one has now attained and is now experiencing. But if one is thinking in terms of true selfhood or the attainment of true selfhood, and if one is thinking of the attainment of that, say, psychologically, then it has to be pointed out that on the psychological level, on the mundane level, the attainment of true selfhood is not possible. One [35] needs to rise to the Transcendental. Whether that constitutes an attainment of true selfhood in a Transcendental sense, or whether it constitutes a going beyond the category of true selfhood altogether, may be debated.

Does that make the passage clearer?

\_\_\_: Yes.

S: The passage itself needs to be rewritten.

Tape 2, Side 2

- It's really rather like that with the other laksanas too, actually, because - let's take up this apparently innocuous laksana of dukkha: that conditioned existence is characterized by dukkha, unconditioned existence is characterized by sukha; that's quite straightforward, quite plain, quite simple. So what sort of sukha? What is this sukha that the Unconditioned is characterized by? Is it the sukha that we usually experience, only carried to a much higher degree, or is it something completely different?

Now, there are passages in the Pali texts where the Buddha says that ordinary sukha - as far as I recollect it must be mundane sukha - arises through the dependence, or through the contact, of a subject with an object. Through a certain kind of contact of a subject with an object sukha arises. This is true of sense pleasures, it is true even of dhyanic bliss. In the case of nirvanic, which is to say Unconditioned, bliss, the sukha is not the product of a contact between any subject and any object. So can we have any conception of such sukha? Is there

the remotest resemblance between such sukha and that with which we are familiar, where a subject impinges on an object or an object impinges on a subject, or they impinge on each other, and thus give rise to that familiar phenomenon of sukha - or unfamiliar phenomenon of sukha, or pleasure? Is there anything in common between the sukha which arises as the result of contact between subject and object, and a sukha which arises in the absence of any such contact? Have they anything in common except the bare word?

So you have to say, yes, the Unconditioned sukha is sukha, yes, it's bliss; but it's bliss of a kind of which we can have no possible conception. If you can say that, can you not say it about self? Well, yes, the self that we experience when we have [36] realized the Unconditioned is self, but it's something of a completely different kind, in a completely different category, from our ordinary mundane self. Well, if you can say that of the one, why can you not say it of the other? Which is, of course, I'm sorry to say, I'm afraid the Hindu argument. But there is a certain logical force in it, could one not say?

Because if we are going to use the same words for both mundane and Transcendental categories, experiences, if we can use the word sukha to cover both can we not use the word selfhood to cover both? Can we not use the word person to cover both? Indeed, (...). The Theravadins seem to have maintained, despite a certain amount of evidence to the contrary in their own scriptures, that pudgala was a purely mundane category; the pudgalavadins, of course, maintained it was also a Transcendental category, but why not?

You are having to use all the time words derived from mundane experience originally to apply to Transcendental experience. So if there can be a mundane bliss and a Transcendental bliss, why should there not be a mundane selfhood and a Transcendental selfhood, a mundane personality and a Transcendental personality? We have to tread very carefully here, because we don't want to fall headlong into any heresy, a concealed pit of atmavada or asvavyavada or anything of that sort; but none the less we mustn't allow ourselves to be bound by words. Hence my small waving of the red duster.

Suvajra: Was this the sort of view that the pudgalavadins held, then - that there was a (...) also Transcendental sense?

S: Well, if you had put it to them in that way, the pudgalavadins would have said no. In order to safeguard the orthodoxy of their position, they maintained that the pudgala was not the self. Perhaps that is largely a question of semantics. But they did very firmly maintain - and they were a very large and influential school - that there was such a thing as a pudgala, that the pudgala was an ultimate reality. They identified the pudgala with the Tathagata on the basis of certain scriptural verses or passages. For instance, there are texts which say a pudgala arises for the benefit of all beings; that pudgala is the Buddha. Well they say here's the word (?). The Theravadins said it's only to be understood as a sort of figure of speech; it can't be taken as having any metaphysical significance. The pudgalavadins didn't agree.

[37]

It's interesting that one of the foremost Theravadin Pali scholars of modern times, a Bhikkhu in Ceylon, as a result of his own impartial study of the Pali texts, became a pudgalavadin. That was the famous Buddhadasa Thera, who translated the Dhammapada, a copy of which we have here. (There were) enquiring minds, even in the Theravada.

Devamitra: Did he attempt to revive the school?

S: I don't think so; his views were similar to or even identical with those of the ancient pudgalavadins. He hasn't written anything to that effect, but I have been told this by people who were associated with him.

Subhuti: Does it actually make any difference? Is it just a sort of metaphysical philosophical debate, or does it make a difference? What consequences did the pudgalavadins draw from their viewpoint?

S: Well, the Theravadins themselves believed that a difference of this sort did not make any difference to the possibility of one's attaining Nirvana. There's a quite striking thing about early Buddhism, and I think this point arises from the (...) also, that there were strong disagreements on certain doctrinal points, but all schools were agreed that the followers of all schools were able to attain Nirvana. There was no disagreement about the path to be followed. They did not regard these doctrinal disputes or differences as affecting the Path. Had you said, for instance, that lobha, dvesa and moha were not obstacles to Nirvana, that would have affected the Path, but the differences between them were not of that sort. Whether there were two or three or even more asamskrtadharmas - these were not, they considered, matters which affected the Path. The Path could always be followed by all Buddhists, Buddhists of all schools. Buddhists of all schools could attain the goal of the Path regardless of their philosophical differences. Perhaps it was a bit of a compromise, but that was the view. The Theravadins also held that view.

Vessantara: Did you say perhaps it was a bit of a compromise?

S: In the sense that perhaps they weren't sufficiently rigorous, that perhaps if they had pursued the matter more rigorously it would have emerged, or it would have transpired, [38] that certain at least of these doctrinal disputes made some difference to the Path or to the way in which you followed the Path, and therefore perhaps to the possibility of your attaining final Nirvana.

Vessantara: Can you give any examples?

S: Well, perhaps the pudgala path itself as commonly understood.

Devamitra: Presumably there must have been a quite strong danger of the pudgalavadins falling into a sort of more orthodox Hindu position?

S: That does not seem to have happened, in fact.

Devamitra: It could have happened, could it?

S: They were regarded by others sometimes as having seceded from the strict Buddhist position; they never so regarded themselves. They were always quite firm on that point - that pudgalavada is not atmavada. There is much that could be said on this, probably, but it is likely to lead us rather far from (...) In Buddhist Thought in India, Conze has quite a bit to say about the pudgalavadins.

Suvajra: Another question. It's a miscellaneous one.

Devamitra: We had two questions that arose out of our study this morning: one arose out of just considering the nature of the Indian symbols, and I think Ratnaketu wants to put the question.

Ratnaketu: This came out of a discussion on the section where you are talking about the three main images for existence.

S: The Wheel, the Spiral and the Mandala.

Ratnaketu: The Wheel, the Buddha, and the Spiral. And it was just to do with symbols in general; we got talking about symbols in general. And we began to wonder whether - we were talking about colours as symbols, and whether a symbol, whether the meaning that a colour has is just because of association or whether there was anything inherent within that colour of a spiritual - it would communicate a spiritual value, like, say, the colour red we tend to associate with compassion. And we learn that, it's in association with (...). If we were really to [39] meditate on, say Amitabha and red, would we be able to get in touch with the experience of that redness which usually has a spiritual value?

S: It does seem that there is to some extent a natural association of certain colours with certain emotional states. At the same time, along with that, in different religions and cultures, for so to speak doctrinal reasons, dogmatic reasons, there is the artificial association of certain colours with certain mental and emotional states and so on. For instance, you mentioned the colour red: I think even physiologically the colour red has a certain impact, which is universal. It is after all the colour of blood, it's the colour of life, and it's the first colour to be perceived, the first colour to be discriminated by the infant. Animals, apparently, so far as I've understood, reading the results of people's researches, have no colour sense; they distinguish only light and dark, black and white. And the human infant learns to distinguish first of all red; then I think green comes next.

So it would seem that in most religions and cultures red usually symbolizes blood, anger, war, things like that. But inasmuch, presumably, as there is a strong element of emotion involved, a more refined red comes to mean emotional warmth, love and so on. In the same way, green usually means something like nature; green is associated in some cultures with woman for that reason, though again in some cultures it is associated with love - perhaps a more earthy love, one might say.

Yellow seems to be directly associated with sunlight, with growth, development, prosperity, riches, gold. And blue seems to be associated with space, with expansion, with breadth, a wider perspective, truth, spiritual experience, and so on.

Ratnaketu: The question was if some person, without any knowledge of Buddhism, just meditated upon the colour green, would they come to a similar experience to somebody who meditated, for instance, upon Tara?

S: Well, it wouldn't be enough for someone merely to meditate on the colour green to have an

experience of Tara. One might say why does Tara have the colour green, or what connection - again it comes back to what we were talking about before in respect of words, of certain terms - what connection, what association is there between, say, the colour green and [40] Tara or one of the forms of Tara, or between red and Amitabha? Is Amitabha really red? Is Tara really green? What does one mean by giving them, so to speak, these colours?

Supposing you meditated, supposing you visualized the red Amitabha; supposing you visualized a red Amitabha quite successfully: have you therefore seen Amitabha? Have you experienced Amitabha? Not necessarily. You might see that red colour, that red Buddha figure, quite clearly, but you would not necessarily have experienced Amitabha. The red colour symbolizes, all right, love; so inasmuch as there is a sort of psychological connection between the two - redness and emotional warmth, love - all right, it sort of helps you to get the feel, visualizing red, visualizing a red Buddha helps you to get the feel of a Buddha of love, a Buddha of compassion. But it's not enough just to see the red Buddha figure, you've got to start feeling the love and compassion of that Buddha, you've got to start feeling, got to start experiencing that Buddha as a Buddha of love and compassion. And when you start doing that you may forget all about the colour red.

And then again, you may be feeling that Buddha as a Buddha of love and compassion, but what do you mean by love and compassion? Your conception, your experience of love and compassion may be very limited. And even if you expand them, even if you develop them more and more, they may still fall far short of the love and compassion which, say, Amitabha embodies. In the end you may come to the conclusion that what you experience, what you know as love and compassion, have got nothing to do with love and compassion as embodied by Amitabha. All you've got in common are the words. And if you want to get in contact with the love and compassion of Amitabha, you have to altogether abandon everything that you know or experience of love and compassion and get into some completely new, completely hitherto unexperienced dimension. But you have been pointed there: the red has pointed you to the emotional warmth and that's pointed you to love and compassion, and the love and compassion have pointed you beyond even love and compassion in the ordinary sense.

So not only is Amitabha not red; Amitabha doesn't even embody love and compassion, because we know of love and compassion only from our own limited experience, and he certainly doesn't embody that. He embodies something that we have no experience of as yet, but to which perhaps our experience of love and compassion can point us. Perhaps it's a [41] question of not trying to understand Buddhas and Bodhisattvas too literally; I think this question will come up later on. A Buddha is no more a Buddha of love and compassion or a Buddha of Wisdom or a Buddha of power - or a Bodhisattva, for that matter - than he is a Buddha or Bodhisattva who is red or green or blue.

Devamitra: We have one other question which arose out of the Wheel of Life.

Dhirananda: We'd just like to know a bit about the origin of that symbol and its development. It was a pre-Buddhistic symbol that the Buddha took up.

S: Apparently the oldest representation that we have - or had, rather, it's faded away now - of the Wheel of Life was found in the Ajanta caves, so it could date back to 500 or 600 AD. I say we've had it because it's apparently faded; it was fairly visible, (...) been photographed and copied, but now it's almost indecipherable.

There is a Sanskrit work, preserved, I believe, by the Sarvastivadins, in which the Buddha is represented as giving advice or giving directions to Sariputra regarding the construction of a vihara, and he directs him to have the Wheel of Life depicted on the wall. I believe that is regarded as the oldest reference, the ultimate canonical source, for this particular symbol.

Aryamitra: It's not pre-Buddhist?

S: To the best of my knowledge, it's not pre-Buddhist at all. The conception of samsara as a wheel, yes; that is certainly the bhavacakra - that, one may say, is probably pre-Buddhistic; because if one has the conception of repeated existences, the image of a wheel constantly turning naturally suggests itself. So the symbol of the wheel as representing a cycle of repeated births and deaths, that may well be pre-Buddhistic, but I wouldn't be certain that it actually is, but it may be. But certainly the more detailed representation of the Wheel of Life, the so-called bhavacakra, with the three animals at the centre, and the black and the white halves, and the five or the six worlds, and the twelve nidanas around the rim - that is definitely and exclusively Buddhistic.

Dhirananda: And all the details came down from the [42] Buddha's life? There was nothing added later on as a development?

S: I think the Tibetans have elaborated. I don't recall how detailed was that description the Buddha gave, when he instructed Sariputra about the Wheel of Life (...) wall of the vihara. But it is, I think, to the best of my knowledge, an exclusively Tibetan tradition. But then, of course, the Sarvastivada texts are part of Tibetan tradition. That is where they get it from. But they certainly elaborated it.

Amoghachitta: I understood that the twelve nidanas were added on at a later date. Is that so?

S: You are referring to the depiction of the Wheel of Life or the doctrine itself?

Amoghachitta: To the Wheel of Life.

S: I haven't come across any such statement. It could be, but I don't think I've ever seen any representations of the Wheel of Life which did not include the twelve nidanas. It could be that there are ancient ones which don't include them; I don't remember any reference to them.

Subhuti: Still on the theme of the Wheel of Life, Bernie's got a question.

Gunapala: It came out the part of the Wheel of Life, where you have the black and white sections, one representing the good or ethical path, leading up, and the black half representing unethical behaviour. I suggested that that's where the Spiral Path was connected with this ethical behaviour. It seems like they had two different views almost: there's the white section only led to - well, it never led off, as it were, in a spiral direction, it only led back on to the Wheel, but it was circular. So I suppose what I want to know is whether you can see it in a spiral way, and if you can, whether the connection between the circular leading to the god realm, leading back down to the hell realm, and this practice of ethical behaviour leading on to the Spiral.

S: Well, first of all one has to realize that three-dimensional representations of spiritual truths have their limitations; you can't provide for everything, or get [43] everything in. Having said that, it's usually considered that the white half of that second circle represents an upward movement within the Wheel of Life. One mustn't forget, though, that the Wheel of Life contains the realm of the gods, and that the realm of the gods - or the realms of the gods - correspond to the dhyanas also; the realms of the higher gods correspond to the dhyana states. So one could regard this white section of that second circle as included in the Spiral, as well as in the Wheel, but in that part of the Spiral which is intermediate between the Wheel proper and the Spiral proper, or between the Wheel and the Spiral proper.

There is a section of the Spiral which is intermediate between the Spiral proper, that is to say the Spiral which begins with the Point of No Return, or Stream Entry, and ...

Gunapala: That's quite a long way up the Spiral.

S: Yes. But you can go up there, but you can fall back. So, in another sense, that section of the Spiral is included within the Wheel, and the upward movement represented by that segment of that circle is a movement within the Wheel, and therefore is a movement, one might say, within that section or segment of the Spiral.

Gunapala: So really there's no difference between this part of the Spiral up to Stream Entry and the Wheel itself?

S: That's true, yes.

Gunapala: The practice of ethical behaviour.

S: Yes. Hence the limitations of the pictorial representation, because you represent, say, between the Wheel and the Spiral, that is to say the Spiral as it begins from the Point of No Return - you have an intermediate spiral section, though strictly speaking that is also part of the Wheel. It's as though the Spiral and the Wheel overlap. You could look at it that way.

Subhuti: We've got about four more questions. It's one o'clock. We could leave it to tomorrow if you like.

S: I don't mind, it's up to you; depending perhaps on what sort of questions they are - whether they go off at a tangent, or have dharmic ...

[44]

Subhuti: Well, let's deal with one from Robin, about dukkha.

Ratnaprabha: We were discussing the Four Noble Truths, and then went on to the three kinds of dukkha, so the first Noble Truth speaks of unsatisfactoriness, or dukkha, and the third one speaks of the cessation of dukkha. Now I was wondering whether this applies to the first kind of dukkha, namely dukkha as ordinary pain, dukkha dukkha, physical pain; in other words, does this cease with the cessation of dukkha referred to in the Four Noble Truths?

S: Ah. Well, the answer is yes and no. The first of the three kinds of dukkha is, yes, dukkha dukkha - suffering which is just suffering; the ordinary bodily, painful sensation. Now the

Buddha himself was not free from that, even after his Enlightenment; that is very clear from various passages in the Pali texts. So the Buddha had eliminated craving; the Buddha had eliminated hunger or *tr̥sna*, but he had not during his lifetime eliminated that kind of *dukkha*. So that's the 'no' part of the question.

But the 'yes' part of the question is that, having - this is according to standard Theravada, Hinayana teaching - having, so to speak, relinquished the present physical body, having attained not just Nirvana but *parinirvana*, he would not be subject to any future rebirth; he certainly would have no physical body in future. Therefore the Buddha gained deliverance from *dukkha dukkha* also.

Ratnaprabha: That still doesn't quite satisfy what I was wondering, because I was wondering - I'm not sure this can be answered, really - but it was whether the nature of the pain, as experienced by the Buddha, is the same as pain as experienced by us.

S: Well, yes and no again. It's the same inasmuch as it is pain; but we are told that the Buddha bore his pain mindful and self-possessed, which we may not do, and that makes a difference, perhaps, to the actual experience of the pain itself, if you bear it mindful and self-possessed. We are also told that the Buddha had the ability, had the capacity, if he wished, to withdraw from the painful sensation by withdrawing into a deep what we might call trance state, that is to say a higher dhyanic experience, in which he no longer experienced the painful bodily sensation because he no longer experienced any bodily sensation at all.

But the Pali scriptures certainly do make it clear that, even after his Enlightenment, the Buddha was not exempt from physical pain, so in this way also perhaps the Pali scriptures emphasize, or at least underline, the humanity of the Buddha. He wasn't some kind of a superman.

Are we going to leave it there or carry on?

\_\_\_: I think we should leave it there, because we can take them up tomorrow.

S: OK, then.

Day 3: Tape 3, Side 1

Devamitra: This morning we are looking at different doctrinal formulations of the nature of existence. In our group we had two questions arising out of the very brief paragraph on karma and rebirth, the first of which Ratnaketu is going to put.

Ratnaketu: We were talking about rebirth and I wondered, firstly, whether the experience of *bardo* transcended time and space, and if so did that mean that you could be reborn in the future or in the past?

S: The question really involves the nature of time, doesn't it? I suppose one could go a little into it, though it isn't directly relevant. What does one mean, for instance, by being reborn in the past or in the future? What does that assume?

Gunapala: It's something quite solid that you can go back and forwards in.

S: What does it mean to be reborn, let us say, in the past? Is it a meaningful concept? Is it self-contradictory?

Silabhadra: You can be pre-born ...

S: How does this question arise? There are really two parts to it: the bardo, whether the bardo takes place in time - well, what do you think? You've probably thought about the bardo quite a bit already, the Tibetan Book of the Dead; it apparently lasts 49 days - 49 days presumably means it takes [46] time; or is one to understand the 49 days in some other way? If so, in what other way? The experiences of the bardo seem to be or are represented as a series of experiences; a series of experiences means time. Therefore the bardo, so to speak, occupies time. If the bardo is not a series of experiences, what is it? Or if it is to be represented other than as a series of experiences, in that case how is it to be represented? I am perfectly open to the possibility that the bardo does not occur in time, that it doesn't consist of or need not be represented as a series of experiences, but if that is the case please tell me what it does consist of and how it can be represented.

Cittapala: Could it be more like the Wheel of Life, in the sense that in dependence on one experience another arises?

S: Well, yes, but then we are still concerned with time; we are still concerned with a series, we are still concerned with sequence, so it doesn't really make any difference. It would seem that the bardo is essentially an experience of a series of visions; that would seem to be the nature of the bardo, that you start off with an experience which is comparatively close to Reality and you end up with one which is comparatively remote from Reality, in accordance with which or as a result of which, under ordinary circumstances, you are reborn. The whole conception of the bardo experience or experiences would suggest that it is essentially a temporal process, occurring within time. This is not to say that there may not be times and times, if you see what I mean. Buddhist thought is familiar with the idea of different times, or different time scales, more correctly; the different worlds have different time scales: that a year on earth, say, is a day in a devaloka, and a year in a devaloka is a year or 10,000 years in a brahmaloka - these are different time scales.

There is, of course, a possibility that in the bardo a different time scale operates, so that a person in the bardo may subjectively experience what seems to him like, let's say, 49 days, but to someone still living who is as it were following his course, following his progress, it may be a few minutes or a few days. That is a different matter. But it would seem that if you are to conceive of the bardo as other than a series of experiences occurring in time you are to so radically reconceive it that it becomes something totally different. Therefore what is it that it has become?

[47]

Vessantara: Would it be a question of wherever there is conditionality there is time?

S: Not necessarily; because in the Pali Abhidhamma co-existence is for instance one form of conditionality, so sequence doesn't apply there. In other words, the formula of conditioned co-production covers instances other than those of temporal sequence. It isn't quite causality

in a modern sense.

You might even say, in Jungian terms, that it involves or includes elements of synchronicity.

Suvajra: What do you mean by co-existence?

S: Existing at the same time.

Suvajra: What sort of things would exist at the same time?

S: Well, as an example, you've got two playing cards upright one against the other, forming a sort of tent, each mutually supports the other. It's not that one comes along first and the other is dependent upon it after that; they are both at the same time, in the same time so to speak, supporting each other, so there's a relation of conditionality between them but one is not successive to the other. Therefore the question of time does not arise, you see?

Anyway, where does that leave your question - or the first half of your question?

Ratnaketu: From that I (...) that it's not so much an experience out of space and time, but experience of time is - well, could be relegated ...

S: The time scale could be different. Even the experience of space could be different. But it would be at least within that general framework.

Ratnaketu: Presumably it cuts out the possibility of being reborn in the past.

S: Yes. Well, not necessarily; not necessarily. There is this concept of reversible time, isn't there? Ratnaketu seems to have come across it, anyway. Of course, it is usually thought, or it has been thought, that time by its very nature is irreversible. After all, today always comes [48] after yesterday and before tomorrow. So one can conceptually, as it were abstractly, conceive of time that flows backwards. But though one can conceive of it in the abstract, conceive of it logically, though one can put that particular form of words together, does one really attach to that particular form of words - reversible time or time flowing backwards - any idea, any meaning, that you actually apprehend? It's as though - please explain at great length what that idea or what that meaning actually is, that one could be reborn in the past, or preborn.

For instance, what difference would it make - supposing someone is born - usually in Buddhism we'd say he is reborn. So what practical difference, if any, would it make to say he was preborn - that he had come not from the past but from the future? What difference would that make?

Dhirananda: It would be perhaps that conditionality would work backwards.

S: So what difference would it make?

Dhirananda: The future should give rise to something ...

S: No, what I'm getting at is this: supposing someone is born in the present, and you say he is

born into the present not from the past but from the future. All right, you can go into further detail. Suppose you say that he is born in the present very handsome. Now, according to the Buddhist teaching, this is the result of karma of good nature and good temper, a happy mental state; so, all right, since he is so born in the present, he must have had, so to speak, that sort of temperament in the future in order to be reborn handsome in the present. Well, what practical difference does it make to put it in that way? In other words, is there really a difference between past and future or is there really a difference between being reborn and pre-born?

Ratnaprabha: Wouldn't it imply that you could plant karmic roots in this life which would have an effect on this life?

S: Say that again.

Ratnaprabha: ... you could plant karmic seeds or roots in this life which would as it were later have an effect on this present life? In other words, you would get to a logical absurdity.

[49]

S: Yes. The fact that someone appears in this life - if he appears in this life as a result of karma, well, in a sense it can only be past karma, because future karma is really a contradiction in terms. So you cannot appear from the future, you can only appear from the past. Unless one can make greater sense of this whole conception of irreversible time. If someone is reborn from the future, even if it was possible, it could not be a birth as a result of karma, in which case why would the person be reborn, or born, at all? Why would he appear?

You could perhaps envisage someone being born into the present from outside time altogether, say an emanation of a Buddha; but what meaningful idea could one attach to the expression 'being reborn', as it were, 'from the future', rather than from the past?

Ratnaketu: What occurred to me as you were talking was that the only possibility would be that - if you see the individual as being completely separate from the rest of the world, in the sense that the individual always comes from his own past. His conditionality always comes from his own conditions. He ... his own conditions. But that might appear in some cases to be coming from a different place, in a way, than the rest of the world's conditions.

S: Well, let's look at it from a slightly different point of view. Suppose it's a film. A film consists of a number of frames. You run, you play the film, you project the film; so what you see you see an event that takes place in time. Well, you can run the film backwards, can't you? So is this an analogy for the reversal of the time flow in a real sense, and possibly being preborn rather than reborn?

\_\_\_: (...)(...).

S: Suppose - all right, in the film you see someone's life. You see a baby being born, then you see the baby growing up to a young man and then an old man. So you can speak here of conditionality; you can speak of 'in dependence upon the baby arises the child, in dependence on the child the young man, in dependence on the young man the mature man', and so on. All right, you reverse that film. In dependence upon the old man arises a mature man, in dependence upon the mature man arises a young man, in dependence upon the young man

arises the child, in [50] dependence on the child arises a baby. Does that give one a meaningful model for anything that could be conceived of as actually existing? Any state of affairs that could be conceived of as actually existing. Does it make sense to speak of, let's say, the old man as the condition of the young man, instead of the young man as the condition of the old man? Or does it perhaps not undermine our very conception of the nature of old man and young man? So that perhaps we are just playing with words, without there being any meaningful idea behind the words.

So that it's possible to recombine words in such a way that they seem to have a meaning but they don't have a meaning. I am wondering whether, despite the fact that some people have thought up this idea of reversible time flow, whether we are not perhaps concerned with something of that sort here.

Prasannasiddhi: What about prediction of future happenings?

S: Well, it does seem that there is such a thing as prediction, it does seem that there is such a thing as precognition, and this of course raises interesting questions about the nature of time. I started thinking about these things myself in my teens because I had, as I think some people know, a number of precognitive experiences. You know what I mean by precognitive? You see things happening before they happen. So between the ages of 16 and 18, I had a number of these precognitive experiences. I used to see things unfolding just as though I was looking at a cinema screen. It was as though a cinema screen was suspended up there and I would be watching it, and I would see what was going to happen; and some time later it would happen - usually not very long afterwards, half an hour or one hour. And clearly it was a precognitive experience, it came quite spontaneously; I wasn't doing any meditation then. It might have been something to do with adolescence, though.

But anyway, I had these precognitive experiences, and they are relatively common. So then the question arises: how can one see something happening before it happens? That is the question that I asked myself. So the only conclusion to which one can come, it seems, is that time is somehow within consciousness, and not consciousness within time. This is the only conclusion one can come to, in short.

Devamitra: Could you repeat that?

[51]

S: That time is in consciousness, and not that consciousness is in time. In a way, one might almost say that - well, perhaps one shouldn't go so far immediately as to say that consciousness is unconditioned; perhaps one should only say that consciousness has a different time scale.

Ratnaketu: Consciousness has a different time scale to what?

S: Well, the events of the ordinary world. In other words, it is operating on a higher or a wider level of conditionality on a different sort of time scale, and therefore could contain within it the ordinary time scale which we usually experience. I am only saying that so that we don't make a jump from saying that time is contained within consciousness, rather than consciousness within time, to saying that consciousness therefore is unconditioned; I don't want to make that jump so quickly. I'm quite happy to keep consciousness for the time being just mundane, even

though time does exist within it.

So if time exists within consciousness, if consciousness as it were occupies a point outside time, then consciousness should be able to see as it were, at any time, any time. It is not that - it is quite difficult to express this - it is not that when you have a precognitive experience the future is existing in the present; it is that you are standing as it were outside time, your consciousness is outside time. Your consciousness is simultaneously in contact with the so-called future and the so-called present - even perhaps with the so-called past in some instances. So that, from the standpoint of time, you see the future in the present. But actually what you are seeing from the standpoint of consciousness - well, you are just seeing something. It can be looked at as it were in the future, it can be looked at as it were in the present. But consciousness transcends or envelops or includes time, not the other way round.

Amoghachitta: Isn't there another way you could look at this precognitive ...? Couldn't you look at it in terms of seeing a karmic (...) before it bears fruit, seeing in what way it will bear fruit before it actually does?

S: Well, you may in some cases, but not with regard to my own experience, because when I say 'saw' I mean I saw a picture. I'm not using the word 'see' metaphorically, I'm using it quite literally. That just as I might see what actually happened when [52] it happened, I saw it in just the same way but sort of suspended in space in front of me. So I didn't see the things that after a while might give rise to something in the future, but I actually saw in the present, so to speak, a sort of cross-section of time, that which did exist later on in the future.

Sometimes you can just see the way things are going, and you can predict, because that's the way things are going, something that is bound to happen. It was not like that. It was a sort of static picture of the future which was sort of suspended in front of my inner vision; I saw it externally as though I saw it with my physical eyes, though obviously I couldn't see it with my physical eyes.

Also I heard what people were going to say, I heard conversations which afterwards took place.

Silaratna: Did the things you saw actually involve you being involved in the situation, or were they more or less things that you weren't actually going to be involved in?

S: In some cases, at least, I was also involved in the situation. For instance, I saw someone coming into the room and speaking to me, and I replied to him. Things of that sort.

Richard Clayton: Have you any suggestions why these experiences might arise?

S: Well, I did refer half jokingly to adolescence, but perhaps not completely jokingly, because they were all in fact between 16 and 19, maybe 16 and 17 and a half.

Gunapala: I have heard of people explaining exactly the same thing being a lot older - mature women, for example, being able to see exactly in the same way into the future and the past.

S: I'm not suggesting that is invariably the reason for precognitive experiences, but possibly in my case it might have been: general disturbance and disorientation of the faculties at the

time.

Devamitra: Did the fact that you had seen what was as it were happening in the future affect your experience of the future when you got there?

S: No. As far as I remember, it didn't affect it at all. [53] I was just interested in checking that what I had before seen did actually happen, or whether there was any discrepancy; but, no, it all happened again down to the minutest details. I remember, for instance, when someone was speaking, I'd be saying to myself, before they spoke, exactly what they were going to say, and I said: 'Oh, I know what you're going to say', you're going to say such and such just a few words ahead of them. It was always exactly as I had foreseen.

Devamitra: Presumably you could give a different answer.

S: That possibility didn't seem to arise.

Ratnaketu: You didn't feel ...

S: I didn't feel any temptation to depart from the script. (Laughter)

\_\_\_: You were a good boy.

S: But even had I departed from the script, I would have foreseen that I was going to [do so] (Laughter). The nature of the experience is such. But this did give me food for thought, and the conclusion to which I came was that the mind does transcend time; that the mind is, so to speak, outside time; that the mind is not limited by time; that the mind is not born or reborn. Do you see what I mean? The mind, in a way, can move backwards and forwards in time. Because, from the standpoint of the mind, in a sense, time is not time.

Silaratna: Do you think this comes into the idea of the alaya? The alaya vijnana, the store consciousness?

S: Possibly, yes. Also, if one looks at the mind in this sort of way, in a way one needs to re-interpret, at least, or re-present, the whole traditional doctrine on rebirth. The doctrine of karma and rebirth, as traditionally taught, is no doubt as near as we can get to an explanation of certain things, but it can I think be more deeply understood, in the light of what I have just said, as well as in the light of other considerations. If time is not ultimately real, karma and rebirth also cannot be ultimately real.

Ratnaketu: By karma and rebirth you mean conditionality?

S: They are not just conditionality, but a particular kind of conditionality, that is to say conditionality as applied to the skilful and unskilful acts of the so-called individual being and their consequences.

[54]

Also one might say that, if time is unreal, in the last analysis there is no such thing as spiritual development. This is another way of looking at things, that there isn't any question of really developing; development is an illusion, though a necessary one. So it is a question, from

another point of view, of realizing what you really are, what you are or were all the time. But that is not a very helpful way of looking at things always. It suggests that there is nothing to do, that you retain your sense of time when you think that within time there is nothing to do. If you can get rid of your sense of time, and be without your sense of time, and outside time so to speak realize that there is nothing to do, that's fine; but first of all you've got to get outside time. As long as you have a sense of time, you have got to think in terms of development. If you don't do things while retaining your sense of time, you don't go beyond time, you simply stagnate, you ...

Anyway, perhaps we have gone into those matters sufficiently.

Devamitra: There is one more question which arose out of our discussion on karma and rebirth.

Bodhiruchi: All the time you've been speaking about rebirth and karma for time, you have spoken of an individual being reborn. Is it possible that if one looks at the individual as a flux, as a process, as against some sort of entity, that it's quite possible that you will split? - you need not necessarily be reborn as one person? Or else two people may come together to be reborn as one person in the future? Is that a valid way of looking at karma and rebirth?

S: There is a teaching in Buddhism about the different ways in which the so-called mind and the so-called body can be related. For instance, in the Pali scriptures the Buddha makes it clear that in some worlds, in some realms, the rule is one mind to one body, but that in certain other realms the rule is that a number of minds are associated with a single body; or that a number of bodies are associated with a single mind. We usually think in terms of one body being associated with one mind, but we are aware of such phenomena as multiple personality. But Buddhism traditionally envisages the possibility of all sorts of combinations.

There is another point also. I'm not sure about the combination of, let's say, several minds into one; I'm not sure [55] about that; I can't recollect any instance of that, I'd be very wary of that sort of idea, for obvious reasons. But in Vajrayana tradition, certainly in Tibetan tradition, there are instances, supposedly, of one person being reborn as more than one person. For instance, one of my own teachers was one of five rebirths of one original teacher. You know there is the Vajrayanic subdivision of body, speech and mind expanded to five: body, speech, mind, guna and karma. Well, apparently, when the former teacher deceased, in dependence upon that departing Enlightened consciousness, five personalities arose, that incarnated so to speak separately. Two of them, in fact, I had some contact with. So this sort of thing is known to tradition.

The implications, perhaps, for the standard karma teaching are quite interesting. There is no doubt people can share karma, in the sense of sharing a common background. Sometimes - some people, for instance, the Theosophists - speak of group karma, collective karma, though I think that expression is not actually used in Buddhism. But there does seem to be something like group karma. I have mentioned before the possibility of a number of people being together in successive lives because of their common interest, their mutual contacts and so on. It can keep them together. Empirical studies of cases of rebirth seem to suggest that people tend to take rebirth in the group in which they previously lived - that seems to be the general rule. Even in the same family.

Amoghachitta: Do you take it literally that one person goes through the bardo and gets reborn, or can you see it more in terms of the skandhas getting reborn in terms of, say, one cup of water being put into the ocean and taking out another cup, implying a mixture?

S: No, the way in which the teaching is presented traditionally does certainly suggest a single individual undergoing that whole process and as it were emerging at the other end. Conventionally the same, but in philosophical terms neither absolutely the same nor absolutely different.

Suvajra: How on earth would you get that split into five parts? How ...[jet aircraft noise] ...

S: ...[much lost]... individuality in the ordinary sense. It is not a question of splitting up an [56] ordinary subjective ego, but rather of a ... Enlightened personality emanating by it - Enlightened ...

Devamitra: Would there be any connection between that sort of phenomenon and the one which you commented upon in The Thousand-Petalled Lotus with Swami Ramdas - appearing in two places at the same time?

S: Possibly, possibly. There do seem to be quite a number of instances of people appearing in different places at the same time, and this is presumably understandable only on the basis of some sort of division of personality; whether a real division or an apparent division, it is difficult to say. Perhaps we should just use these sort of questions to help us question our usual way of looking at things. For instance, we say 'a mind'; why should not a mind be divisible? What do we mean by a mind being divisible? A mind is not a spatial thing, presumably. So if we speak of a mind or psyche being divisible, what exactly do we mean by that? It can't be taken literally.

Quite a bit of the discussion this morning seems to have pointed in the direction of a more thorough investigation of what we actually mean by what we say. It even suggests that often we don't know what we mean by what we say; no clear idea attaches to what we say. We understand the meanings of the words, perhaps, taken separately, but we don't understand what we mean when we put those words together in a particular way. Or we think we do, because we understand the meanings of the words themselves. For instance, just to give an example, you can speak of 'black light'. Well, we know what black means, we know what light means, so you can apparently frame a meaningful question: 'What is black light?' But do you really attach any meaning to that question, as a question, as distinct from attaching meaning to the words 'black' and 'light', as well as to the words 'what' and 'is'?

Anyway, Perhaps we'd better come off karma.

Subhuti: We have actually got some questions on karma. I think they will probably come into the same sort of categories. Never mind.

Ratnaprabha: I was wondering if you thought there was any value in attempting to investigate rebirth scientifically and attempting to verify it, or indeed that there was any possibility of doing such a thing.

[57]

S: The possibility of verification would seem to exist, and a certain amount of work has been done in this field I think mainly by American investigators, and some of their results or their conclusions are, to say the least, quite interesting. No amount of scientific investigation could ever establish that all cases of human birth are cases of rebirth; it would be impossible to establish. You could establish, perhaps, that certain cases of human rebirth were cases of rebirth of other human beings previously deceased; that perhaps could be established. I think perhaps in some cases it has been established.

Vessantara: Would it be possible to ever clearly establish that without there being alternative explanations in the same phenomena?

S: Well, this raises the question of the nature of explanation, which is a very tricky question indeed. But it might well be, and I think possibly has been, that there are cases of alleged, say, recollection of rebirth or alleged rebirth where no alternative explanation has seemed to be applicable.

An alternative explanation must be a real explanation. It's no use saying, 'Well, there could be a man sitting up in the moon who is telepathically influencing this child's mind and also at the same time telepathically influencing certain other events, and therefore causing the appearance of recollection of rebirth.' That is no explanation at all; it has got to be an intelligible, as it were fairly viable, alternative explanation, not a purely hypothetical, purely imaginary one.

Tape 3, Side 2

- A Christian theologian would no doubt invoke the influence of the devil, but that does not count as an alternative explanation, because the existence of the devil himself is to be established, to begin with.

Ratnaprabha: The other part of that question was: does this have any value, does it have any relevance, for the spiritual life, this sort of investigation?

S: Well, I think it has relevance if it is established that actions do have consequences, and that you will live, so to [58] speak, to meet the consequences of your own actions. I think if you were firmly convinced of this - whether by way of the establishment of there actually being cases of this sort or in any other way - your whole conduct must be radically affected.

From what I have seen so far, it seems that there is a possibility of rebirth being established in this empirical way; the question of karma seems less clear. Maybe karma is a too complex sort of thing. In other words, it seems that in some cases it has been established that such-and-such person was the reincarnation of such-and-such person recently deceased, but that certain experiences befalling the reborn person were the direct karmic consequences of certain actions committed by the previously deceased person - that is far from being clear. In other words, karma perhaps works in a more general, rough and ready way than perhaps we have been accustomed to think after reading some of the scriptures, or some even popular modern accounts.

Subhuti: You had another question.

Ratnaprabha: Yes, well, perhaps in the light of what you've just said, the other question would be: can you think of any other ways of encouraging such strong conviction that actions have consequences? My previous question - I originally thought of it more specifically: can you think of any specific ways of encouraging an experience that rebirth does actually take place - fairly accessible?

S: Well, I think that it is obvious that actions have consequences within the limits of the present lifetime. One can very often see the consequences of one's own actions or failures to act. I don't know how you can convince yourself that there is such a thing as karma and rebirth and therefore provide oneself with a motivation for living, say, an ethical or spiritual life, other than, in the first place - Well, there are three possibilities.

The traditional one is that one, so to speak, has faith in the Buddha. The Buddha is believed to have not only attained Enlightenment but to have developed various supernormal powers and capacities, and sees beings passing away and being reborn in accordance with their karma. So for the traditional Buddhist this is the basis for his belief in karma and rebirth: he depends upon the higher spiritual vision, so to speak, of the Buddha, and he doesn't argue about it very much, he accepts it.

One could presumably come to accept karma and rebirth as a [59] result of general philosophical considerations about the nature of existence, and a law of compensation at work in the universe along Emersonian lines. Or one could become convinced as a result of the study of empirical evidence, cases of alleged recollection of rebirth or alleged recollection of previous lives.

The whole question, to my mind, is very much bound up with the question of original consciousness.

Ratnaprabha: Perhaps the trouble with someone like me is that, having gone through a very rigorous training in scientific materialism, it's very difficult to see clearly the idea of consciousnesses as it were becoming disembodied from the material body and then being re-embodied in another material body.

S: Well, some people have had the experience of themselves as existing quite separately and independently of their physical bodies - this has ... one or two. Because if you as it were see your physical body 'down there', it's not very difficult to imagine yourself as associating yourself with another, a different, physical body when the old one is worn out, because you experience yourself as standing quite apart, and separate, and independent, and distinct from that physical body. I think this is not an unusual experience.

Subhuti: One more. Richard - question?

Richard: How does self-consciousness arise out of sense-consciousness?

S: Hm. How does self-consciousness arise out of sense-consciousness? I wonder what one means exactly by 'out of'. We know that, to use the Buddhist terminology, in dependence upon sense-consciousness self-consciousness arises. Perhaps a clue to the question would be found if we studied the behaviour of children.

What happens in the case of children, very young children? At first, apparently, they have only sense-consciousness, don't they? Like animals, they are aware of warmth, cold, light, darkness, they hear sound. They are aware of their own bodies; they are aware of the bodies of other people, especially mother, though apparently at first they are not able to distinguish between them very clearly; they are sort of merged. But then [60] what happens? Supposing the baby is given something to suck, supposing it's given a dummy. It sucks the dummy, it enjoys the pleasurable sensation; this is all sense-consciousness. Then the baby is aware that the dummy isn't always there when it wants the dummy, and it develops the habit, so to speak, of screaming. When the dummy isn't there and it wants the dummy, it feels angry, so it screams. Then it notices that when it screams, the dummy appears. So the screaming becomes a sort of signal: you scream and the dummy is popped into your mouth, (and that gets satisfied)?

So this goes on for a while, and then not only do you experience the dummy in your mouth, you experience the dummy as lying beside you, so you play with the dummy, and maybe in the meanwhile you are learning to use your hands, you can pick up things.

And then one day you scream for the dummy, and a voice says something like, 'Why don't you put it in your own mouth?' You may not understand what the words mean - you may not have learned enough (...). But maybe some force takes up your hand and puts it on the dummy and then transfers the dummy in that way to your own mouth. So you begin to get a glimmering of consciousness of yourself as doing certain things, and that is reinforced by this voice that says, 'Oh, clever baby! You've done it.' And then you start getting the idea 'I have done it'. And in this way, it would seem, self-consciousness develops. You not only are aware of what is happening but you are aware that you are aware. It would seem, in the case of the individual human being, that self-consciousness develops by way of interaction between self-conscious adults. Whether - presumably this is how it developed, in some such way, at the very beginning, but presumably over a very much longer period of time; as the human race as a whole came to be more and more self-conscious.

Richard: The question did actually - probably [not] literally, the question did arise out of how one arises out of animal consciousness ...

S: Oh, animal.

Richard: - animal consciousness to being a human being with reflexive consciousness. That is perhaps quite different. But could you apply the same sort of analogy?

[61]

S: Well, yes, I think one could say that self-consciousness would arise out of the interaction between human beings. Not just the interaction between man and nature, say.

Richard: It wouldn't be so for an animal, animal consciousness (?) - it's very literalistic, perhaps, but animal consciousness which is just sense-consciousness, a very refined, say, sense-consciousness on the verge of reflexive consciousness. I suppose I'm asking at what point does one become human?

S: Well, again, it's a question of 'at which point?' And here one is concerned, in evolutionary terms, or at least according to orthodox Darwinism, with very, very minute changes extending

over vast periods of time; and also one is concerned with a vast number of individual members of a certain species.

Certain people recently have been carrying out experiments with chimpanzees, and some maintain that a chimpanzee has - well, can develop - what we call reflexive consciousness, and can learn, say, to recognize itself in the mirror and all that sort of thing, and have an awareness of its own awareness.

Perhaps we shall never know historically exactly how the process took place, because it did concern so many people and the changes were so small and so varied and extended over such a vast period of time.

Richard: Go back one stage further to the question before. We were talking about how one comes from the animal and talking about how one tends to think literalistically about there is in fact a - Subhuti was saying there's a sort of soup of animal consciousness. If that's so, it seems to suggest that if you came out of it through these minute differences that occur, the ones that come into existence is really very random. Would you say that was so - your existence is the result of - ?

S: Well, not random, of course, in the strict statistical sense. But, as I said, so many changes are involved, such minute changes - the number of living beings concerned is so enormous also. It is probably very difficult to plot a single uniform course of development from sense consciousness to reflexive consciousness applicable to all species, as it were, culminating in the human species.

[62]

Gunapala: It seems from what you said that the influence of more developed consciousness on lesser developed consciousness plays a big part in development of lesser consciousnesses. Would the same apply with us and the Enlightened consciousness?

S: This would of course bring us on to non-scientific ground. I have kept so far on the sort of scientific ground, but some people do believe, according to some traditions, man was not alone, so to speak, but beings of a higher stage of development appeared, and it was through mankind's contact with those higher beings that early culture and civilization, and presumably perhaps self-consciousness, or even spiritual consciousness, arose. That is one view - non-scientific, although some people believe that there is some scientific evidence; but that is one view.

Gunapala: From our point of view, though, we can see quite clearly that other minds do have an effect on us. More developed consciousness has an effect on our consciousness.

S: Well, there's no doubt about that. One could certainly say that contact between a less and a more developed consciousness speeds up the evolutionary process. It makes it a much less chancy business. But it is not impossible, I think, from the scientific point of view, that the mutual impingement of these various human or proto-human beings in the early days of human evolution did eventually bring about the transition from sense-consciousness to self-consciousness.

First of all, you have sense-consciousness; you are aware, say, of another human being. And

then you make that other human being aware that you are aware of him. Then he begins to see himself through your eyes; he begins to see himself from the outside, he becomes aware of his own awareness, and in that way reflexive consciousness develops. So it could certainly develop through the interaction of people on roughly the same level, or even the same level, but it would take much longer to develop than it takes, say, to develop when it's a question of someone with a highly developed self-consciousness interacting with someone with purely a sense-consciousness, as in the case of the interaction between the infant and the parent. Does that seem comprehensible?

Voices: Yes. Straightforward to me.

[63]

Suvajra: Just one question. You were speaking of the view that man is perhaps not alone and you said that some traditions hold that. What sort of traditions - Buddhist traditions or - ?

S: Well, nearly all, actually. He is called the culture hero, I think, in anthropology: a figure who appears. It's Osiris in Egypt, or it's Prometheus in Greece, or it's Manu in India, or it's Quetzalcoatl in South America [Mexico]. He appears very early, at the dawn of history, and teaches men; teaches men agriculture, he teaches them how to make baskets, he teaches them how to make weapons, how to worship the gods, and so on. So these traditions are very widespread in probably all cultures.

Suvajra: Would Buddhism incorporate Manu in its philosophy?

S: Yes, very likely, I would say. Though, of course, Buddhism, also, according to certain sutras, sees man as a sort of fallen angel who has somehow put his finger into this sticky mess of the world and started licking his finger and liking it, and gradually got involved with this sort of treacle which eventually covers him; and out of it a physical body eventually is manufactured for him. That, of course, is the traditional Buddhist view.

It is - just to mention this again, to emphasize this - it is a very widespread belief, I think present in all early cultures, that there was a culture-bringer, a culture hero, who taught mankind what mankind knows. So it is a question of - the ubiquitousness of the belief or tradition is not questioned. The question is what significance one attaches to it: whether one regards it as reflecting an actual historical situation, (...) That is another matter. But it is rather curious that that is how, I think, all early traditions, all early cultures, see themselves as emerging.

Silaratna: In the traditional little book *The Buddha's Law among the Birds*, I suppose this sort of thing would apply there, like supposing a Bodhisattva out of compassion would become a certain form to teach.

S: Yes, sort of visit the birds.

Gunapala: ... vision of Bodhisattvas treating us the same way we treat animals, a sort of being higher forms of [64] consciousness, in the same way; a bit like Buddhas, we are to Buddhas as animals are to us.

S: Hm, there is a Hindu text which says that human beings are the cows of the gods.

Time is passing. Are there any more questions?

Vessantara: We can look at one last one about rebirth.

Jinavamsa: We've been reading about karma and rebirth, and we've seen how being born as a human one is very unlikely to be reborn as an animal after that. I wondered whether being born as a man, how likely is it to be reborn as a woman?

S: Well, that depends upon karma. The Buddhist teaching here is quite straightforward, though I think quite unacceptable to feminists, I must warn you of that in case you have feminist sympathies. The general Indian belief, and certainly the Buddhist belief, is that woman is so to speak more mundane than man, and especially more involved in, more interested in, bodily life and biological processes. So the Buddhist teaching is that, if, say, you are a man in this life, but your interests are mainly bodily - you are interested not just in the physical body but in sex, reproduction and children and all that sort of thing - and if you develop no other interests, and if your interest in these other sort of mundane, body-based things is particularly strong, then there is a likelihood that you will be reborn as a woman, because the female body is more suited, and more adapted, to these interests than is the male. This is the Buddhist traditional teaching.

Amoghachitta: You said it was a general Indian belief. I thought it was quite a bit more Buddhist than that. (?) ...

S: It would seem so. I won't be too positive about that. But it is in a general way a general Indian belief. But certainly, quite definitely, a Buddhist belief, and I think a Jain belief.

Amoghachitta: Are there scriptural references?

S: Oh yes, yes.

Bodhiruchi: Would you then say that karmically it is equidistant between being born as an animal and being born as a man to be born as a woman? Or is one -

[65]

S: Well, which animals do you have in mind? (Laughter)

Bodhiruchi: I was just thinking of the animal world in general.

S: What does one mean by 'equidistant'? Because when one says 'equidistant' one is thinking in terms of space, so how is one as it were to translate that into presumably terms of consciousness? I think - again at the risk of upsetting feminists - I think the Buddhist tradition would say, in terms of the scriptures, that the female consciousness, to use that expression, is nearer to the animal consciousness than is the male consciousness; but how near, quantitatively speaking, how one is ever to measure that, that is quite a different matter.

Bodhiruchi: I would have thought that their reflexive consciousness was playing quite a large part in that both man and woman have reflexive consciousness.

S: What do you mean by 'playing quite a large part'?

Bodhiruchi: I would say that being born as a woman was closer to being born as a man than to being born as an animal.

S: Well, if one takes reflexive consciousness as the criterion, that would be the case, because both men and women are human beings.

Gunapala: So a woman has more in common with the men than they do with animals?

S: Well, this raises the question first of how much the men, that is to say human beings, have in common with animals. That isn't an easy thing to say. And also what one means by 'having in common with animals'. Is the 'animality', inverted commas, of a human being the same thing as animal animality? Is it a question of animal animality added to a sort of human, let's say, reflexive consciousness? Can one think in those terms? Or is the animal part of one's nature so interfused with this so-called human that one can't really speak of an animal part?

Do you feel, say, human and animal as two separate things, or do you feel one thing, which is sort of - well, one can hardly say partly animal and partly human, but do you feel the humanity and the animality more as two poles of the same thing - not two separate things put together? It's a very important [66] question.

Ratnaketu: I see it as humanity is animality developed, so it's not so separate, it's not a different thing, it's not a development of ...

S: Well, that really begs the question. You can say 'What is development?' Man is sometimes defined as a rational animal; so is it that rationality has been added to animality to get the human being? Or is it that the rationality has so completely transformed the animality that one no longer can speak of a separate animality? Is your animality detachable? Can you imagine yourself as purely human without any animality? What does one mean by animality in the case of a human being?

Cittapala: Well, presumably, not to the extent that even a Buddha has to function in any sort of animalistic way, although there are certain activities which are not really (...) (?)

S: The Buddha still hears, the Buddha still sees. These are animal activities, presumably, but he sees not only as a human being and hears as a human being but as a Buddha. So it's as though the animality is taken up, even subsumed into the humanity.

Gunapala: Can we draw the conclusion, then, that not only do we see as human beings, we also see as animals? That there is ...

S: Do we see as animals? Do we see in the way that an animal sees, other than purely formally? The mechanism of our eyes is the same, I think, in terms of the mechanism of the eye of an animal, but do we see as an animal sees?

Gunapala: If your consciousness, surely, dropped low enough, you would.

S: Then the question might arise: could your consciousness drop as low as that?

Ratnaketu: But if it did you might as well be an animal.

\_\_\_: Well, I suppose so, yes.

[67]

Bodhiruchi: So in a sense to compare man and animal is like comparing apples and oranges?

S: No, because an orange did not develop from an apple, nor an apple from an orange, as far as I know. Whereas we do usually believe that man has developed from the lower animals; but even this is quite a question. As I said, what do we mean by develop in this case? Supposing a human being becomes Enlightened, supposing a human being becomes a Buddha: well, a Buddha is an Enlightened human being, a human being is an animal with reflexive consciousness; so where does that leave the relation between, say, animality and Buddhahood?

Bodhiruchi: But we went into this yesterday - that Buddhahood is of the Unconditioned, and we can't really say how you leap or step from the conditioned to the Unconditioned. So by the same token ...

S: Well, it's more than that. You can't even say whether you leap, because leap involves the crossing of a gap: is there a gap? There are logical difficulties if there's a gap. There are also, of course, logical difficulties ...

Bodhiruchi: But do the same rules of illogicality apply to, say, comparing an animal and a man, and a man and a Buddha? Is there an element of the Unconditioned in a man? Because if there isn't, then one could compare man and animal.

S: Well, you could say is there an element of the Unconditioned in a man? If there is, presumably there's also an element of the Unconditioned in an animal.

Bodhiruchi: Unless you link it to the reflexive consciousness.

S: Well, you could hardly link the Unconditioned exclusively with the reflexive consciousness. This is connected with all sorts of interesting questions - I am not going to go into them now, just indicate them. One interesting connection is the connection with the question of abortion. You know, there is this great debate about when a foetus becomes a human being - you are familiar with this? Some people say that a foetus is not a human being, so we can kill a foetus; we are not killing a human being, therefore the killing is justified. This is the argument. Others say that a foetus, if left to itself, so to speak, does develop into a human being, therefore a foetus is a human being. So therefore when you deprive a foetus of life you are in fact [68] killing a human being, so therefore abortion is not on, it's an unethical act. But you could carry this further, because a human being also can develop into a Buddha; well, not just as a foetus develops into a human being, because the foetus will develop into a human being without any effort on its part, as a result of natural growth and development. That is not the case with a human being developing into a Buddha; but none the less a human being can develop into a Buddha. Therefore a human being is a Buddha in much the same sense as a foetus is a human being.

So there are many associated questions. So when you kill a human being you are killing a

potential Buddha, you could say, just as when you kill a foetus you kill a potential human being; and a potential human being is a human being, a potential Buddha is a Buddha.

The whole difficulty arises about the difficulty of conceiving of the developmental process as being either completely continuous or proceeding by way of leaps and starts - logically, that is.

Anyway, perhaps we'll leave it there for this morning.

\_\_\_: Thank you, Bhante.

Day 4: Tape 4, Side 1

S: - how far we've got this morning.

Devamitra: We've got as far as considering the negative aspects of Perfect Emotion, which takes us up to page 27 of the transcript.

S: Page 27? ... All right: who has the first batch of questions?

Devamitra: I do. The first question arises out of the distinction between Perfect Vision and Perfect Emotion. A few days ago, you did emphasize the fact that there was an emotional aspect of Perfect Vision, in which case it seems there is possibly quite a strong common factor between Perfect Vision and Perfect Emotion, and we wondered if you could clarify the distinction between Perfect Vision and Perfect Emotion.

S: Hm. In the case of - in Perfect Vision there is an emotional component. At the same time, there is a difference [69] between speaking of Perfect Vision as containing essentially, so to speak, an emotional component and speaking of it, whatever it may be, in emotional terms. Do you see what I mean?

Devamitra: No.

S: Oh. Well, suppose we - we are talking about Perfect Vision. We can only speak about it in terms with which we are already familiar, if we are to speak about it at all; and those terms with which we are already familiar will have been drawn from our ordinary experience, that is to say our experience preceding our experience of Perfect Vision. Our experience preceding our experience of Perfect Vision is a divided experience, because we are divided beings. We have, so to speak, at the very least, a sort of intellectual aspect and a sort of emotional aspect, but when we attain Perfect Vision it is neither an intellectual experience nor is it an emotional experience: it partakes of the nature of both, at the same time it transcends both. So one can say, in a manner of speaking, that there is an emotional element, an emotional component, in Perfect Vision, just as one can say that there is an intellectual element in it, an intellectual component. But only with reservations, because in both cases that element or that component doesn't exist in Perfect Vision, so to speak, in a separate form; emotion is not separate from intellect, intellect is not separate from emotion, in Perfect Vision, and both are in any case raised to a higher power.

So that is one thing. Then the other thing is, having attained or having achieved this Perfect

Vision in which both emotion and intellect exist in a higher power, carried to a higher power, and as not differentiated from each other as they are in our ordinary experience - having attained that, we have to speak of it. We can speak of it in terms of our emotion or in terms of our intellect; that is to say, our divided emotion or our divided intellect. So these are two different things; that is to say, the fact that there is, so to speak, an emotional component in our experience of Perfect Vision, and the fact that we can speak of Perfect Vision in terms of emotion.

So how far does that go towards answering your question? Or perhaps you can remind me of the question.

Devamitra: Well, the question was that there seems to be an emotional component in Perfect Vision, therefore could you clarify the distinction between Perfect Vision and Perfect [70] Emotion?

S: Ah. So the position is that once you have attained a measure of Perfect Vision you are, so to speak, partially Enlightened. There is a part of you that has been transformed, but there is a greater part which has not been transformed. So this means that, in the case of emotion, part of your emotion, so to speak, has transformed and is now a component of your Perfect Vision, but part of your emotion, the greater part, has not been transformed. So Perfect Emotion represents the transformation of the remainder of your emotion.

So the relation between Perfect Vision, from an emotional point of view, and Perfect Emotion, is the relation between that part of your emotion which is, so to speak, now a component of Perfect Vision and that greater part of your emotion which is still untransformed or in process of transformation into a component of, of course, a greatly enlarged and expanded Perfect Vision.

So Perfect Vision contains an emotional component; it contains transformed emotion. But Perfect Emotion represents the transformation of the totality of one's emotional life, that is to say whatever is left over untransformed after the experience of the initial Perfect Vision. And the same applies, *pari passu*, to the transformed and the untransformed intellect.

Perhaps it is assumed - I don't know; this is not actually stated - that in the case of Perfect Vision your intellectual life has been completely transformed, and that your emotional life remains to be completely transformed. Perhaps that is assumed. Though, on the other hand, one might say that perhaps it is not strictly or literally possible to have a completely transformed intellectual life, with so much of your emotional life remaining untransformed. But, in any case, you start off with Perfect Vision, and inasmuch as for most people it is self-consciousness, it's rational thought, which is the growing point of the Higher Evolution, one thinks of Perfect Vision initially, perhaps, predominantly in cognitive rather than in emotional terms.

Ratnaprabha: Could this have some connection with the first three fetters, [which are] being broken by a Stream Entrant, being predominantly intellectual while he still has more than one emotional fetter to break?

S: Well, one can certainly speak of the first three fetters as being predominantly intellectual, but what does that [71] mean? Because if one speaks of the view of a self, *sakkaya-ditthi*, as a

predominantly intellectual fetter, it isn't just an idea that you have, it's an attitude - an attitude strongly reinforced by your emotions. So I think we have to be careful - though it is a useful distinction - we have to be careful how we speak in terms of intellectual fetters and emotional fetters.

Any further questions?

Devamitra: Yes, we've got a question from Kennet about renunciation.

Dhirananda: One gets the impression from what is said on page 23 that it's almost as if one shouldn't give up something unless one is already detached from it; there really is no such thing as giving up from a Buddhist point of view. But that doesn't take into considerations ... detached.

S: Well, I see I say here, as a sort of illustration, 'it's not a sacrifice to the adolescent to give up the child's toys.' But it may be a little difficult. One does find people who keep their teddy bears even up into their 20s, and it may be a little difficult just to throw them away. So I'm not actually suggesting that there's no such thing as giving up in the strict sense at all, I'm not suggesting that there's no question of your giving up until you can give up so easily that giving up is no longer giving up. What I'm suggesting is that one shouldn't think of giving up necessarily in terms of a powerful wrench. I think there would be a little bit of difficulty, perhaps; it's a question of striking a balance, following a middle way, not outwardly giving up things to which you remain in fact deeply attached, but on the other hand not waiting indefinitely hoping that you'll just stop being attached to them. Maybe - the illustration that occurs to me is like a loose tooth: the tooth has to come out, it may be hanging by a little bit of flesh, you really want it out, but it is still a bit painful just to tug it and snap that little integument of flesh; but you do it. It's more like that, perhaps.

I don't mean to suggest that when you are grown up you just automatically give up your childish things; because what does 'growing up' mean? It means you gradually detach yourself from those childish things, that often you can see that they are childish even when your feelings are still tied up with them. So sometimes you have to exert a little force just to give up, even though you may feel a certain amount of attachment.

[72]

It does sometimes happen that we just give up things, we just forget all about them, because we really have outgrown them, but I don't think we can count on that always. Sometimes we have to help things along by a reasonable act of will, so to speak, without actually forcing ourselves overmuch.

Devamitra: We have another question on the theme of renunciation from Tony.

Silabhadra: We were discussing non-desire and general renunciation, and we had a small discussion about asceticism. For the purpose of this question, I think I would define asceticism as just keeping your needs to the minimum. And we came to a discussion about communities. In the past, in the FWBO, there's been a term, 'a squat mentality', which is where things are quite bleak. And we were just passing comments and drawing a balance between this asceticism and rather an aestheticism, making your surroundings quite pleasant, at the same time not getting too materialistic about things, overdressing the balance.

S: I wouldn't personally define asceticism as keeping things down to a minimum. I would describe that more as simplicity of life. Asceticism comes from the Greek word which means literally, or which meant originally, 'training'. It was connected originally, I believe, with the training of the athlete, that in order to achieve something you needed to go into training. So asceticism from a spiritual point of view is the sort of training that you go into in order to fit yourself for the attainment of certain spiritual objectives. Certainly simplicity will be involved as part of that. But as for the 'squat mentality', I was wondering in what exactly that consisted. I can remember, in some of the squats in which people lived, there were certain objective limitations; sometimes there was no running water or no electricity, so it's difficult to keep up standards under those conditions. But you referred to the 'squat mentality', and I think the squat mentality consists probably - it may vary from person to person - in eventually getting used to those sort of conditions, getting used to conditions of squalor, almost accepting them or even not noticing them; perhaps not realizing the effect that those conditions are having upon your mind.

The squat mentality also perhaps doesn't bother about cleanliness or hygiene, and doesn't bother about aesthetic [73] considerations, doesn't bother whether surroundings are beautiful. So I wouldn't say that the squat mentality had any element in it of genuine asceticism; I would say that asceticism is a completely different thing from squat mentality. And I'm not sure whether you're contrasting the more aesthetic attitude with the ascetic attitude or with squat mentality. Which is it? Or could it be either?

Silabhadra: I think in terms of asceticism it's just simplicity, then, and just keeping things simple and also keeping an element of caring.

S: So what's the question, actually?

Silabhadra: Well, basically, do you think that people could take more care of their surroundings?

S: 'Could take more care' - or 'should take more care' - of their surroundings. Well, what are their surroundings? Well, first of all there's, I suppose. their own physical body, their clothes, their room, their possessions, the community, the garden, the street. I think probably they could take more care - to keep them clean, to keep them tidy, and if possible to keep them beautiful. I don't mean being fussy or fiddly or having too many little frills and furbelows around in a feminine or pseudo-feminine way. Because also beauty is not incompatible with simplicity. A great deal of Zen art shows that.

But, yes, I think it would be desirable if there was more care about the surroundings, along with these matters. Sometimes it's difficult because our areas overlap with [break in recording] The inside of the LBC is reasonably tidy, clean, and aesthetic. But what about the immediate surroundings? What about the pavement right outside the Centre, right outside Friends Foods? Well, there's dirt and dust and papers and sometimes tin cans and things like that, for which we are not responsible - that is to say, not responsible in the sense that we didn't put them there. But perhaps we have to assume a little extra responsibility, for our own sakes, even though we didn't make the mess, for taking on ourselves the responsibility of clearing it up.

I don't think that we perhaps need make so much of an antithesis between the ascetic and the

aesthetic; I think to some extent they can coincide - as in the case of some art which was inspired by the Zen tradition or Zen school.

[74]

Devamitra: Another question. [Break in recording.] - and it seems that to some extent at least acts of cruelty are committed through lack of imagination, and it just occurred to me that there seems to be quite a strong association between imagination and feeling for other people. And I wondered if you would care to expand upon that - the connection between imagination ...

S: I think you should say that some acts of cruelty are the result of a lack of imagination, as when children are cruel to animals. I wonder, though, whether that is cruelty or can be regarded as cruelty in the strict sense. It's more, it seems, that cruelty consists in the deliberate infliction of pain knowing full well what you are doing, and in a way able to imagine the consequences. It's as though cruelty, in the full sense, at least, is that - it essentially consists in that. It's not that you happen unthinkingly or unwittingly to inflict suffering on others; you wish to inflict suffering, you know that you are inflicting suffering, you delight in inflicting suffering, you gloat over the sufferings of your victim. That is cruelty in the strict sense.

Devamitra: So that cruelty in fact can involve imagination?

S: Well, yes, because you spend your idle hours blissfully imagining all the tortures that you are going to inflict upon your victim. It can involve a great deal of imagination. Sometimes, of course, it is confined to the imagination, as in the case of sadistic fantasies. Sometimes your feeling to be cruel may be so extreme, that it's not able to satisfy itself in any objective manner. It may go far beyond the bounds of practicable possibility.

So I think we probably need to reserve this term cruelty, or *vihimsa*, for the deliberate and wanton - no, deliberate, not wanton; wanton is malice - the deliberate infliction of suffering, of pain on other living beings, knowing full well what you are doing; not not-knowing through lack of imagination. It's a question of terminology.

Devamitra: We just have one more very small question from Gerry.

Bodhiruchi: It's a very small question. Is there any etymological link between *samkalpa*, perfect emotion, and *kalpa*?

S: *Kalpa* in the sense of age or aeon? Not as far as I [75] know, but I can look it up in the dictionary.

Bodhiruchi: That's all right.

S: Well, I shouldn't let it rest there. One needs to ascertain these things, that a dictionary usually clears up for one. There may be a ... connection, but not one that is immediately ... clear.

Devamitra: That was all the questions from my group.

Subhuti: We had first of all a question on the connection between Perfect Emotion and the Bodhicitta.

Ratnaprabha: We were discussing again the twofold nature of the Eightfold Path, the mundane path and the Transcendental Path, and I wondered whether one could draw any connection - not necessarily a traditional connection, but whether one could draw a connection between the Transcendental aspect of Perfect Emotion and the Bodhicitta.

S: Well, it's very clear that the Bodhicitta contains a very strong emotional component. If one tries to work out a scheme of correspondences as between, let's say, the Hinayana path and the Mahayana path, and if one thinks in terms of Perfect Vision being the commencement of the spiritual path in the real sense in the Hinayana - that is to say thinks of Stream Entry as being the starting point of the spiritual path in the real sense in the Hinayana - then corresponding to that, of course, one has the arising of the Bodhicitta as marking the entry into the spiritual life proper from the Mahayana point of view, so therefore the correspondence will be between Perfect Vision and the arising of the Bodhicitta in that case.

None the less, yes, the emotional component in the Bodhicitta would appear to be very strong, because it consists in a will to Enlightenment for the sake or the benefit of all living beings, that is to say out of compassion; compassion is the motivating force. And, of course, Perfect Emotion is predominantly emotional, so one might think that there is some correspondence between those two. No doubt, in that sense, there is; but if one is thinking in terms of that initial entry into the higher spiritual path, then you can see that none the less the correspondence is between Perfect Vision and the Bodhicitta.

[76]

It's not that the Bodhicitta in itself, perhaps, is more emotional than cognitive, but perhaps it is expressed in more emotional, or certainly more other-regarding, terms. That's why it as it were appears as more emotional, or why the emotional component appears to be more prominent.

Gunapala: So you've just said that it's more like Right Vision, that it corresponds more to Right Vision?

S: I'm not saying that the Bodhicitta corresponds more to Perfect Vision, therefore it is as it were more intellectual; I'm not saying anything like that. But in either case you've got an initial point of entry into the higher spiritual path, the Transcendental level; so inasmuch as for the Hinayana it is Perfect Vision and Stream Entry, and for the Mahayana it is the arising of the Bodhicitta, the correspondence must really be between these two, inasmuch as they constitute, within their respective contexts, the first entry upon that higher spiritual path.

Gunapala: Perfect Emotion, then - you mentioned compassion - it must be Perfect Emotion in a way a sort of an emotion which is very different in the way we relate to emotion, so is it more like compassion?

S: Well, it would be more like compassion under certain circumstances, that is to say if it was confronted by pain or suffering; under other circumstances, if confronted by happiness, it would be more like metta or probably more like mudita.

Prasannasiddhi: So you could say Perfect Emotion is - you can speak of the four brahma viharas as being kind of examples?

S: Yes, one could. Especially if one regarded the four brahma viharas as, potentially at least, going beyond the reaches of the mundane, as having access to the Transcendental dimension.

Subhuti: Dealing with the question of the failure to find emotional equivalents with intellectual understanding, we were considering the way in which Buddhism tends to become often quite narrowly intellectual, merely intellectual, ...

Chakkhupala: Perhaps that is more or less the question. [77] The question really is: would you consider there is something inherent in the Dharma, in Buddhism per se, which is the root or cause of this tendency towards intellectualism, dryness, or would you say that these were external factors to which Buddhism seems to be ...?

S: I think quite a number of points arise here. Historically, there is no doubt that what we may call the higher tradition of Buddhism is very very intellectual. If one thinks of the Abhidharma, if one thinks of the Madhyamika, if one thinks even of the Yogachara, this is predominantly, at least as regards its mode of expression, an intellectual tradition, making use of highly conceptual terminology, abstract ideas or what appear as abstract ideas divorced from the background of its spiritual experience. But then why should this have been? Why should what I call the higher tradition of Buddhism have been, or have become, so easily and so quickly so almost one-sidedly intellectual?

There are two things to be said - or there is one thing to be said, or in fact several things to be said here. It is as though, as far as one can see, this let's call it predominantly intellectual tradition - even though it wasn't, at least at the beginning or wasn't very often or wasn't always exclusively intellectual in the modern sense, but certainly its mode of expression was intellectual - this predominantly intellectual tradition seems to have been confined very much to the monasteries and the monks. We do find that among the laity a more emotional approach or attitude to Buddhism was the case.

For instance, it seems that stupa worship arose mainly among the laity, if not exclusively among the laity. They had a very strong devotion to the Buddha and to the monks, and lots of popular festivals and celebrations and decorating with flags and banners and little bells and lamps, and all that sort of thing was the work of the laity. But then one might wonder, why was this? Why should the monks be predominantly intellectual and the laity as it were predominantly emotional? This is itself a question.

It's connected with another point, perhaps: as a developing individual, as a would-be individual, you are concerned very much with emancipating yourself from the group, aren't you? You are responsible for - you want to emancipate yourself from group attitudes, group emotions and all the rest of it. So you have as it were not only to turn your back on the group, you have almost to turn against the group; you have to [78] adopt quite a critical attitude towards the group. But among other things, the group is a great reservoir of emotions - mainly, of course, of collective emotions - and these collective emotions of the group have expressed themselves in all sorts of forms, in all sorts of ways, perhaps in terms of manners, customs, festivals, myths, legends and all the rest of it. But as you cut yourself off from the group you cut yourself off from all these things. So maybe, because you want to be an

individual, you have to cut yourself off from the group, but very often in doing that you also cut yourself off from your main source of emotional nourishment.

The laity, of course, remained laity: they remained more connected with the group than did the monks, and perhaps therefore they remained more in touch with their emotional lives.

So we do definitely see the monks as it were following a predominantly intellectual path and the laity a predominantly emotional path or devotional path. This is apparently one the sources of that great early split in Buddhism between the Theravadins on the one hand and the Mahasanghikas on the other. The Theravadins represents the more exclusively monastic wing, one could say even the more exclusively intellectual wing, of the Buddhist movement, and the Mahasanghikas represented, or included, the more popular wing, the more devotional wing. Not that they were not intellectual; not that they didn't include monks, in fact they were the larger party among the monks, but they were more sympathetic to the aspirations of the lay people. They were less inclined, it seems, to split off the intellectual approach from the emotional approach, the devotional approach. And, of course, the Mahasanghikas were the matrix within which developed the Mahayana.

So the Mahayana, in another way on another level, in a more refined way, tried to heal the breach. It tried to establish contact with the group, so to speak, with group images, myths, symbols, legends. It was more sympathetic to the aspirations of the lay people, it was less exclusively monastic, less exclusively intellectual. And, of course, the Vajrayana carried the process a step further, even. Do you see what was happening?

But the early tradition of Buddhism, especially the early monastic tradition, especially that of the Hinayana - the Theravadins and Sarvastivadins, mainly - was very predominantly [79] intellectual, and that seems to have influenced the Mahayana to some extent in the early days.

So there were all these sort of considerations. I have just thrown out a few hints; I've done no more than that. Perhaps - there's just one more thing - perhaps there's a sort of parallel here with the Greeks; because one finds with Socrates, and often with Plato and Aristotle, to some extent a sort of almost alienation from the group, alienation from the emotional attitude to the group, alienation from the myths and legends of the group; because the rational mind was very much awake, it was very critical, and there were a lot of things it couldn't accept. So it was to some extent the case with Buddhism: there is much in the beliefs and traditions of the group that early Buddhism could not accept. It was concerned, say, with the development of the individual, and the individual's attainment of Enlightenment. But in emancipating the individual from the group to some extent it cut him off from his sources of emotional nourishment, which he had subsequently to find in a better way, on a higher level, in a more refined way, and this is to some extent what the Mahayana, and maybe the Vajrayana to an even greater extent, is all about, or part of what they are about.

Chakkhupala: It seems to be an application in historical terms of what you referred to in terms of the spiritual development of the individual; that initially there seems to be a degree of alienation of the intellect, so that in a sense the individual is pursuing successfully the spiritual path, and he brings his emotions with him ...

S: He will eventually bring his emotions with him.

Chakkhupala: Eventually, yes. So you might say that the Theravada had failed to some extent to do this.

S: Yes, yes. Especially if you identify the Theravada with the Abhidharma. One certainly does find, anyway in the case of people coming into the FWBO, that there is a lot that they can accept intellectually before they can really accept it emotionally, especially, say, by way of puja and so on; or their emotions remain tied up with their early religious involvement.

Tape 4, Side 2

S: I think I have said that a certain amount of initial alienation [80] seems to be indispensable to the development of the spiritual life.

Devamitra: Do you think that's just the case in Western society, or would you say it was generally the case?

S: It seems to have happened in India in the case of Buddhism, and it seems to have happened with the ancient Greeks. Because you break away from the solidarity of the group, the tribe; you break away from your emotional identification with that, it's a wrench. You break away, usually, because your critical intelligence has become awakened and there is a lot that you can't accept. But at the same time you feel, perhaps, emotionally quite strongly bound to the group; intellectually you are emancipated from the group, and in that way there is a split.

Subhuti: We have one more question, but it's not strictly on Perfect Emotion; it's left over from Perfect Vision, so perhaps Vessantara should ask his question [last].

Suvajra: There's one question ... by the question about ... last week hit me. Speaking about reason and emotion. 'And this, you may say, in a sense, is a central problem for most people, at least of the spiritual life: to find emotional equivalents for intellectual understanding'. I was thinking about the split between reason and emotion, how it actually happens, how far back in our life does it happen? What are the reasons for it, and how can we stop the process going on?

S: Well, in a sense, this is what I have been talking about, though in relation to the group, so to speak, rather than in relation to individuals. It does seem inevitable that at some stage in your development - I'm speaking of ordinary human development - your intellect, let us say, using that convenient term, or your rationality, to some extent is split off from your emotionality. Because first of all there's the warmth and security and affection of home, parents; it's all very cosy, very comfortable, very comforting. But then you have to leave that behind, and the process is, in the case of some people, reasonably easy, in the case of others quite difficult; and in the case of others again very difficult. But that split does occur. Perhaps it occurs when we go to school; perhaps it doesn't occur till you go out and start working. But that split does occur.

Suvajra: We were discussing it not just being a problem [81] of the spiritual life, but even just of life, that your emotional life, even your experience, doesn't seem to match up to what information you seem to get from your surroundings - from your parents, from your teachers etc.

S: Can you give examples or be more specific?

Suvajra: Well, maybe the example which you gave when you were talking about alienation: when you speak about - you hate your father; that's your actual experience. Yet the information you get from the outside is that you don't hate father, you can't hate father. So I was wondering is this split encouraged right from the very beginning, right from when you're a baby?

S: Well, it would seem that in the case of the infant, emotions are very, very powerful. Sooner or later those emotions are bound to be frustrated to some extent. As one's rationality develops, one can see or one can understand very well why those emotions should be frustrated. One can see those emotions as quite unreasonable. But none the less one continues to feel them; one continues to feel frustrated. And in that way a clash develops, a conflict develops, between your emotions and your reason.

It does seem to be the result of the conflict between your very strong, very powerful emotional demands, left over, so to speak, from your infancy, and the exigencies of the objective world in which you now have to live. And your rationality has developed to such an extent that you can see that you have to live in this objective world, but your emotions continue to make their totally unreasonable demands. They are unreasonable - or let's say they are irrational; they may not be unreasonable.

Silaratna: What do you think in the context of this about... there's a certain movement among, say, bringing up children, say a child if it can be breast-fed right till say three or four if possible that should happen - what do you think about this, because this seems to be a problem that arises in the context of this - this child it's pulling off this breast, it's going to have to happen inevitably? Do you think it's liable to affect someone, or affect the child?

S: Well, it is said, I believe, by child psychologists that weaning is always a traumatic process for the child because it is deprived of a source of nourishment and comfort and all [82] the rest of it. I really don't have any original inside knowledge about breast-feeding: I have not had very much experience of it. I definitely had a very personal experience of breast-feeding, but it would seem to me that common sense would suggest that a child, an infant, wasn't weaned too early and at the same time not too late. Not too early in the sense that it shouldn't be weaned before it has learned to get a considerable amount of satisfaction from some other source; that is to say maybe some kind of food other than mother's milk. When it hasn't learned to gain considerable satisfaction from other sources it would seem unwise to deprive the child of its main source of satisfaction.

On the other hand, not leave the whole process so late that the child becomes a confirmed breast-sucker, a confirmed suckling, and finds it difficult or is unwilling to shift to any other source of nourishment or pleasure. That could have consequences for later life. No doubt infants differ, even as infants. I think most parents have quite a problem here.

I remember asking one of our women Order members who had quite a number of children, all sons, whether she thought she had ever made any mistakes in bringing them up. So she gave me a quite hopeless look and said, 'Mistakes are inevitable.' And maybe here too it's very difficult to get it just right, however conscientious you may be as a parent. There's always bound to be some traumatic experience at these sort of points, this sort of period. If one is a

parent one just has to do the best one can, ...

Cittapala: Do you think there's any programme which parents could involve themselves in which would develop the emotions of a child better than is the normal practice?

S: I don't think the child is the problem at all, I think the parents are usually the problem. I think if the parents are people of positive emotion, the child will pick that up automatically. I think that it is the parents who have to look at themselves; not assume that everything is all right with them, but it's the wretched infant that needs to ... positive emotions. I think the parents need to make sure first that they are in a positive emotional state, they should make sure of that before they even think of having children. If you see some of the neurotic couples that have children, it's quite unthinkable, it's quite shameful in fact, they're not fit to have them, very often. So if the parents make sure that they are in a state of positive emotionality, I think the baby will be all [83] right. At least it will stand a very good chance.

Suvajra: Those are all the questions that we had.

Subhuti: We've got a last one which goes back to Perfect Vision. This arose out of our study of sunyata.

Surata: We were considering sunyata and the fact that there's very little you can actually usefully say about it. You could almost say it's inappropriate to us as a teaching. And I was wondering in a traditional sense what would actually be appropriate to us, in a sort of formal traditional sense, say, maybe in a monastery or - ?

S: What would be appropriate?

Surata: What would actually be appropriate.

S: What do you mean by appropriate?

Surata: Well, in a sense that we have so much stuff available to us in the form of books, advanced teachings which are obviously quite inappropriate.

S: Well, I have touched upon this before. Under a proper traditional system you probably wouldn't see a book for years. What would be appropriate for you would be that you would sweep the monastery out, and sweep up all the dead leaves ...

\_\_\_: Just like an apprenticeship.

S: Yes. - keep things clean and tidy, and do the washing of the older monks, cook, look after the shrine, learn chanting, learn good manners, learn how to chant correctly. And then, after a few years, perhaps, the meaning of the puja would be explained to you. And, of course, you'd be observing things like mindfulness. If you were unmindful, if you were loud, or shouted, or anything like that, very probably you might be beaten. You see? This would be considered appropriate. And if there were any bright lads among you, they might get taken aside once or twice a week just for half an hour and a few simple doctrines explained to them, and then they would be told to reflect upon them. This is more likely to be what would be considered appropriate under a traditional system.

Bodhiruchi: What's your feeling on this?

[84]

S: Ambivalent! I certainly see the sense, the wisdom of the traditional system, but I have to live in a world where books for which nobody actually is ready are freely available to all - for the price of a cup of tea almost. So one cannot help encountering people who have read all sorts of things which they were not ready to read, and ask all sorts of questions which in a sense they are not ready to ask. So one has to feed them with answers of some kind or other. If they are lucky they will not think that they've understood all about it just because you've answered their questions.

It does seem you can't put the clock back. You have to devise some way of coping with the situation. I know some people entering the Friends who have read quite a lot, they've read quite a lot of books on Buddhism, but they gradually in some cases stop reading; they concentrate more on practice. And maybe, much later on, they go back to their old books or back at least to some of them, those that they still feel are worth going back to.

In the West it does seem - or in the world, perhaps, nowadays, because of general literacy and all that sort of thing, that people have access to material which they are not really able to appreciate. It is a common problem. We get this in India

among our ex-Untouchable Friends. Some of them have just got a smattering of knowledge about Buddhism, and they ask all sorts of questions which are sometimes quite unrealistic.

Ratnaketu: I've got one question which may not be directly related to this but was sparked off by ...'s question. It's a question I've often wondered about. In Peace Is a Fire you (quote?) some of the main religions of the world, and you talk about this sin which comes from that, which begets, I think is the word you use, or the begetting sin.

Voices: Besetting.

Ratnaketu: Besetting sin. Sorry about that. Anyway, you talk about Buddhism and you say that the besetting sin of Buddhism is laziness and indifference, and I wondered was that because of some sort of misunderstanding of the Dharma or why is Buddhism plagued with this - ?

S: Well, when I speak of the besetting sin of Buddhism I am using the word Buddhism rather than the Dharma. There's no question of any sin at all as regards the Dharma. So I use the [85] term Buddhism to mean that whole historical movement to which we attach the term Buddhism, which is made up after all of weak and fallible human beings.

So historically speaking it does seem that Buddhism has been characterized to a great extent by laziness and indifference. Buddhists should have done far more for the propagation of the Dharma. When you think what the Christian missionaries have done - well, the Buddhists could have done at least half as well as that in recent centuries at least. They haven't done even a hundredth as well, or even a thousandth as well as that. When you consider, for instance all these ex-Untouchables in India who have become Buddhists, so who is it that's really doing anything to help them - not people from Thailand or Ceylon or Tibet, they haven't got a clue. Just a small handful of Buddhists from England, New Zealand and so on. This is very astonishing. It's as though Buddhists in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, and other ...

they don't care what's going on in India. They don't really care about spreading the Dharma, in fact, in the West. They've got the facilities, they've got the money, they've got the support, but who bothers, who cares? A very few bhikkhus and lamas and others - they do whatever they can. Very, very much more could be done, but they're not bothered.

Ratnaketu: Why is that? Is there something about Buddhism that, you know, why does the average Christian ... interest?

S: I don't know. Well, the Christian has got a sort of neurotic urgency; and also, of course, the expanding missionary movement provided jobs for certain members of the middle and upper classes, you could say that. It was all part of colonialism. In the past, yes, Buddhism did go from India all over Asia, so that involves a certain amount, or great amount, of what we may call missionary activity, and at one stage the Chinese were very active taking Buddhism to Japan. The Tibetans were very active taking it to Mongolia, all over the Himalayan region. But in modern times, in the last 500, 600, 700 years, Buddhists seem to have been virtually completely inactive. When the world started being opened up, when one continent started being opened up to another, when the West came in contact with the East, think of the enormous missionary enterprise launched by some of the Christian powers - by the Spaniards, by the Portuguese, by the Dutch, by the French, and then rather half-heartedly by the British. And what did the Buddhists do? Were there any corresponding missions brought to [86] the West? No; no; not until the very end of the last century and the beginning of this century. By which time Christian missions were firmly established all over the world, practically.

So why? It certainly isn't due to any lack of emphasis on virya or spreading the Dharma on the part of Buddhism itself, on the part of the Dharma; certainly not on account of any lack of an example shown by the Buddha. It seems almost a sort of failure of nerve, a failure of will, in these Buddhist countries. No doubt there are many reasons why, but I can't say that they are very obvious or evident to me.

Ratnaketu: Could it be that people have used the Dharma to the extent of becoming happy and then just sat back with that?

S: There is some truth in that. I think that is probably an element in it. I remember talking to a Thai bhikkhu and saying, 'Why don't you Thai bhikkhus do more for propagating the Dharma in India and other countries?' And the reply he gave me was: 'We are very happy in our own country.'

I sometimes wonder about the Tibetans, because, after all, they follow the Mahayana, the Vajrayana; they profess the Bodhisattva Ideal. But until they were turned out of Tibet as refugees, did they ever think of propagating the Dharma in the West? No, they never gave it a thought. So that seems a bit strange to me. They were very happy in their own country.

Richard Clayton: Could it be something to do with the cultural tradition - that the Westerners had in history a tendency of being more ...

\_\_\_: Expansive?

\_\_\_: Outward-going?

Richard: Exploitive, I should think really, in terms of trying to take over new lands for I suppose socio-economic reasons, that sort of thing.

S: But because the Westerners were exploitive, there's no reason why Eastern Buddhists should not be spiritually expansive, especially when their teaching encourages this; especially in the Mahayana form, one might say, with the Bodhisattva Ideal - of the Bodhisattva wanting to deliver all [87] beings, to bring the Dharma to all beings. One would have thought that as soon as they heard of these Western countries, some bhikkhus at least would have at once set sail to bring the Dharma to those countries; but they didn't, not one. That really seems extraordinary.

Devamitra: You said that nothing really happened until the beginning of this century, but then that was really only one person, wasn't it - Dharmapala?

S: Yes, Dharmapala.

Devamitra: - and subsequently, as far as I am aware of the Buddhist movement throughout the world, I don't know of anybody else other than yourself who has ...

S: Well, there have been others. There was Tai Chu(?), the famous Chinese abbot who did tour round the world in the 1920s and gave lectures - certainly gave lectures in Paris, he might have given in London too, through an interpreter. There were a few people like that. But that doesn't represent any general concerted effort on the part of the Buddhist communities in the East to introduce Buddhism to the West. After all, in the 1940s and 1950s, who was the most prominent Buddhist figure in Britain? It was Christmas Humphreys. It wasn't anybody who came from the East to bring Buddhism to Britain. People did come, but they also went, usually rather quickly.

Devamitra: I was quite struck by something Walpola Rahula said on an occasion when I really did put my foot in it in a big way at a public meeting. He just made a comment that he - I think he had been talking with Christian missionaries about converted Christians and born Christians, and he made the point that they had agreed among themselves that the Christian missionaries had the greatest trouble with Christian converts, and likewise Buddhist monks had the greatest difficulty with Buddhist converts rather than with so-called born Buddhists.

S: Difficulty in what sense? [As a bad] influence]?

Devamitra: Yes, I was being pointed to as a bad example in this respect. But I was just quite struck that he said that, because it seemed to betray a really abysmal attitude.

S: I was recently reading an article by the same Walpola [88] Rahula, and he was talking about the Vinaya, the monastic law, so to speak. And in the course of that article he made the point that actually, in the course of history even in Ceylon, in practice the Vinaya had been changed; alterations had been made. But it was never made official. It was always a question of just finding loopholes and observing the letter of the Vinaya while breaking the spirit. And he said in his view this was perfectly correct, because the Vinaya was a purely legal system and it should be dealt with in a purely legal manner. So this seemed extraordinary, that he could say this - that the Vinaya was a purely legal system and therefore you could treat it in a purely legal manner. In other words, if the Buddha had said some things or laid some things

down, you mustn't abrogate them, you mustn't change them officially because the Buddha had laid them down; but it was up to you to find ways round them so that you could continue to observe the letter but not the spirit; and this is perfectly all right, he says. He really believes that.

Silaratna: So this could be perhaps the reason why some of those bhikkhus didn't make an effort to go out to the West, because they could take certain elements of the Vinaya and say 'We can't handle money', for example, 'We can't travel, we can't become involved with ... '

S: There is something in that so far as the Theravadins are concerned, yes. But again it shouldn't apply to the Mahayanists.

Ratnaketu: Maybe it was because the monks were predominantly intellectual...

S: But again, could one say that, say, Tibetan monks were predominantly intellectual? Were they all? What ... some kind of art(?) ...people in the West who didn't know anything about the Dharma?

Subhuti: To some extent they seem to have been quite confused by meeting a higher religion. I felt that with Walpola Rahula's response - that he felt that in a way the world had been carved up already and it was a bit sort of indecent to go poaching each other's territory and that everybody ought to remain where they are, basically. And the same sort of attitude is inherent in some of the Tibetans' approach. By and large, they think that one should be quite respectful towards Christianity. None of them seem to have really analysed it and come to grips with it.

[89]

S: Even intellectually, not to speak of spiritually.

Subhuti: So I think they find themselves in quite a confused position.

S: Well, I've found this attitude prevailing on a committee that I ... was a member of for a few years in London. I think I have spoken about it before. It was a committee that was somewhat connected with education and the teaching of religion in schools, and there were various representatives. I was a Buddhist representative; I think I was the only one. There was a Hindu representative; there were Catholic representatives, there was a Jewish representative, a Sikh representative, and so on. But I couldn't help noticing that though they all followed different religions, their attitude was the same: they all had this attitude of 'You keep your hands off my flock and I'll keep my hands off your flock', and they were all getting together, not to say ganging up together, to make sure that all their respective flocks remained under their respective control.

For instance - to give an example - the Catholics would agree that, say, Jewish boys and girls should definitely be under the control of the Jewish rabbi and be educated by him, and they shouldn't be exposed to certain influences; and in the same way the Hindu representative would strongly agree that the Muslim boys and girls should be kept under the influence of their particular shepherd. It was almost like a sort of common trade union, as though they'd all gone to the same trade union. And they didn't want any of their fee-paying members to be allowed to escape. They all realized that they were in the same boat; this was basically what it

was. I was the only one who questioned this, apart from one Catholic representative who did have some doubts about forcing for instance Muslim girls to comply with orthodox Muslim customs, etc. etc., in Britain.

So I think it's the same here: that your ecumenical get-together consists in a gentlemen's agreement that you will just not poach on one another's territory. You haven't really carried out any intellectual or spiritual agreement, but you have a vested interest in maintaining your ecclesiastical position, and if someone of another religion promises not to interfere with or undermine that, you will respect his position vis-a-vis his particular flock. So, yes, the world is sort of carved up between you.

[90]

Subhuti: Buddhism has never really encountered any universal religion before, except to be rolled back from it.

S: In the case of Islam.

\_\_\_: Islam.

S: It's really noticeable how weak Buddhism is in the East when confronted by militant Islam and militant communism and militant Christianity. I went into this in a lecture in India for the ex-Untouchables, and I just pointed out how Buddhism had been organizationally on the defensive for the last thousand years, almost. First of all it was smashed by Islam, then it was badly knocked about by Christianity, then it was very savagely bashed by communism. And the Buddhists themselves seem to have stood up to these things very, very poorly, I must say. I don't say the Dharma stands up poorly, but Buddhists have stood up very poorly to these things. They seem to have made no real attempt to grapple at all, either intellectually or practically; that's my impression. So what have we got to make of this?

Bodhiruchi: Could you not say that, say, the Christians and the Hindus and the Jews etc., their religions have passed very much into the secular? So that territory is very important. That would be a reason for their actions being very much associated with a particular genetic stock.

S: Well, perhaps it is that in the case of the West, and Western Christian missionaries, the missionary call corresponded or coincided with the territorial imperative, if you see what I mean.

Devamitra: I don't understand that at all.

S: Well, what did Jesus say? - 'Go forth and convert the earth.' And on the other hand, there was the government saying, 'Go on, boys, go and colonise the earth.' These two just fitted together quite nicely, quite neatly.

Devamitra: It strikes me that a lot of the so-called missionary activity is just in fact the spreading of materialism - that ... up against.

S: Well, yes, because by the time at least Protestantism got to the East it was so heavily secularized that it in fact spread secular values rather than Christian values.

[91]

Ratnaketu: It asks the question whether Christian religions are really religions, and what are they spreading? - their means of spreading their religion in other countries.

S: All the Christian churches, certainly all the main ones, were well organized, and sort of adapted to expansion, they think in terms of expansion. But on the other hand, we know that - what really puzzles me is why organized Buddhism, with the very strong ethical idealism of especially the Mahayana behind it, could not spread more. Well, all right, maybe there was no secular force on the back of which they could ride, but they didn't really need that.

Ratnaketu: Even when it was in their own interests, for instance, in Tibet and China. The Tibetans spread the Dharma effectively to China; the Tibetans ... Tibet.

S: Well, there was a time when a certain amount of propagation of the Dharma did go on from Tibet into China, especially during the Mongol dynasty, but even so the Tibetans could have done more, but they seem not to have been interested. The idea, even, of spreading Buddhism in the West as soon as they knew about the West - that's not so [many] years ago - seems not to have occurred to them. Not that they considered it and rejected it. I am not counting the Philosophical Masters, who were presumably or allegedly located in Tibet; maybe they did their bit, but that was on another level.

\_\_\_: Maybe they'll just have to leave it up to the British Empire again - the British Empire of Buddhism - British Buddhist missionaries...

S: It's a bit late in the day I'm afraid for that. The sun has already set on the British Empire; they would have to do it some other way.

But this is something that has really given me cause for thought. It's almost as though - sometimes I think that Buddhism, in a way, went to some of the Eastern Buddhist countries prematurely, that they weren't ready for it. It took along with it a lot of Indian culture, which was appropriated, but that the higher thought of Buddhism, the ideals of Buddhism, in some parts of the East have never really been understood; that the East was only superficially (Buddha-ized?), let us say. Sometimes this is what I think.

[92]

Bodhiruchi: Are there any lessons we can learn from this?

S: I'm sure there are hundreds of lessons.

\_\_\_: But any that come to your mind?

S: Well, maybe not one more than any others. Maybe the overall lesson is that a religion, so to speak - to use that term - can very easily lose its original impetus, can very easily settle down, can very easily ossify, within a couple of generations; even after having got off to a really magnificent start; not just a religion in the big sense, but any sort of spiritual movement. Degeneration can very easily set in. Which doesn't mean that people suddenly become violently rigid; they just become slothful and lazy, and don't bother any more, just get caught up in worldly life.

Anyway, any further questions ... ?

Amoghachitta: I was just thinking in that connection of - you could ...the development of some more monastic as it were tradition within the Friends, perhaps ...

S: When you say 'monastic', what do you mean?

Amoghachitta: I do mean it not so much in the historical sense, but more in the sense that ... that people are 100% practising, as it were, less worldly than communities.

S: Well, first, one has plenty of monasticism in the East, but what is real monasticism? It means wholehearted dedication to 100% practice. One has a lot of very easy-going monasticism in the East. But certainly a spiritual movement needs a hard, sharp cutting edge if it is going to get anywhere ..., even. I personally think that, in the case of the FWBO, the crucial factor perhaps in its eventual survival will be the men's communities. Perhaps that's too big a subject to go into now. I think of them as at least semi-monastic, with a reasonable amount of asceticism - and a reasonable amount of aestheticism, too, because if there isn't a reasonable amount of aestheticism around, perhaps one's feelings will suffer, one's feelings will dry up, unless one's feelings provide one with a considerable amount of motivation for leading the spiritual life.

So perhaps we should come full circle in that way, ...

[93]

[End of Tape and End of Session]

Day 5 Tape 5, Side 1

Devamitra: We've been covering slightly different ground in different groups, but all the questions should arise out of having considered the negative aspects or the negative expressions of positive emotion and the positive expressions would be dana and the brahma viharas. That's about as far as we've got in the different groups.

The first question arises out of relating the negative expressions of positive emotion to the positive ...

S: I'm not sure what you mean by 'negative expressions of positive emotion'.

Devamitra: Well, non-hatred, non-cruelty, non-greed.

S: Grammatically negative?

Devamitra: Yes...

Dhirananda: In the discussion we could see how closely related non-greed was to dana and non-hatred to love and to metta, but when it came to non-cruelty in relation to compassion it seems a little bit woolly somehow. The question is whether the word ahimsa implies more than what cruelty at first suggests - whether there is more to this.

S: I think we have to be careful not to think that there's a real distinction between the grammatically negative and grammatically positive form of the word for a positive emotion. I think I have mentioned this before. I think I have pointed out that it seems that for the ancient Indians in the Buddha's time, and certainly for those using that particular language, [94] the grammatically negative had the force of the grammatically positive, so that there wasn't as it were two positive emotions, one a rather weak one which was merely the absence of the corresponding negative emotion, and another which was truly positive. That seems not to have been the case. It is as though for the users of the Pali language, let's say for the point of argument the grammatically negative term had all the force of what we would regard as a positive term. For instance, I give the example that in English we have the word 'immortal'. Keats says 'Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird.' For us 'immortal' has a definitely positive connotation; we speak of, say, personal immortality. It isn't simply the absence of death, it conveys far more than that. So you can say that, even though grammatically negative, the term 'immortal' has a quite positive emotional connotation, or at least a positive connotation. So it's much the same in Pali. For instance, there is the expression *anatta*, the deathless for Nirvana. That has a completely positive connotation, it is not merely the absence of death. Similarly with these other words, like *alobha*; this seemed to have, for people using that term originally, a positive connotation. Similarly for *adosa*, similarly for *amoha*.

So therefore I think we don't need to ask ourselves too much what is the difference between that negative form of the positive emotion - that is, grammatically negative - and the positive form. For the ancient Buddhists it's as though that sort of difference didn't exist.

Devamitra: I would have thought there was a distinction between non-hatred, for example, and *metta*, on the basis that, for instance, somebody could behave in a way which would normally provoke a reaction of hatred, and you could respond to that as it were just in a self-contained way to give you the experience of non-hatred; or you could respond in an even higher way, with *metta*.

S: There is no doubt there is that possibility, but none the less the grammatically negative term, even for *metta* - *avera* - seems to have the full force of the positive term itself; as in that verse in the *Dhammapada*: *na hi verena verani sammant' idha kudacanam*. You can translate it: 'Never does hatred cease by hatred; hatred ceases only by non-hatred.' But the *averani*, non-hatred, has the full force of *metta* or love.

[95]

Devamitra: Is there not, then, any distinction between the intensities of positive emotion? Because that's what I understood.

S: Well, no doubt there are differences of degree, of intensity, within a positive emotion, there is no doubt about that. But I would not say that there is in the mind of the person using those original words a degree of positivity corresponding to the grammatically negative and positive forms of the word. For instance, take that famous word *ahimsa*, which was used in modern India, in modern times, by Mahatma Gandhi. For people using that term in India even today it has a positive connotation; they don't think simply in terms of the absence of violence. So it's as though the grammatically negative term does not have a connotation of mere privation of the emotionally negative quality; it conveys the strong suggestion, at least, of the presence of the positive emotional quality itself. That's not to say that there are not degrees of emotion.

From our point of view, this is not very satisfactory; it is what we would pick up as an excessive use of grammatically negative terms. I think they are not to be translated into English by grammatically negative English forms of speech. I think that would convey a quite misleading impression.

Devamitra: I think there was a question from Subhuti's group about the so-called negative expressions of positive emotion.

Subhuti: We wondered why those three had been chosen in particular, because the distinction particularly between non-hatred and non-cruelty didn't seem that clear. It's certainly not the same sort of distinction - difference - as there is between the first and second, renunciation ...

S: Well, these are the traditional terms, so if there seems to be a need for there to be a sufficient degree of difference to account for the fact that both are used, I suppose one has to discover a sufficient degree of difference if it isn't immediately obvious.

Subhuti: I suppose perhaps what it is is not clear. It seems that non-cruelty is an extension of non-hatred - or rather cruelty is an extension of hatred; cruelty is hatred taken to a slightly more extreme degree.

[96]

S: Yes, for instance - well, *himsa*, of course, is, one could say, definitely physical, whereas hatred is not necessarily so. Hatred may find expression in physical action, but not necessarily so, whereas *himsa* is essentially a matter of overt action. So *vihimsa* is extremely violent action, and *avihimsa* is - well, the negative, so that is the abstention from extremely violent action of, one might say, a mental state, a positive mental state, a positive emotional state, which was so positive that any suggestion of any kind of violence or cruelty whatever was completely precluded, therefore a very highly positive state indeed; one which we could render, perhaps, in English as compassion.

[Discussion on the spellings in the text they are using of *ahimsa*, *nekkhama*, *avyapada*.]

Subhuti: Are these part of the classical definition of Perfect Emotion?

S: Yes, these are always given. What we translate as Perfect Emotion is always explained in terms of these three in the Pali tradition, in the Theravada tradition; I suspect in the continuing Sarvastivadin and ... tradition also.

Devamitra: Shall we move on to the next question? We have two questions on *dana*, the first from Aryamitra.

Aryamitra: Yes, Bhante. We were talking about *dana*, and a question occurred to me concerning the precept 'With open-handed generosity, I purify my body.' And I was wondering to what extent this is to be taken literally; what was meant by giving, if you like - by open-handed generosity one purifies one's body. Is that to be taken literally?

S: Well, I think if one takes 'body' in the ordinary sense, clearly there is no question of the body being purified in a moral sense, because it isn't a moral entity. It only becomes a moral entity to the extent that it is a moral instrument, so essentially it is the mind that is purified, if

one takes the word 'purified' in the strict sense. None the less, one regards body, speech and mind in Buddhism as a sort of indissoluble unity, and therefore one can speak in terms of purification of speech as well as of purification of body. It suggests that your body is never merely body and your speech is never merely speech. This connects up, perhaps, with [97] what I was saying the other day about animality and humanity: it's not a sort of detachable part. Your body is always body informed with mind, just as your speech is always speech informed with mind. So to the extent that body is body informed with mind, your body can be purified, the same with speech. But if one dissociates body completely from mind, regarding it as something as it were autonomous or independent, then there is no question of purification of body.

One also has, of course, the fact that tradition itself does speak in terms of purification of body, speech and mind, so if that isn't to be regarded just as a mere convention without significance it would seem to suggest, as I've said, that body, speech and mind are an indissoluble unity. In other words, the body can be not merely clean but even pure.

Devamitra: The second question is from ...

Bodhiruchi: This is not so much a question as a thinking out loud, and asking you to say something on it. It seems to me with dana that there are two important aspects. One is the particular emotional connection you have with the object that you are giving of the time or you are giving of the thought. Another is the appreciation of the quality of that particular thing you are giving. There is some crossover, some - they seem quite linked in some ways. Could you - ?

S: What do you mean by 'quality' of the object?

Bodhiruchi: Say, for example, you feel the highest quality of the Dharma, you really appreciate its quality: that's what I mean.

S: So you are asking whether that is similar to what?

Bodhiruchi: I'm saying that there's an emotion - say you have something you are quite attached to and it's quite good to give it away. And also there's the other side, you feel that it's something that's got great quality, it's quite precious in itself, and to give that away. I was wondering - it's ... could you say something ... ?

S: Well, perhaps there is a distinction to be made between giving and giving away. You give the Dharma but you don't give away the Dharma. So, however precious you regard it as being, the fact that you give it doesn't mean that you are depriving [98] yourself of its benefits, because it remains with you even when you've given it. You merely give it, you don't give it away. In fact, by giving it you may increase whatever of it you have yourself.

: It's generated.

Devamitra: We have one more question from the group. Ratnaketu on karuna.

Ratnaketu: I was thinking that in Buddhism there is wisdom and karuna. They are almost equated, especially in the way Hui Neng talks about it, wisdom and karuna, compassion,

mahakaruna.

S: ... equated?

Ratnaketu: Well, you don't have one without the other. Anyway, I was thinking about the way we also think of quite ordinary compassion, not mahakaruna but just karuna, as a response of metta to suffering in the world, and I was thinking that metta is a sort of debased emotion. I was thinking that if you were talking about having the emotional equivalent of wisdom, why was karuna chosen rather than metta? Why wasn't it metta that was spoken of as mahametta?

S: Well, the expression mahamaitri is used; sometimes both expressions are used in terms of the Buddha's or the Bodhisattva's mahamaitri and mahakaruna; this is a quite common expression. But none the less, karuna or mahakaruna is used in conjunction with wisdom much more frequently than maitri or mahamaitri is used, so presumably there is a reason for that. The reason seems to be that in relation to us the Buddha's mahamaitri cannot but appear or be perceived as or be experienced as mahakaruna, inasmuch as, from the Buddha's point of view, from the Buddha's standpoint, all other living beings are suffering. So if he regards other living beings, inevitably the mahamaitri is so to speak instantaneously transformed into karuna inasmuch as they are suffering, from his point of view. From the point of view of sentient beings, his karuna is what is immediately relevant.

So one speaks of Avalokiteshvara as, say, the embodiment of karuna because of his relationship with living beings. One could say that Avalokiteshvara is the embodiment of mahamaitri - that would be correct. But living beings might say that [99] Avalokiteshvara is the embodiment of mahamaitri - well, so what? It's not the maitri that we want, it's the karuna; but the maitri does become, as I said, instantaneously the karuna, when it comes into contact with suffering living beings. So one might say that essentially it is mahamaitri that is in conjunction with the mahaprajna, but so to speak effectively, so far as we are concerned, it is a question of mahakaruna, inasmuch as that is the way in which the mahamaitri affects us. It is the form, so to speak, that the mahamaitri takes in relation to us. We don't experience the Buddha's maitri; that is to be experienced only by other Buddhas; we experience the Buddha's karuna, which is of course a transformation of his maitri.

Vessantara: Our group has been [considering] dana and the four brahma viharas, and we have four questions which all relate to the brahma viharas.

Amoghavajra: We were talking about the four brahma viharas and it came up that they weren't originally Buddhistic terms; and I wondered what was the difference between the use of the Buddhistic terms and the non-Buddhistic terms.

S: You are asking about the term brahma vihara as such, or the term brahma?

Amoghavajra: Brahma viharas.

S: As far as we know, the term brahma vihara is exclusively Buddhist. To the best of my knowledge, there is no reference to the four brahma viharas in pre-Buddhist Indian literature. But the word brahma is, of course, very, very common; it is frequently (...) in pre-Buddhist Indian literature. In Buddhist canonical literature, in Pali texts, for instance, brahma signifies a deva of very high rank indeed. There are many different kinds of brahma, incidentally. The

brahma devas correspond objectively to the arupalokas, broadly speaking.

But having said that, I would say something else, which is that in the Pali scriptures, wherever the Buddha speaks about the brahma viharas - or rather, where he speaks about the attainment of the brahmaloka - he frequently represents ancient brahmins as having attained that state; and he sometimes criticizes the present-day brahmins, that is to say the brahmins of his day, for not having attained that state in the way that their forefathers did. So it would seem that, so far as the [100] Buddha was concerned, there was some brahma vihara before his day, even though there is no reference to the brahma viharas as such in those terms in the pre-Buddhist Indian literature.

This is bound up with all sorts of questions that I have gone into in the course of the last year. It is bound up with the question of the nature of the ultimate goal in Buddhism, or the terms for that. But there are contexts in which the Buddha uses the term 'brahma' rather than the term 'Dharma'; for instance, one has got brahmachari as well as dharmachari; one has got brahmayana, one has got brahmachaksu, that is the brahma wheel; one has got brahmayana. One has got all these terms incorporating the word brahma, parallel to similar terms incorporating the word dharma. This suggests that perhaps early in his career the Buddha used this word brahma rather more; that is a word perhaps that he carried over from existing usage. The word dharma, perhaps came to be used more later on, more as, say, a distinctively Buddhist development.

But it does seem, as I said, that even though we don't encounter the expression brahma vihara in pre-Buddhist Indian literature, the Buddha did regard the brahmins of old as having attained to the brahmaloka by, apparently, the practice of the brahma viharas.

Vessantara: ...I gained the impression that they were mentioned in the book as - in Conze's Buddhist Thought in India he says 'They are not specifically Buddhistic' - this is talking about the brahma viharas - 'they occur also in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, and may have been borrowed from other ancient religious systems.'

S: Well, he is referring here to some speculations by Mrs Rhys Davids. They are no more than speculations. It is true that the brahma viharas are referred to by Patanjali in his Yogasastra; he doesn't use the expression 'brahma viharas', but he simply mentions metta or maitri, mudita, karuna and upeksa. It is generally regarded as a post-Buddhistic work, strongly influenced by Buddhism. But in any case the expression brahma vihara is not used in the text. And Mrs Rhys Davids has the view that the brahma viharas were not actually taught by the Buddha; she has the view that they were introduced into Buddhism, or into the circle of the Buddha's followers, by some unknown spiritual genius. Well, the Pali texts, at least on the face of it, clearly refer to the Buddha as at least sponsoring the brahma viharas, speaking in terms of the four viharas.

[101]

It could be that one of his brighter disciples introduced that particular formulation, but I don't think we can regard that as definitely established, by any means. In fact, the more I have personally looked into things, the more it seems to me likely that the Buddha himself spoke in, let's say, brahma terms more than he spoke originally in dharma terms.

Amoghavajra: It is possible in a Buddhist context to follow a path to Enlightenment through

the four brahma viharas. Is it possible also, then, for us ... to get to the state of Enlightenment through the - ?

S: The Buddha, as I said, certainly does represent, in the brahmins and others, all the sages of old prior to his own dispensation, as attaining to the brahmaloka. Now this raises the question of whether the brahmaloka is equivalent to Nirvana or not. In later Buddhist thought - 'later' including perhaps the later stages of the Buddha's own career, terminologically speaking - it would seem that the brahmalokas were regarded as equivalent to the arupadhyanalokas or arupaloka worlds; so that would make them definitely inferior to Nirvana. So that even though you might have attained the brahmaloka you would not necessarily therefore have attained the state of Nirvana.

But there does seem to me a possibility, looking at the literature, that originally 'brahmaloka' was used, perhaps it's not putting it too strongly to say, even as a sort of term for the Goal itself. But later on the expression brahmaloka, along with the word brahma generally, was sort of degraded and Nirvana took over in terms of the Goal, and brahmaloka came to refer to something less than that.

Now this all ties up with something else, which I can't really go into now, but I can just indicate certain lines of thinking. We all know that the Buddha's major, the Buddha's central teaching, conceptually speaking or speaking philosophically, was the pratitya samutpada. That's generally accepted. I think it's also accepted now that the pratitya samutpada is embodied not only in the more well-known twelve nidanas but also in that other set of what I have called the positive nidanas, which constitute the Spiral as distinct from the Round. And it is also well known and generally accepted that the crucial point on the Spiral is what we call the Point of No Return, the point of Stream Entry. This is all as it were commonly agreed ground.

[102]

Looking at the Pali texts, it does seem that in the early days, so to speak, the Buddha often spoke in terms of 'going upstream', and spoke of 'one who had gone upstream'. This seems to correspond to the Stream Entrant of the somewhat later nomenclature or terminology. So once you had passed that Point of No Return, once you had become a Stream Entrant, once you had 'gone upstream', what happened was that you were involved with a series of progressively more creative states, let us say.

Now the possibility arises that one can regard these states as having a definite termination, or one can not regard them as having a definite termination. It would seem to me that, in the very early days of Buddhism, there was not much concern with a definite termination. Once you had entered the Stream you were involved with what I have called an irreversibly creative process, which continued indefinitely. There was no need to think of it actually terminating somewhere. In a way, to think of it as terminating somewhere would involve regarding it in a sort of self-contradictory manner. But none the less, it seemed that as time went on the Buddha's followers at least started regarding this process as having a definite termination, and this came to be thought of as arhantship, Nirvana, and so on. But in those earlier days it would seem very likely that the brahmalokas referred to just states further on: not furthest states, but further states. But when the conception of a 'furthest' state came to be established, clearly the furthest state was established above and beyond the further states, though strictly speaking there are only further states.

So it is perhaps that originally, when there was still this conception simply of further states rather than a furthest state, the term brahmaloka was more in vogue, more in usage. I can only give a very rough sketch, but ... these lines of thought.

Vessantara: If the brahmalokas became synonyms for the arupadhyanas, then presumably seen in that way they weren't the further states which had been superseded by the furthest state, they were actually this side of Stream Entry, were they not?

S: Well, there is this whole question of the arupadhyanas, which is a quite difficult one in a way. It sometimes means - well, there are various questions. For instance, one can't refer to too many texts, but for instance it is believed by some scholars that the series of four arupadhyanas was added on to the series of four rupadhyanas only [103] at a later stage. For instance, (...) in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta that the Buddha attained Nirvana by ascending to the rupaloka, then to the arupaloka, or arupadhyana rather, coming down to the rupaloka, and then attaining Nirvana from the rupaloka. Now according to some scholars this reflects two things: first of all, there was an ancient tradition that the Buddha attained parinirvana from the rupaloka, which meant that the rupaloka was highest. That had to be combined with this later fact that the arupadhyanas had been added on to the series of the rupadhyanas. So they had to sort of take the Buddha all the way through the eight dhyanas but bring him down to the fourth rupadhyana to attain Nirvana from there because there was that ancient tradition.

So this in a way points to the possibility that originally the arupadhyanas were the other side of Stream Entry; but actually the arupadhyanas represent states or stages of Insight, not of merely mundane dhyanic experience. And, of course, if they correspond to brahmalokas, this would also suggest that the brahmalokas are the other side of Stream Entry, not this side as is the standard and as it were classical teaching.

But be that as it may, it is mainly a matter of terminology. There is no doubt that there is such a thing as a Point of No Return, and there are states and stages on the other side of the Point of No Return which proceed or continue indefinitely, without there being a fixed, definitive, ultimate Goal in the literal sense. That is the main point, however one shifts around one's terminology.

There is another point also which I would mention - I have mentioned it before. There is the Mahagovinda Sutta. In this Mahagovinda Sutta someone goes into retreat and he practises, I think it's the karunabhavana, the karuna brahma vihara. At the end of the retreat, the Brahma Sinatsumara appears before him, the brahma of eternal youth, and Mahagovinda asks a question. The question is: (in Pali; translates word by word). 'How may a mortal man attain the immortal brahmaloka?' Now amata is a synonym for Nirvana throughout the Pali texts; so if the brahmaloka is amata, it would seem that the brahmaloka is being regarded as the equivalent of Nirvana, i.e. as a Transcendental state, not as a mundane state corresponding to a mundane dhyana. There are little hints, little indications of this sort.

Ratnaprabha: In the Mahavastu, which was reading for my talk, it mentions the sudhava devas living in a [104] brahmaloka which is at the pinnacle of, I think, the rupaloka.

S: Yes, the sudhavasas are regarded in all the different Buddhist traditions as being situated, so to speak, at the summit of the rupaloka.

Ratnaprabha: This in the notes at least is actually called a brahmaloka. Is that actually correct? Are all the brahmalokas in the arupa?

S: Well, perhaps it's question of what one means by the summit of the rupa, because the fact that they are anagamis means that it cannot be a purely mundane state. Because to be an anagami, a Non-Returner, is one of the aryapudgalas.

Ratnaprabha: So all the inhabitants of a sudhavaśa... are in fact non-Returners: there are two classes of inhabitants, one of them devas and the other one Non-Returners.

S: It would seem - I don't know how much consistency there is in the text, but it would seem - that the sudhavaśa devalokas are realms inhabited exclusively by anagamis, who have as it were deva-like forms. This is what I have gathered from various sources. I won't be too sure about this, because it could be that some texts refer to sudhavaśa devas who are not in fact anagamis. But I don't remember encountering any such references so far.

So in this way the sudhavaśa devaloka of the Hinayana becomes very similar to the Sukhavati of the Mahayana: a very important, even striking, point of resemblance or parallel between them.

Tape 5, Side 2

But, as I have said, matters or questions of terminology apart, it is just important to get one's overall picture clearly into view: that is to say, the Spiral with the Point of No Return - the great crucial turning point. Whether you speak of the subsequently arising states as the brahmalokas or anything else, it doesn't really matter, you just have to get clearly in mind this idea of an infinitely continuing, irreversible creative process after the Point of No Return.

Cittapala: That's where it seems to emphasize the importance of really being able to understand what the [105] experience of going beyond the Point of No Return would be like in any case. It's rather as if there's a scholastic tendency to try and pigeonhole.

S: Right. It would seem, as I said, that in the very early days of Buddhism, as reflected in some of the Pali texts, there was just the conception of someone having 'gone upstream', past the Point of No Return. It's only subsequently that there came into existence, it seems, a subdivision into sotapanna and sakadagami, anagami, arhant and so on. That does seem very much of a later elaboration.

Aryamitra: So the idea of going upstream was equivalent to Enlightenment, or was it - if it was ...?

S: This raises the question of what does one mean by Enlightenment? - because if there is no fixed terminal point to that irreversibly creative process on the other side of the Point of No Return, then there is no such thing as Enlightenment in the sense of the attainment or realization of that fixed point. Enlightenment therefore, begins, in a manner of speaking, from the Point of No Return, but it is an Enlightenment which is continually expanding and increasing, and never stops expanding and increasing. So therefore it is as though the Point of No Return, Stream Entry, becomes more and more crucial; more and more determinative.

Aryamitra: Do you think that it could have been the - in the early days that was the idea - going upstream was, so to speak, the Goal, as being the ongoing creative process, and that as that ongoing creative process developed then people started to make further categories within that process? - not that they were actually fixed points, but just elaborating on that process.

S: Yes, it would seem to be so. And, of course, there came about a correlation between the four main kinds of aryapudgala and their attendants, and the number of fetters to be broken.

Subhuti: But the Eightfold Path isn't cast in terms of a fixed point at which you arrive.

S: No, one could say no, it isn't, indeed. Except that usually it occurs within the context of the Four Noble Truths, and it is vividly the Fourth Truth is the Way, that is the way [106] leading to the cessation of suffering. But the cessation of suffering is not in itself a positive goal. You can go on developing and progressing, and becoming more and more blissful as it were, long after actual suffering has ceased.

Vessantara: I've got a question, which in a way is covering the same material. In what way are the brahma viharas a path to Insight?

S: 'In what way?'

Vessantara: I know that traditionally, in a Buddhist context, they weren't seen as a path to Insight?

S: Yes. I would personally say - this is my personal interpretation - that they become means to Insight through the fourth, which is upekkha. For instance if you go through the four brahma viharas, you develop metta, you develop mudita, you develop karuna, and you develop upekkha. So upekkha arises when you develop metta, karuna and mudita equally towards all. This seems to have come very near to the Mahayanic samata-jnana, which is usually understood as a sort of aspect of sunyata. You see all things as the same. In other words, if you see all things as the same, if your metta is the same towards all living beings. If you are not distinguishing between living beings or between yourself and other living beings, well, then surely you have transcended all distinctions between subject and object and so on, and surely that is tantamount to Insight? Therefore, surely, upekkha is tantamount to Insight, or rather we can regard upekkha as an emotional equivalent of Insight, that is to say the term itself as an emotional equivalent of Insight. This is further confirmed, for instance, by the sequence of the seven bodhyangas, because what is the seventh? Apparently the culminating member of the series, upekkha. So that can't be upekkha just in the ordinary mundane sense, not just equanimity, that is to say relative equanimity (...) Enlightenment, but it's a sort of metaphysical [Jet plane noise]

Aryamitra: What was the word you used as a Mahayana - you said upekkha is equivalent to it in the Mahayana, and you used a word meaning sunyata?

Vessantara: Samata.

S: Oh, samata, yes, s.a.m.a.t.a., meaning sameness: it's the wisdom of sameness, corresponding to the Buddha [107] Ratnasambhava. So I would say that upekkha is very similar to that; and clearly samata-jnana is a jnana, is a Transcendental awareness embodied

by a particular Buddha.

So I would say that the four brahma viharas become means to the development of Insight as that aspect of equality is developed more and more, as the aspect of equal metta or equal karuna or equal mudita towards all living beings is developed. In that way, the distinctions between beings are transcended. If you could really feel the same metta towards all living beings, quite literally, without making any distinction, it is inconceivable that you should not be, so to speak, Enlightened.

Vessantara: Is this point not made traditionally anywhere - the commentators (...)... ?

S: Well, certainly the Theravadins seem to regard the brahma viharas not very highly, though there are a few indications to the contrary - in Buddhaghosa, even. For instance, the brahma viharas are also called the Four Infinities, the *aparamandus*(?), meaning they are to be developed infinitely towards living beings. So this would surely suggest a going beyond, as it were.

But nowadays in Theravada circles, for instance, metta - they never even think about the other three brahma viharas - metta is regarded as a simple little exercise for very ordinary people, that you do a couple of minutes of every day, and this is all the value they place on it - a little bit of metta radiation. They sometimes call for two minutes' metta radiation before a public meeting, or something of that sort. Very few people in the Theravada take the metta bhavana seriously. It's regarded as a very, very elementary little practice. It's very strange.

On the other hand, in the Mahayana it is frequently said that the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas are characterized by *mahamaitri*, so they don't always make the connection between the practice of the metta brahma vihara and that *mahamaitri* of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, but obviously they should. If Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are characterized by *mahamaitri*, then surely the development of *maitri* can be a way to Enlightenment.

Shantiprabha: Is there any reference in the scriptures to the Buddha or his immediate disciples doing the practice of the metta bhavana?

S: Yes, I believe it was Subhuti who was referred to in [108] the scriptures as being especially good at metta bhavana. The Buddha is frequently referred to as surveying beings with compassion - with compassion rather than metta for obvious reasons, but if karuna is there surely the metta is there also.

Vessantara: Now a more down-to-earth question. In the section on *maitri* and *upeksa*, you mention the chanting of *sabbe satta sukhi hontu*. In discussion, we - it seems to be dying out in the Movement. As Robin mentioned, he has been around the LBC for 18 months or so, and today is the first time he'd actually seen the phrase at all. Do you feel that it's a thing which we should not allow to die out - the chanting ... ?

S: Well, it's never been very prominent, put it that way. One has the practice of the metta bhavana, and in order to get oneself going, as it were, in order to help one generate that feeling of metta, various phrases may be used, and this Pali phrase is one of them: *sabbe satta sukhi hontu*, 'may all beings be happy'. Whether one actually chants it regularly, so to speak, in chorus, I suppose mainly depends upon whether one does feel that by so doing one can

generate a more emotionally positive atmosphere. Perhaps, if the chanting of sabbe satta sukhi hontu has dropped out, the possibility is at least that people didn't find it was working in this way. Maybe one needs to inquire into it.

Gunapala: When I was in New Zealand at Christmas time, on all the retreats where I went along it was used quite frequently before the metta bhavana. So they're still doing it there.

Vessantara: ... Suvajra had a question.

Suvajra: It was concerning your translation of upeksa as 'tranquillity' in this bit on the four brahma viharas. Why had you chosen 'tranquillity' rather than equanimity?

S: I doubt if there was a definite reason. I can't say that I had chosen 'tranquillity' definitely in preference to 'equanimity'. None of these words are really satisfactory as a single equivalent to upekkha. It's equanimity, it's tranquillity, it's calm, it's also forbearance, all these things.

Suvajra: ...you speak of it in terms of peace, but without mentioning that it's an equanimous feeling also for [109] everyone - a feeling ...

S: One mustn't forget this is a verbatim transcript of the lecture. The word equanimity may just not have occurred to me at the time of speaking. It may be that there were other reasons.

Subhuti: Those are all of the questions.

S: Were there other questions?

Vessantara: No.

Bodhiruchi: Can I ask you a question that came to my mind from a few days ago? It was in connection - we were talking about karma and rebirth, and you mentioned the phrase 'This all depends upon the nature of consciousness.' you already said that about consciousness being outside of time, but it seemed to me that when you said 'nature of consciousness' you implied a bit more than just time. Could you go into that, or would you feel or think is the nature of consciousness?

S: I don't remember that in connection with what I said - 'It all depends on what you mean by consciousness' - can somebody remember?

Ratnaketu: It was about the bardo, the question about whether you'd be born in the past or in the future, and you eventually came down to saying that it depended where you are and what your definition of consciousness was, your definition of what was the nature of consciousness.

S: I might have had in mind (...) (...) (...) in terms of a dualistic consciousness or a non-dualistic consciousness; or rather whether one thought of consciousness as being in reality characterized by being a subject-object duality or not.

Subhuti: I think you were talking particularly in relation to karma and rebirth, because you were saying that you were putting forward a view of consciousness against which the

traditional view of karma and rebirth needed some re-expression.

S: Yes. Because if one thinks of time as being contained, so to speak, within consciousness rather than the other way around as we often do think, then consciousness becomes of course the more fundamental reality; and if one thinks in terms [110] of karma, or thinks in terms of karma in the ordinary way, clearly time is involved. And if time is contained within consciousness, clearly karma is contained within consciousness, too. For instance, I mentioned precognitive experiences. So there is a sense in which all karma takes place simultaneously, if one thinks of consciousness as transcending time. So that means one needs to reassess one's whole view of karma (...), or at least re-present. I don't think it would come to anything different in practice, actually, but one's philosophical interpretation of the whole question perhaps would need quite thorough revision.

In other words, what seems to be the case is that apart from being brought into line with the anatta doctrine, which is not really very difficult matter, rather much is made of it, but the whole teaching about karma has never, I think, in traditional Buddhism been properly related to the basic philosophical concepts of that same Buddhism. I think this is what it amounts to. If, for instance, sunyata is the ultimate reality, or if the One Mind is the ultimate reality, well, where does that leave karma? What is the significance of karma? Perhaps it's also a question of the relationship between what is called the relative truth and the absolute truth, because Buddhist tradition would no doubt agree that sunyata pertains to absolute truth and karma, the teaching about karma, pertains to relative truth. So it's also a question of the relation between those two truths. Truth is perhaps a misleading term though that is the term actually used, traditionally - it's more like levels of reality; because the Yogacara makes out three, rather than two.

More basically, you could say it is a question, in more general philosophical terms, of the nature of the relation between the Absolute, Ultimate Reality, or whatever you like to call it, and the whole temporal process. Even if you say that time is included in Mind, let us say - Mind being not contained within the temporal process - how is one to envisage the relationship between them? It seems almost inconceivable; well, it seems it's just inconceivable - the relationship between time and the timeless.

Bodhiruchi: Of the niyamas there's the relational, which is karma, and then the Transcendental, so it seems that the Transcendental is out with all karma - the Transcendental order.

S: No, well, there are these niyamas enumerated - the [111] karma-niyama is not exactly a Transcendental order, it's more an order of cosmic law. But even if it was a Transcendental order, there would still remain the question of the relationship between niyamas of the Transcendental order and niyamas of the mundane order; it would be another form of that same basic question.

But perhaps the basic question, which is also a basic question of philosophy in general, is: what is the status of events occurring in time in relation to Ultimate Reality? It's quite a big question. Can one think simultaneously time into the timeless? You could say that time is an illusion: all right, but at least even though it is an illusion (...) at least as an illusion. So how is

an illusion related to Reality? How, within the bosom of Reality, so to speak, could such a thing as an illusion ever arise? These are the sort of problems that the (...) (...) has to grapple with, and doesn't really solve them.

Perhaps one should question this whole distinction between Reality and non-Reality: is that itself valid? Because if one thinks in terms of an Ultimate Reality, and also of something which is unreal or even illusory, how does the illusory arise, because if there is nothing but Ultimate Reality, where would the illusory come from? It's a bit like in Christian theology, the problem of where evil comes from if God is good and if God has created everything - there's a little question of free will, but that doesn't really help. But perhaps one has to try to look at things in a completely different way. One has the image of the Ultimate Reality as a sea, and phenomenal objects are all the waves which are whipped up on the surface. But whence comes the wind that whips up those waves? Does it come from a perfectly motionless ocean, or does it come from some other source? - in which case you've got another principle alongside Ultimate Reality, you've got a dualism. So you end up with Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism.

Subhuti: What other approach could one take? You said 'Perhaps one should approach it in a completely different way.' What other way?

S: Well, first of all, by examining the assumptions that one makes, examining the concepts which one is using: whether one, for instance, can think in terms of an Ultimate Reality and the reality of Reality or ... illusion - what one actually means by that. What one means by the timeless - what do you mean by saying something is outside time? We use expressions [112] like that quite easily and quite glibly, but have they any meaning? Is it meaningful to say that something exists outside time? What do we mean by 'exist', anyway? - another fundamental term that needs, perhaps, radical re-evaluation.

So, in the long run, one comes to the conclusion that perhaps the Buddha was wiser than some of his followers. The Buddha didn't say very much about ultimates. He directed his attention definitely to the Path. One knows that there are two processes going on within one's own mind, the reactive and the creative, and you gradually learn that the creative is more satisfying, let us say, than the reactive, and you gradually get more and more on to that, and shift more of your energy into that, and eventually pass the Point of No Return. The Buddha seems to have left it more or less at that.

: Maybe we should do the same.

S: Are philosophical questions ultimately meaningful - are they meaningful at all? Is there such a thing as a philosophical question? One could bring in Wittgenstein, I suppose, but we'd better not because ...

Perhaps we'd better leave it there for this morning.

Day 6 Tape 6, Side 1

Subhuti: Some of us have been covering the four brahma viharas that remain ... So first we've

got a question from the brahma viharas, which is: what, properly speaking, is the far enemy of upeksa?

S: Strictly speaking?

Subhuti: Strictly speaking, is there a traditional - ?

S: I don't remember, to be quite honest. My guess would be that it's mental restlessness, disturbance, distraction. It's all these things. It's preference! It's preference - You did say far enemy? yes. So preferential treatment, one might say. I am here doing a bit of thinking aloud, because I'm mindful of the way in which equanimity is developed. Equanimity is developed on a basis of the previous brahma viharas, when you've equalized them; when you have equal metta towards all, equal karuna towards all, equal mudita towards all, you then develop [113] equanimity.

So what would stand most in the way of your developing equanimity? What would be the real far enemy? It would be any tendency not to feel equal metta, not to feel equal karuna, not to feel equal mudita. So I would say, on the basis of that, that the far enemy was any tendency to discriminate between beings in respect of your metta, mudita and karuna. I don't know whether that is the traditional explanation, but, in two words, 'preferential treatment' would seem to be the far enemy of equanimity. That would seem to disturb your equanimity.

I'd have to look up what Buddhaghosa says, because I don't remember a far enemy of equanimity; I won't be categorically certain that there is one, though I think it highly likely. But on the basis of the way in which equanimity is developed out of the preceding three brahma viharas, I would say that any tendency to preferential treatment of beings, any tendency to distinguish between them in respect of, so to speak, apportioning your metta, your karuna and your mudita, would be the far enemy.

There may be a Pali term which covers this; I can't think of it at the moment. But does that not seem reasonable? And if you did distinguish in that way, if you did prefer in that way, that would certainly be a disturbance. So it would seem that the far enemy of equanimity is not just mental disturbance in a general sense, but mental disturbance of this specific nature, or mental disturbance arising in this specific way.

Supposing, just to give a very simple example, supposing you're a father, supposing you've got two children - or let's say supposing you've got ten children. Well, supposing you've got, let's say, a cake. Well, if you divide it into ten equal portions and give a portion to each of your ten children, that shows presumably that your attitude towards them is equal; you've the same metta, let's say (presuming one does feel metta for one's children), towards all ten of them; so therefore you have to that extent an attitude of equanimity towards them. But supposing you had one favourite son, or two favourite sons, and you gave the whole cake to that favourite son or to those two favourite sons - well, that would suggest that you had, so to speak, more metta towards them than towards the rest of your sons, and that would represent a disturbance in your overall attitude of equanimity, or even-mindedness, towards them. And no doubt that would lead to various complications and [114] confusions.

Subhuti: Going on to consider the puja: you started off by talking about symbols for the Three Jewels, and you talk of the monks as being the symbol for the Sangha Jewel. Robin has a

question on that.

Ratnaprabha: I was just wondering why the monks specifically were a symbol rather than the whole of the Sangha including the lay members of the Sangha; why the monks only were traditionally taken to be the symbol for the Sangha Jewel.

S: I don't know whether one can go back to a historical reason. I think, probably, the reason is that the Sangha in the primary sense is of course the Aryasangha; that is to say, the Sangha of those who have various Transcendental attainments, or at least are Stream Entrants. And it would seem that in the early days of Buddhism, in the early days of the Buddha's teaching, quite a high percentage of those who had Gone Forth to live as what subsequently came to be known as bhikkhus were in fact members of the Aryasangha. So I assume that that is why the bhikkhu Sangha came as it were to stand for the Aryasangha: because within the bhikkhu Sangha there was a higher proportion in fact of Aryas.

Another reason, of course, may be that the bhikkhus, by virtue of their shaven heads and yellow robes, were more distinctive and more colourful, and could therefore be more easily identified as the symbol of the third of the Three Jewels.

Ratnaprabha: Do you think it was connected in any way with the more exclusive view that modern Theravadins seem to have of the Sangha being just monks, not regarding the laity to be members of the Sangha?

S: It could be. Because what is symbolized is, of course, the Aryasangha, and I think most lay people in Buddhist countries of Asia, knowing themselves only too well, perhaps, might think it rather presumptuous if they were to consider themselves as constituting a symbol for the Aryasangha; but they might be very willing to so regard the bhikkhus whom they see, as it were, from a distance and perhaps on to whom they project something of those spiritual qualities they are not realizing or developing themselves.

[115]

But yes, according to tradition it is the bhikkhu Sangha that symbolizes the third of the Three Jewels.

Devamitra: This actually seems an inappropriate symbol, so far as we are concerned now. Have you ever had any thoughts about what might be a more appropriate symbol for us, specifically in the context of the FWBO?

S: Well, presumably it is the Order. If it wasn't the Order, who else could it be?

Devamitra: I was thinking more in terms, I suppose, of an emblem - because the robe, the yellow robe, symbolizes the Sangha, and maybe the kesa - but ...

S: It's not just the robe. The tradition is that it is the bhikkhus actually sitting there in assembly that symbolize the Sangha Jewel; not just the robe, not just the bowl, but the actually living bhikkhus sitting there. So that you have, for instance, on occasions, say, in a shrine, in a temple, you have the image of the Buddha on the altar - well, one should say 'image table', there is no such thing as an altar in Buddhism because there are no sacrifices - you have the image of the Buddha on the image table representing the Buddha Jewel; you

have the volumes of the scriptures, perhaps, arranged to one side, symbolizing the Dharma Jewel, and you have the monks, the bhikkhus, actually seated there in assembly, symbolizing the Sangha Jewel.

So if one wants to continue that sort of symbolism in its completeness, and not have bhikkhus sitting there, then you would have to have the Buddha image, the scriptures (they don't change), and members of the Order. You would then have the three appropriate symbols for the Three Jewels.

Gunapala: The only problem I can think of is that they are such a mottled bunch. The monks are all so uniform.

S: Well, you can put yourselves in uniform if you wish. It has been suggested.

Devamitra: We had another question associated with the Sangha, which Kennet...

Dhirananda: Yes, the esoteric Refuges - the dakini represents the Sangha. I was wondering whether it's a female [116] figure symbolizing the Sangha.

S: I think I did go into this on one Order Convention. I think I explained it with reference to William Blake; I think I referred to what Blake calls the emanation. The emanation is, so to speak, the more feminine side of the human individual; the emanation is the more emotional side of the human individual. In the unintegrated human individual, the emanation is separate, and is even experienced as a separate person - even as a hostile person; but in the integrated person, in the integrated human individual, the emanation is not separate in that way. But the point that is relevant here, the point that Blake makes, is that human beings mingle or communicate through their emanations: that is to say, you communicate through the as it were more feminine, more emotional, part of yourself - that man communicates with man through his emanation, or men communicate through their emanations.

There is something in it. In ordinary social life, you very often find it's the women who look after the social life. Maybe you get to know things - what's been happening - through your wife; she's got together with somebody else's wife. So your wife is usually your in a way alienated emanation; that's why you've got a wife at all. If your emanation wasn't alienated, you wouldn't need a wife. So if you're integrated, if your emanation is, so to speak, an integrated part of yourself, you don't need to communicate with other men via your wife; you communicate with other men via your own emanation. You communicate with other men through your emanation; your emanation communicates with their emanation. So there is a more direct communication.

So the emanation is female, and the dakini, it would seem, as the sort of symbol of the third esoteric refuge, the Sangha Refuge, would seem to be feminine for much the same reason. Do you see what I'm getting at? This is briefly what I explained on that occasion. It is all taped, I think.

So one must not think of the dakini as an objectively existing female partner, a sort of glorified, transmogrified wife - nothing of that sort.

Let me just say a few more words about that. One knows that if one tries to communicate

with other people, especially other men, simply or exclusively through one's so-called stronger, more masculine side - if you've just got these two masculinities bumping against each other - you may not get very [117] far in communication. You need to bring in the so-called softer, the so-called more sensitive, the so-called more refined aspect of yourself, and communicate with the other person, with the other man, through that. This is the sort of thing that Blake is getting at when he says 'Let men communicate with each other - let human beings communicate with each other - through their emanations.' It's through their more sensitive aspects, through the more sensitive aspects of themselves. Not that you necessarily put your strength to one side when you start communicating, but it's as though your emanation has, so to speak, to put out the feelers so that you don't impinge on one another too dramatically and forcibly, because that might prevent certain aspects of yourself from entering into the communication.

Ratnaketu: Further to the dakini, I was wondering - I've only seen drawings or paintings of dakinis in wrathful form. Do the dakinis always appear in wrathful form, or do they have peaceful forms?

S: They usually do, because you are alienated from them, and they get angry! But no, there are lots of representations of dakinis in peaceful, joyful, happy, carefree form, yes, indeed. In some thangkas which represent Padmasambhava, especially more elaborate ones which (...) - there are naked figures flying through the air with hair streaming out behind and they are dakinis.

Some of our feminist friends like to think of dakinis exclusively in their wrathful form. That is a little one-sided, if I may say so.

Bodhiruchi: Are there other symbols in Western tradition that embody what the Tibetans are getting at with the dakini?

S: In the strict sense, I would say no: I think Tibetan Buddhism, the Vajrayana generally, has gone much more deeply into this kind of thing. But none the less, there are various symbols, there are various figures that are pointing in this direction.

Amoghacitta: Angels, perhaps even Christian angels, are a bit like dakinis in a sense. They are messengers, protectors.

S: I think the angels are a rather different kind of figure. They are not feminine, anyway; they are masculine with some feminine features, and wings. I would say that the figure [118] of the angel belongs to a rather different category.

Subhuti: Robin has a question about the term 'Refuge' - Going for Refuge.

Ratnaprabha: Yes, I was thinking of the way it appears to beginners, to people first encountering Buddhism or first encountering Friends. The Going for Refuge seems at first sight to be an escapist kind of terminology. Can you think of any other terminology that applies to Going for Refuge that would not convey this impression ?

S: Well, we have taken the word 'commitment' as a sort of working equivalent for Going for Refuge. I doubt if we can do better than that, especially as the English word refuge, actually,

exactly translates the Pali and Sanskrit sarana. It is exactly that. It's not very often that you get a pretty exact equivalent, but in this case we do have a pretty exact equivalent. Even - it comes down to (...) in modern Indian languages, in for instance literary Hindi, 'a refugee' would be a saranarathi, one who goes for refuge. So we are all spiritual refugees: of course we are, we are exiled from our true homeland, we've been exiled or we've exiled ourselves from the Pure Land and we are trying to get back there.

But I really wonder why we should have almost to pander to people's little prejudices; especially this whole question of escapism annoys me considerably. When people who are in fact indulging in escapism with regard to almost every aspect of their lives come and accuse us of escapism, I think we should really take them up on this rather sharply. I think I've done this myself once or twice, at least in lectures.

Also, it's such a stupid question really, or a stupid objection, that you are escapist. People have got - this word escapism that is in the air, people have vaguely got the idea that escapism is not a very good thing. They apply it to any activity of which they disapprove - it's said to be escapist. There two things one can say here. If there is some undesirable state or situation, why should you not escape from it? If you are, say, a prisoner of war, why should you not want to escape and try to escape? Even a burning house - well, why should you not try to escape? It's ridiculous to accuse a person who wants to get out of a burning house of being an escapist: well, of course he is. What else could he possibly be? It's the sensible thing to do.

[119]

So Buddhism sees that we are involved in a certain unsatisfactory state of affairs, an unsatisfactory way of life, unsatisfactory experience, and Buddhism says the most sensible thing to do is just get out, just escape. Of course, it's not merely a question of escape, because once you have escaped broader perspectives open before you, all sorts of wonderful new possibilities. So escapism is not the last word; there's nothing to be ashamed of in escaping from undesirable situations. The only way in which the word escapism can be legitimately used in a negative sense is when, in your efforts to escape, you are so blind and so foolish that in fact you don't succeed in escaping, you only make things worse. But that is precisely what most people do: they escape into some kind of distraction, some kind of pleasure, some kind of little affair, some kind of little ambition. This is all escapism. Watching the TV is escapism; work is escapism; marriage is escapism; a career is escapism, usually. So here are people indulging in escapism on a grand scale. And they come along in the evening and see you, and here you are making a sensible effort to get out of an undesirable situation, and succeeding to some extent, and they accuse you of escapism. So you shouldn't let them get away with it. You shouldn't be put on the defensive - 'We're not escapists, no, we're not trying to get away with it, no (...) (...) (...) [jet noise] There's no point in your trying to assure them that you are just as lost and hopeless and confused and overwhelmed as they are themselves. They might be quite happy to hear that, but you shouldn't give them that satisfaction.

I think it's much better to meet questions of this sort, objections of this sort, head on: grasp the bull - or cow - by the horns. Don't just make evasive movements; don't be apologetic in your attitude.

I heard a little while ago from somebody who gave me an account of classes at the LBC. Apparently there is a mixed class on the regulars' night, and apparently Parami was having some trouble with some visiting feminists - I only gathered the nature of the trouble from the

nature of the reply she gave. She apparently was trying to convince them that Bhante in his writings - this was according to the report I received - used the masculine to include the feminine only for reasons of convenience. I don't know whether she really did say that, but I can sympathize with her difficulty, confronted by raging feminists. I think maybe it was a bit of a compromise.

[120]

Ratnaketu: Why does Bhante use the masculine to include the feminine?

S: Because he prefers to speak and write standard English, rather than distort the English language in the interests of rampant feminism.

Vessantara: Our group started talking about the Buddha rupa as the symbol for the Buddha Jewel, and that led us to consider some of Subhuti's remarks last night in his talk about Manjughosa and how the Buddha rupa came out of Hellenistic influence ...

Cittapala: There are really two questions. To what extent did Hellenistic art influence Buddhist art? Could you expand on that? And the second one is: to what extent did Buddhist philosophy have any effect upon perhaps Hellenistic thought or even thought in the Middle East? And I was wondering whether there was any possible connection with Alexandria. And finally, going on to whether it had any effect on the development of Christianity.

S: Quite a series of questions, isn't it? This is a field in which there is quite a bit of scholarly difference of opinion. For instance, not all art historians, and certainly not all Indian art historians, would admit that the Buddha image originated as a result of Hellenic influence. I think most non-Indian art historians do accept that theory, and in fact it seems pretty obvious if we just look at some of the examples of Hellenic sculpture, at certain figures - they are remarkably similar to the figures of the Buddha. And there seems to have been no other prototype.

The only other possible Indian prototype seems to have been some of the yaksha figures - very powerfully built male figures. These yaksha figures seem to have influenced the Buddha image, at least in some parts of India, the Delhi area, the (Matrabha?) area. But then we've got this Gandharan art, which is definitely Buddhist, in which scenes from the life of the Buddha are depicted, and which is clearly under late Hellenic influence. It is very similar to some early Christian art - which, of course, is also under Hellenic and Roman influence.

It quite clearly belongs to the same world, as it were. So there may be some difference of opinion as to the exact degree of influence exerted by this Hellenic, or Romano-Hellenic, art, on early Buddhist art, and in particular on the way in which the figure of the Buddha was represented; but that there was some [121] influence, and some very considerable influence, I think cannot be denied.

Then, with regard to that larger question - well, we do know that Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, didn't he? At that time, I think there were two extreme eastern provinces of the Persian Empire which were in fact part of India, so Alexander took those over, didn't he? And after the death of Alexander they broke up into a number of independent or semi-independent kingdoms, ruled by successors of Alexander. And amongst these there was, of course, the state of Gandhara. We know that there was one of these Greek or

Greek-descended rulers who had a conversation with a Buddhist monk - that was Milinda or Menander, who had a conversation with the monk Nagasena, as recorded in the book of the Milindapanha, The Questions of King Milinda. So there was some contact, we know from this there was some contact between Greeks, or people who were at least partly of Greek origin, in what is now north-western India or perhaps north-western Pakistan, and Buddhism.

In the accounts of Alexander's campaign, there some rather vague references to conversations of Alexander with Indian sages - supposed to be naked sages, whom the Greeks called gymnosophists, that is to say naked wise men - but we are told very very little about the content of the conversations. It does seem that very little filtered back into Greece from India, from Buddhism. I can't say that I have ever come across any convincing signs of influence of Buddhist thought on Greek thought.

There is, of course, this curious business of Ammonius Saccas - the teacher of Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism. He taught in Alexandria, didn't he? - in the third century, and some scholars believe that Saccas is a form or corruption of Sakya; he may have been a sort of Buddhist, but that is largely speculative. I don't think it's definitely established. But Plotinus himself is known to have visited, or journeyed in the direction of, India, and there are stories of several other philosophers who are supposed to have gone to India. Pythagoras was supposed to have gone to India. I don't think there are any clearly marked traces of Indian thought, certainly of Buddhist thought, on Western thought, on Greek thought.

Cittapala: Presumably it would have been quite easy to travel in those days?

[122]

S: Well, yes and no. That would have depended on the state of affairs with regard to the Persian Empire; because later the Persian Empire did reassert its independence, and under later rulers gave the Romans a great deal of trouble, so there was the Persian Empire for several hundred years lying in between Europe and India - just at that time, perhaps, when there might have been some contact between the two.

Ratnaprabha: In The Three Jewels you do say that there is this possibility that Christianity was influenced by Buddhism via Neoplatonism. Are you not quite so convinced of that now?

S: There does seem to be, coming from Neoplatonism, a sort of general Eastern, Indian, perhaps Buddhist, influence; and Neoplatonism, through, for instance, St Augustine certainly, influenced Christianity and influenced medieval Christian mysticism quite a lot. I don't know how really definite one can be. I don't personally see any traces of Buddhism in early Christianity. There are a few parables in the Christian gospels which seem to echo Buddhist parables, but the resemblances, the parallels, are often quite general, not very precise, not very clear.

Ah, there is one line of contact, though: there is the story of Barlaam and Josaphat. Apparently a sort of Life of the Buddha was turned into one language after another in Central Asia and eventually turned into Arabic and Syriac and Greek, and the hero of the story, who is of course the Buddha, was eventually made a Christian saint and canonized, and his tomb is in St Peter's in Rome. This is rather interesting, because the tomb of St Josaphat, I actually found it when I visited - I didn't know about this at the time - but I found a tomb in St Peter's which was the tomb of St Josaphat, but it was not listed in the guidebook. There are all sorts

of saints who had been demoted in recent years because scholarly investigation has discovered that they never really existed. I think St Josaphat might have been included in this category. But Josaphat is definitely a corruption of Bodhisattva. And the story, which exists in several versions, is quite clearly the story of the life of the Buddha; and this has very strange repercussions, quite distant and faint ones, in English literature, in the case of Johnson's Rasselas. Johnson's Rasselas contains - well, reminiscences of this story of Barlaam and Josaphat, because you may remember, those who have read Rasselas, that Rasselas's father shuts him up in a secluded valley so that he should not have any experience of life. So here we have a distant reminiscence of Buddhism coming down to us right into the writings of no other [123] person than Dr Samuel Johnson, only 200 years ago. He of course must have been quite oblivious of the ultimate source of that part of his story.

Bodhiruchi: Some scholars say that one of Christ's apostles - I think it was Thomas, I'm not sure - went out to the East, and it seems that he was affected by Buddhism. Do you think there was anything in that?

S: Well, among the twelve apostles there was one called Thomas who went to India. I think we have a Gospel of Thomas also. And Indian Christians, that is the old Indian Christians, do believe that Christianity was introduced into India by St Thomas. Current research suggests that this was not Thomas the apostle but a merchant Thomas who lived about the eighth century and perhaps took Christianity, I think in its Nestorian form, to India.

But certainly traditionally St Thomas is regarded as the apostle to India. He is said to have visited Madras and (...)...

Tape 6, Side 2

Ratnaprabha: How about Buddhist influence on Islam via Sufism. You also mention that.

S: Yes, it really does seem that Central Asia is an absolute melting pot of religions and philosophies. There is no doubt in my mind that Sufism is strongly influenced by Buddhism. Perhaps I should just confine myself to that general statement for the time being. But one finds, for instance, reading Sufistic literature, accounts of wandering Sufis, and they seem to live exactly like wandering Buddhist monks. They live also in viharas, they observe (...). They are not married, they don't have families, they live upon alms, they meditate. They even have the practice of the use of the rosary and repeating mantras; ... Islam definitely from Buddhism. Repeating a mantra in Islam, in Arabic, is dikh, and it is clearly a Buddhist practice. I don't think this is disputed.

But yes, I think that there is quite a definite Buddhist influence in Sufism, because Islam overran those areas, that is to say parts of Persia, parts of Central Asia, where Buddhist influence was still very strong. There was not only Buddhism, [124] there was Manichaeism; there was also Nestorian Christianity. There were all sorts of religions and traditions. Padmasambhava, of course, is associated with that same area.

Silaratna: Is Sufism a theistic faith?

S: Oh dear. Yes and no.

Silaratna: I should think Christianity is more ...

S: Sufism is a sort of mystical current within Islam, which sometimes comes into conflict with it, which often comes into conflict with the exoteric theology of Islam and, from the standpoint of that exoteric theology, it seems to deny God - well, the kind of God believed in by most Muslims. Some Sufis were actually persecuted. Some seem to have been relatively orthodox Muslims; some seem to have been not orthodox Muslims at all. They attached great importance to a simple life, an ascetic life, prayer, meditation, retreat. They developed their own teachings, their own philosophical teachings, which went far beyond the simple Koranic beliefs. Even though they frequently quoted and interpreted the Koran, their interpretations were sometimes, one might say, very far-fetched indeed, however valuable in themselves - quite far-fetched as interpretations of the Koran.

Vessantara: One very general question.

Jinavamsa: Supposing that you were to find that devotional practice, especially pujas, were becoming mechanical and uninspired, what would you do, if anything, to help the situation?

S: Perhaps we ought to look at the more general question first: supposing any spiritual practice becomes mechanical and uninspired, well, why is that? Meditation can become mechanical and uninspired; study can become mechanical and uninspired; retreats can become mechanical and uninspired; going to classes, taking classes, can become mechanical and uninspired; so why is this? It isn't just a question of the puja. The puja may be more of a special case, inasmuch as emotional elements are directly involved, and that you notice it more quickly in the case of the puja, if it has become mechanical and lacking in inspiration. But what is it that makes any sort of spiritual practice or activity eventually, in some cases or sometimes, mechanical and lacking in inspiration? What does this mean? What has happened? Has anybody got any views, any ideas?

[125]

: I suppose it depends on people's attitude to it.

S: Yes, but why should the attitude have changed? Because, presumably, originally you did find these things not at all mechanical, they were full of inspiration, but now you don't. All right, it's a change of attitude, obviously; but what has caused your attitude to change? How has that come about?

Bodhiruchi: Loss of vision.

Aryamitra: You've got used to it.

S: You've got used to it; well, what do you mean by getting used to it? Because if you were having inspiration all the time, have you got used to having inspiration? Can you become mechanical by becoming used to having inspiration?

Gunapala: You've got out of touch with the experience itself.

S: But how should you get out of touch with the experience when you have the experience, and there it is? You're having it all the time. What makes you get out of touch with it?

Bodhiruchi: Lack of progress?

: You don't look after it.

S: You don't look after it; what does one mean by that? How does one not look after it?

: You don't guard it.

S: You don't guard it; hm. I think that's got something to do with it.

Bodhiruchi: Respect and value.

S: Well, that is implied in guarding and looking after. You sort of get used to it in the sense that - yes, the inspiration is there, perhaps, but perhaps you get into the habit of thinking that the inspiration will look after itself, because you won't have to keep up an effort of maintaining the inspiration, and so therefore you become less careful in that particular practice; you give it less thought, you guard it [126] less, you care for it less. That could certainly be part of the reason. It could be certainly part of the reason why one no longer finds pujas inspiring, why one starts finding them mechanical. But could there be any other reason?

Devamitra: Your general interest may simply gravitate downwards, towards more mundane things, so that your spiritual practice degenerates therefore into a mere religious performance.

S: Yes; yes. Because every spiritual practice requires an effort, where until you've passed the Point of No Return in a way you are going against the grain all the time. And as soon as you start slacking off, you just start slowly regressing. So I think very often what happens is, when you find that spiritual practice is becoming mechanical or when you find there's a failure of inspiration, it means that a lot of your energies are being drawn away, even drawn down. You may, for instance, take up a particular spiritual practice: it may be puja or it may be any other; and you're making an effort, and therefore you're deriving great inspiration from that, you're finding it very interesting. But this sort of effort, after all, is an effort, and you may be able to make it for a while but then the gravitational pull starts asserting itself. It's as though your energies, your emotions, are happy to be lifted up and put into that spiritual practice for a while, but they are not going to agree to stay up there indefinitely, or to get further and further up, if you can follow the metaphor. They start rebelling, they start wanting after all to go their own way; they start withdrawing themselves from the spiritual activity, the spiritual practices, and then you start finding that - well, you're doing them ..., the life has gone out of them, the spark has gone out, the energy, the emotion. They have become dull and mechanical ... It means that your energies, basically, have withdrawn.

So it's not difficult to involve oneself in things once in a while, but to involve oneself in them steadily and regularly and consistently, [to] lead one's energies into those activities and lead them more and more and more - it is very difficult.

The only real remedy, I think, is association with one's spiritual friends whose inspiration is still alive. If, for instance, you find that the puja for you has become mechanical or lacking in

inspiration, you just have to make sure that you do it not just as carefully as you can but do it in the company of those who do find it inspiring, and gradually you will start [127] finding it inspiring again too; you catch some spark from them.

How soon your energies start withdrawing from any specific spiritual practice or even your spiritual life itself depends on a number of factors. It depends on your actual situation, who you are associating with, and so on. It depends whether you are on retreat or not. It depends on the depth of your conviction, the degree of your attachment to outside things.

Cittapala: In the context of, say, a retreat, is there any case for the introduction of novelty in any form? I don't mean necessarily ...

S: Novelty; well, the retreat itself is a novelty, because it's so different from ordinary life. That we are here for three months is a novelty; none you have ever been away for three months like this before, it's an absolute novelty. Perhaps for weeks together you don't see a woman. What a novelty! What greater novelty can you want than that?! You see - novelties all the time. You see, for instance, one another every day for three months - that's a novelty. You even see me every day: that's a novelty (Laughter). I think there is enough novelty, I must say. Perhaps you weren't thinking quite along those lines; you were thinking maybe different kinds of pujas or several different kinds of meditation, or - ?

Cittapala: Yes, I was thinking of ...

S: That does, of course, help, but I think one has to be quite careful not to depend too much on novelty in this way or in this sense. It means sometimes when people don't get on with a particular kind of meditation and they feel they need something different, this particular kind isn't suiting them and they want something new. But if this attitude is pursued it can prevent one or hinder one from getting very deeply into anything. You have to persist. Did you have in mind any little novelty that you were hoping to be introduced?

: I don't think ...

: Dancing girls, perhaps?

S: Well, if you visualize them in the course of meditation, then fair enough.

[128]

Vessantara: Related to this topic of things going flat or being flat, I think mantras, particularly the Padmasambhava mantra, seems to effect quite a perfunctory and ... Our group has heard it said that you somewhere made the comment that it needed perhaps five or ten minutes for the Padmasambhava mantra to really have a chance, to really engage with it. We had that ...

S: Well, I think it's not just a question of people engaging with the mantra - or rather perhaps the matter is wrongly put: it's a question of engaging with their energies. And it may be that the puja comes at the end of the day, the Padmasambhava mantra comes at the end of the puja; it could be simply that people are a bit tired and don't have the energy to put into it. That's not to say that they couldn't break through, perhaps, into a new level of energy, but this

may have something to do with it.

Amoghacitta: It seems, from one point of view, perhaps, that the puja is done too often. In a way it's almost like it's quite easy to become just a ... practice. I wonder if perhaps it should be treated as being special and kept for special occasions, the Sevenfold puja? There's quite a lot in it to grapple with ...

S: Well, all the more reason for grappling with it daily, one would have thought. I'm not sure about this. I think on retreats we ought to be able to have it every day. Maybe it's different if you are, say, living in the city and you're working and you're busy; it may not always be possible or appropriate to have a Sevenfold puja in the evening. But on retreats, I would have thought it should have been possible. But have people any ideas on this topic?

Silaratna: I've often thought it would be nice to do the Sevenfold puja in the morning. You know, ...

S: Well, the only occasions, usually, when we have Sevenfold puja in the morning is when it precedes a Public Ordination. I have sometimes noticed it goes very well then, because people are fresh and they've more energy. The chanting often - though not necessarily, but often - just goes better.

Cittapala: In connection with that, we did note in our group that on the evening that we had 'just sitting' before the puja seemed to bring people's energies together more than a [129] full-blooded metta bhavana. It seemed ...

S: Oh...had a little rest (Laughter). It seems to have worked like that.

: ...

Bodhiruchi: I was thinking myself with the puja... Padmasambhava mantra - you can only set up conditions, you can't actually cause something to come and be. We had a very good Padmasambhava chant last Sunday evening, and I was just thinking that afterwards trying to think: 'Well, why?' There must be some reason. And I just couldn't put it down to anything. In fact, at the time I was very tired when it started.

S: Well, it could have been that there were four or five people on that occasion who did feel very strongly for the mantra and the chanting, and that they influenced everybody else. You may not even have known or been conscious who they were.

Dhirananda: Related to this about the puja, I've been wondering how early should one introduce the Sevenfold puja to beginners - at what stage in their progress?

S: Really, I must say that I am no longer much of an authority on beginners. I hardly ever meet them; I just hear about them from harassed Order members. I heard just a little while ago from an Order member at the LBC - the same one who wrote to me about the class and Parami's difficulties - that he had difficulties at his home because he was apparently doorkeeper or something one night - I think it was the regulars' night - and he happened quite innocently to answer the door, and there were two strange people there. And one of them started fingering his kesa and said, 'Aha! This is good Malay silk.' They fired, he said,

question after question at him, and Vajrachitta said that he was sort of staggering from these questions, and they just kept coming and coming and coming. So, after half an hour of this treatment he managed to get a bit of breath, and he asked this person who he was. So he said: 'Oh, I'm a Jesuit, but I'm in process of becoming a Carmelite!' Vajracitta had a (...)(...) a Carmelite'. He was quite reeling from this encounter. I suppose those two people could be classed as beginners if they come along to the Centre.

[130]

So I really don't know. It may vary from place to place, even country to country. It certainly varies from individual to individual. I think it is something that the people who run Centres need to be very mindful about, but more than that I really can't say. Some people telling their life stories seem to have been put off by what they encountered of the more devotional aspect of Buddhism; others seem to have taken to it pretty quickly and enjoyed it. It's very difficult. If everybody in England who came along to the Centres didn't like the puja, we could consider stopping them, or introducing them much later. Or if everybody came along and liked them straight away, then that's also proper. But people's reactions seem to be very mixed, and that makes things very difficult for us; because people who are together in every other respect differ considerably in this respect. They may be getting on with the meditation equally well; they've got more or less the same degree of knowledge of Buddhism, they may be good at communication, but when it comes to puja their reactions may be totally different. So you can't carry them along all together in this respect.

Any further discussion?

Devamitra: One more question from my group...

Amoghacitta: We were talking about Worship and Salutation, and we were interested by the tradition of keeping the Buddha on your right side, ... baring your right shoulder as a sign of respect, circumambulating the Buddha on your right. I wondered if you had any thoughts about the significance of this.

S: Well, if you keep the Buddha on your right and you go round the Buddha, it means you move in a clockwise direction; and moving in a clockwise direction has considerable significance in a number of traditions, including the Indian, the Buddhist tradition. Because you are supposedly imitating the movement of the sun. In most traditions and cultures this clockwise movement is considered auspicious, and the anti-clockwise movement is considered inauspicious. But it may well be, it seems likely, that you move around the Buddha keeping him on your right so that you make a clockwise movement around him. One knows that in certain practices of black magic etc. one goes widdershins, you go anti-clockwise - like reciting the Lord's prayer backwards. Somebody who told his life story, I think, tried to do or did this; I'm not asking you to.

[131]

Is that the last question or is there any further question?

Subhuti: Robin had a question

: It was about Confession, and chanting sutras.

Ratnaprabha: You mentioned that following Confession it is traditional sometimes to meditate in front of the shrine and chant sutras.

S: Not exactly following confession, but as part of the confession. Because not only do you want to confess whatever you've done that is unskillful; not only do you really want to acknowledge that as unskillful; not only do you want to resolve that you are not going to perform that unskillful action again; but you want to eradicate all trace of that unskillful action, of the unskillful mental state that led you to perform that unskillful action, from your mind. You want to wipe it out completely. So you burn incense as a symbol of that, you burn incense to purify the atmosphere, and you recite the Sutras, or you read the Sutras; because, if you read the Sutras, if you recite the Sutras properly, your mind is filled with the Sutras, with the meaning of the Sutras; you are occupied with something totally different, mentally occupied with something totally different - with something spiritual, with something Transcendental. So your mind is wiped absolutely clean by that, and therefore that is regarded as being part of that whole process of confession, that you burn incense and recite, in this case, Mahayana Sutras - this is a Mahayana practice; it is mentioned by Chi I, the Patriarch of the T'ien Tai school.

Ratnaprabha: My question is really whether you could recommend any particular sutra ...

S: Well; one recites the Mahayana Sutras. One could recite one's favourite sutra; but what I suggest is that the sutra that you recite deals with the Transcendental - that it is a sutra which definitely lifts you above and beyond yourself; a sutra which definitely lifts you to a new dimension, which embodies a new dimension, a Transcendental dimension; which makes you forget all about yourself - not to speak of your unskillful mental states, it makes you forget about your very self. So this points to sutras like the Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines; points to sutras like the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa; sutras which are very profound in meaning, having a definite Transcendental content.

[132]

Also, especially, it points to the Vajracchedika, the Diamond Sutra, because there are a few words there with regard to this question of purification and the karmas. We'll probably come to that when one study group studies this text later on in the course. But the Diamond Sutra, as a short sutra, is very appropriate for this purpose.

But any sutra of profound meaning, in which you can get absorbed, and which can cause you just to forget about yourself altogether, not to speak about forget about your unskillful mental states and your unskillful actions - once you have genuinely repented of them.

Ratnaketu: It would seem that the Heart Sutra goes very well with our Sevenfold puja after the Confession.

S: Well, one could certainly repeat the Heart Sutra, or recite the Heart Sutra; it's very short. And if you recite it over and over again - I think the suggestion is that you recite sutras for a long time, depending on the seriousness of the unskillful action you have committed. The suggestion seems to be that you spend some hours, if not days, burning incense and reciting sutras to completely purify your mind.

Gunapala: In Dhyana for Beginners, isn't there almost a progression stage, about eight or nine

stages? Set out in this way like a system.

S: I must admit I can't remember in detail, but I do remember something about that.

Suvajra: When you say a sutra which would be Transcendental, can you think of sutras which would be not so appropriate?

S: Well, I think for instance sutras which tell parables wouldn't(?) be very suitable, because it's on a different level. Or sutras which deal with the Unconditioned, which deal with the Absolute, which deal with the Transcendental; which deal with that which is as far as possible from you and your little concerns. For instance, I would say, in terms of the Pali scriptures, to read the Sigalovada Sutta would not be very suitable, because it is concerned with human relationships and ethical duties and so on. It's very useful, but it doesn't exactly lift the mind above and beyond itself.

Suvajra: The Pure Land Sutras.

[133]

S: They might, but I personally think that texts like the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras and the Vimalakirti would serve this purpose much better. But it depends on the individual also. Whatever you find inspiring, whatever you find lifts you up beyond yourself and causes you to forget yourself for the time being.

Ratnaprabha: Should this be done quite formally, do you think, in front of a shrine with candles lit, and saying it aloud?

S: I think this would certainly help, yes. 'Formal' is not a word which exactly ..., but I don't see why it shouldn't be; but, yes, I think if it were done formally, that would be better - much better, in fact.

Aryamitra: It reminds me of that scene in the film *The Time Bandits*, where you've got this little house with people quarrelling and all concerned with very petty concerns, and in fact this huge giant is just about to step on it. Not a very ...

S: I remember seeing that film myself. I must say I don't feel your illustration is altogether appropriate (Laughter). In comparison with what I have in mind, that giant seems so tiny. He is only 10 or 12 times bigger than a human being; but you need, so to speak, something which is a million times bigger than you are, or a hundred million times bigger than you are, or a whole nyuta of khotis of kalpas bigger than you are. That is the sort of thing that one has in mind.

Shantiprabha: Robin was talking about chanting the sutras. Do you think there is any difference between chanting aloud and just merely reciting them over in your own mind, as it were?

S: I think there's a great deal of difference between reading them to oneself in one's own mind and speaking them aloud, whether by way of reading aloud or by chanting. I think this makes a tremendous difference. I think you are probably more likely to pay close attention to the meaning if you read aloud. When you read aloud, what you read has a sort of objective

existence 'out there'. It's less easy for your mind to wander. The only thing you have to be careful of is that you don't pay so much attention to the act of reading, the act of reciting, that the meaning passes you by. But the Tibetans don't even think that that matters, (...) to read or recite or chant aloud. I would say if you can also concentrate on the meaning, so much the better.

[134]

Sometimes the Tibetans, when they chant the scriptures and read the scriptures (...), they read two or three pages conscientiously and then they go 'wur-wur-wur-wur-wur, wur-wur-wur-wur-wur' - they just turn over a whole lot of pages, and then they come on to 50 pages on, and then they start chanting or reading that, just keeping it (...). And in extreme cases they will just recite the title of the book and then just go [gesturing]; ... they do become a trifle mechanical (Laughter)(...) particularly inspired. You mustn't do things like that. The Tibetans are very good examples in many respects, but even the Tibetans are not infallible.

Bodhiruchi: Is that part of the reason why you do quite long readings in the pujas?

S: No, I'm just asked to (Laughter); no doubt for very good reasons. I am just asked to, so I comply; I have no objection.

Subhuti: We just asked you because you did it last year!

S: Anyway, is that all? All right, then.

Day 7

Tape 7, Side 1

S: So what ground has been covered this morning and what questions do you have?

Vessantara: Most of the groups have been looking at the first part of the lecture on 'Perfect Speech'. My group finished off the last section of 'Perfect Emotion', the Sevenfold puja. There are one or two questions arising out of that.

The first one was that, in the short section on the Dedication of Merits, you were talking about that section paving the way for the Bodhisattva vows. You mentioned that, in the East, those vows are recited by people who haven't taken formal Bodhisattva ordination as part of their daily practice, and we wondered, whilst we could see that we wouldn't be taking those vows, why they weren't recited in the Friends when there is a strong emphasis on the Mahayana and the Bodhisattva Ideal.

[135]

S: There are two questions here, mainly; two considerations. The first one obviously is that of regular steps. The Bodhisattva vow is a very tremendous thing, and obviously not to be recited lightly. So I think in the first place one can look at it from the point of view of following a path of regular steps. Even with regard to the recitation of the Refuges and Precepts, we don't follow a path of regular steps, inasmuch as anybody who comes along and joins in the Sevenfold puja does participate in the recitation at least of the Refuges and Precepts; so one might say they do that by way of what I've called a provisional Going for

Refuge. At least perhaps it is sowing a sort of seed even though they don't have much appreciation of what it is all about. That is the sort of Going for Refuge that does go on in most Buddhist countries.

So one might perhaps argue that the same principle could be applied to the Bodhisattva Ideal and the Bodhisattva vow; perhaps logically it could, but my own feeling is that the Bodhisattva vow as such, or the various sets of Bodhisattva vows, in a sense go so far beyond even the Going for Refuge that the very idea of just anybody coming along and reciting it, or joining in a recitation of it, or even of it being recited at gatherings of the Order, requires very serious consideration indeed. One would not really like to imagine people reciting Bodhisattva vows lightly. If they had even the slightest awareness of what they were reciting, it might well make their hair stand on end.

For instance, if you take ordinary precepts - that is to say, well, the precept not to take life, not to take what is not given - even if you are not a Buddhist you can to a great extent understand these and make something of them; even think in terms of practising. But Bodhisattva precepts and Bodhisattva vows would seem to belong to such a different category, they can hardly be approached in this way. So therefore I have tended to exercise some caution. I don't rule out the possibility that, on certain occasions, especially solemn occasions when the Order is gathered together, Bodhisattva vows may not be as it were 'collectively', inverted commas, recited, to give expression to our awareness that there is this other-regarding as it were Bodhisattva aspect or dimension to the whole process even of Going for Refuge itself at a deeper level. But even that, I think, should be done most seriously after very careful consideration, and not lightly by any means.

I know that in Mahayana Buddhist countries sometimes Bodhisattva vows are recited almost mechanically by people who [136] haven't taken as it were formal Bodhisattva ordination, but I don't think there is any need for us to follow bad habits or bad customs that Eastern Buddhists have got into.

Vessantara: Arising out of that, when you first started the Order you seem to have envisaged four levels of ordination: ..., ..., Maha upasaka ordination, Bodhisattva ordination. More recently you seem to be emphasizing the Going for Refuge ...

S: This is true.

Vessantara: Do you foresee that there will be more Bodhisattva ordinations in the future?

S: I don't. No. I don't, no.

Vessantara: Would you like to explain your thinking?

S: Well, I have explained to some extent in the past: the main point being that I see less and less the taking of Bodhisattva vows as an individual thing in the ordinary sense. It's as though the taking of the Bodhisattva vow goes beyond the framework of subject and object; or even the Going for Refuge at a deeper level goes beyond it. In the case of the Bodhisattva vow, one goes beyond the distinction between individual development and the development of other people, or devoting oneself towards the development and helping other people to develop. So it is not, in a sense, something that can be taken by an individual. Though, in the East, in the

past, yes, Bodhisattva vows have been taken by individuals; but, strictly speaking, I think they cannot be taken by individuals.

So I have tended to think that the Bodhisattva vow is something which should be as it were 'taken' by the Order as a whole; that the Bodhisattva spirit, the Bodhicitta, so to speak, is something which should pervade the Order as a whole and all its activities. This is why from quite early on I spoke of the Order as embodying the figure of Avalokiteshvara, with each Order member being one of those thousand arms or thousand hands, each bearing its particular implement or emblem. So that has been my thinking.

Because I think if you take, if you consider some at least of these Bodhisattva vows seriously, you cannot, if you are at all imaginative, if you've got the least scrap of imagination, [137] you cannot imagine yourself as an individual ever carrying out those vows. Something different is clearly involved: a process in which you may participate but which is not anything that you just as an individual can ever do.

Vessantara: Is it not a question of as it were imagination? ... in the puja which I recite(?) which on a literal level I ... (?)

S: The Bodhisattva vows go far beyond that, when it speaks of a Bodhisattva vow ... speak in terms of thousands of millions of years and what you are going to do during those thousands of millions of years. This is something with which our imagination really is quite unable to grapple. One is not really concerned here, in the case of the Bodhisattva vow, with something that an individual in the narrow sense, especially an unenlightened individual, is doing or even thinking of doing. One is thinking of a sort of what I have called for want of a better term sort of cosmic force, with which one can co-operate, with which one can even become quite (...) but not anything one can as it were take upon oneself.

Devamitra: So what point is there at all in having one individual taking the Bodhisattva vows?

S: I think there is less and less point. I see less and less point, even though that has been the Buddhist tradition in the past. This brings us to another point. The so-called Bodhisattva ordination, which as most people know I took myself from Dhardo Rimpoche, is sort of modelled upon the monastic ordination. So to some extent, therefore, the Mahayana has modelled itself upon the Hinayana. In much the same way as for all bhikkhus there is a list of precepts, so for the person taking the Bodhisattva vow there is a list of precepts. To my way of thinking, this was perhaps a mistake, inasmuch as instead of assuming or developing its own form, the Mahayana in this respect modelled itself too closely upon the Hinayana. Because how can you take precepts as a Bodhisattva? The whole notion, the whole ideal of a Bodhisattva goes far beyond any such thing. You might say, strictly speaking, even the idea of a bhikkhu goes beyond it, but if even the idea of a bhikkhu goes beyond it, if a bhikkhu is not just one who observes certain precepts, how much more so is a Bodhisattva not simply one who observes certain precepts, not even Bodhisattva precepts? How can you reduce the ideal of a Bodhisattva, what a Bodhisattva is supposed to do or how he is supposed to function, to a list of specific precepts? It seems to go even more against the spirit [138] of the Bodhisattva Ideal than the bhikkhu precepts go against the spirit of the bhikkhu ideal, in some cases.

Devamitra: So would you say there's a sort of, for want of a better way of putting it - Hinayanic literal-mindedness infecting the Mahayana?

S: Possibly; possibly. Because what does one find? One finds Mahayana sutras which give quite glowing descriptions of the Bodhisattva Ideal - they depict the Bodhisattva in action - and then it seems, at a later stage, certain people came along and they took out from these sutras descriptions of the things that the Bodhisattva did, and they reduced them, so to speak, to a list of precepts, things to be observed by the Bodhisattva, which in a way was fair enough but which, I think, ultimately was not really in accordance with the whole spirit of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

Vessantara: How far back does the Bodhisattva ordination go?

S: We don't really know. It certainly post-dates the great Mahayana sutras. It is quite late texts that give us very much information about any kind of Bodhisattva ordination as a sort of formal occasion, as a ceremony. Perhaps not before the time of Asanga - yes, certainly not before the time of Asanga. In other words, about 1000 years after the Buddha himself.

So in some Mahayana Buddhist countries, for instance in Japan, the Bodhisattva ordination has completely replaced bhikkhu ordination, and it has become in effect a sort of ordination of a Buddhist priest, almost. And I would say that the Bodhisattva precepts in most cases are not taken very seriously or really very imaginatively.

Vessantara: One more question arising out of the Sevenfold puja, an historical one. We know that the Sevenfold puja's literary source is the Bodhicaryavatara. Where as an actual practice does the Sevenfold puja start to appear in Buddhist history?

S: It certainly appeared in Tibet. It is very widely used in Tibet, right down to the present day. It provides the framework for Tibetan pujas of a non-Tantric character; and the use to which the Tibetans put the Bodhicaryavatara of Santideva in this respect seems to have had precedents in India itself, as far as we can tell. It seems that, in making this sort of use of the verses of Bodhicaryavatara, especially the first chapter [139] or second chapter, they were following an established Indian tradition. But exactly when it was established, we can't tell. It must, of course, have been after the eighth or ninth century, that is to say after the time when the Bodhicaryavatara was produced, or composed.

Vessantara: One last inquiry: you were producing an alternative version of the puja out of the Sutra of Golden Light. What has happened to that?

S: It is still in the course of production. I have it all somewhere in a file. I hope to complete it some time.

This also has Tibetan precedents. The Tibetans also made use of the Sutra of Golden Light in this kind of way.

Subhuti: Are there any other traditional texts used in that way?

S: Not as a sort of framework in that way, though there are texts which are very popular and which perhaps we should try to get translated. For instance, there is a very popular hymn to

Manjughosa. This is recited every morning by Dhardo Rimpoche's students in his school. This is something I would like to see translated. It is, I believe, used quite widely in Tibet, especially by students, especially by those studying, by young monks and so on. A sort of invocation to Manjughosa. It's fairly long - At least a few dozen verses. I remember hearing his students reciting it; it seemed to take quite a few minutes.

Subhuti: We had some questions connected with mudras.

S: Yes, before we go on to that I want to come back a bit to this question of Bodhisattva vows and precepts. There is one point that occurred to me which I haven't yet made.

I think one weakness of popular Mahayana in the East, not only at the present day but traditionally, has been what I might call indulgence in fantasy. 'When I become a Bodhisattva' or 'When I become a Buddha, I am going to do this, that and the other.' This is quite common, and quite unrealistic, and can put one quite out of touch with the ordinary demands of practical day-to-day spiritual life. You might think, and this I know does happen or has happened, that because when you become a Buddha you are going to do this and you are going to do that, it sort of excuses, exempts you from practice of the ordinary basic principles here and now in this life. So I would not like to see this sort of thing happening in our own Movement - that [140] people recite these Bodhisattva vows and take Bodhisattva precepts but really it represents no more than a flight of fancy; and perhaps gives them even inflated ideas about themselves or causes them to neglect more ordinary teachings. I think this is an additional reason for not introducing Bodhisattva vows ...

Suvajra: Do you think that the same thing happens here as say perhaps in India, saying, 'When I'm a monk in my next life'? sort of fantasizing in that sort of way?

S: Yes, but it goes far beyond that, because you might conceivably be a monk in your next life and give up the world and practise meditation and all that; but to be a Bodhisattva, in the way described in the Mahayana sutras, goes far, far beyond even that. So, so far as one is concerned in this life, to even think in those terms is really largely a matter of fantasy, which may be compensatory for one's lack of actual spiritual effort and endeavour in this life itself. This does happen and has happened in the Mahayana Buddhist East.

Ratnaprabha: Is it similarly risky to think of oneself as a novice Bodhisattva, in the first stage in that sense?

S: Well, the first stage is quite far on, so I think one should think of oneself in those terms with extreme caution. I think the most that one can realistically hope for is that in the course of one's life, in the course of one's spiritual life, in communication with other people as a member of a spiritual community, you may between you succeed in reflecting some faint glimmer of the Bodhicitta. I think that would be realistic at the present stage.

Cittapala: How does that tie up with your definition - if I remember it correctly - the other day of Hinayana Stream Entry equating to the vision of the Bodhicitta?

S: There is certainly what one might call a Bodhicitta dimension of Stream Entry. But Stream Entry itself certainly does not exhaust the possibilities of the spiritual path, and one might say that sort of aspect of the Bodhicitta which coincides with or is a dimension of Stream Entry

certainly does not exhaust the possibilities of the Bodhicitta. The Bodhicitta goes far, far beyond that.

Ratnaketu: Bhante, it just occurred to me when you said [141] that the most we can hope for in our life is within a spiritual community the possibility of reflecting some faint glimmer of the Bodhicitta. Well, obviously there is a lot more to the spiritual life than that, yet we just reflect it as a spiritual community ...

S: Well, don't misunderstand me. When I say 'faint', I mean faint in comparison with the full light of the Bodhicitta itself, yes. That faint glimmer may be blinding, if you see what I mean.

Ratnaketu: I wasn't so much meaning that. I accept that it is a faint glimmer of the Bodhicitta. But if that is the most we can expect to do, just a faint glimmer, how - there is a future of the Bodhicitta, of deepening that?

S: Oh yes, certainly. I said what we can hope for at the present. I just don't want people to be unrealistic. I don't want them to recite things without understanding or realizing or even being able to imagine what they mean. I don't want them to just go through the motions, for instance, of being Bodhisattvas and getting quite unrealistic ideas about themselves. After all, as I mentioned the other day, there are thousands, tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of people in Tibet reciting Bodhisattva vows every day, but considering that they didn't do very much to bring Buddhism to the West it would seem that they were not taking those Bodhisattva vows very seriously. We don't want that to happen again. Perhaps they were so absorbed in the contemplation of the numberless worlds to which they would take the Dharma after they were Enlightened, they forgot the wretched West, just so to speak waiting for the Dharma - or certainly needing it.

Anyway, those questions were all left over from the study of the puja in the last session.

Subhuti: These questions on mudra. There's a first one from ...

Prasannasiddhi: We were discussing our meditation postures, - this is connected with mudra. And there's something that most of us I think had heard connected with it: when you're sitting in meditation you should place the hands in your lap, and you should place the right hand on top of the left, as opposed to the left hand on top of the right. I was wondering if that was [142] just a traditional thing which has caught on, or whether it had maybe a philosophic base, or whether it actually had a physical base connected with the body.

S: This doesn't seem to be an Indian tradition. I remember when I started meditating in India, no one ever mentioned to me anything like that. I suspect it's of more Far Eastern origin - maybe deriving from Zen. I have been asked this question before, and I think what I have usually said is: adopt the position in this respect, the mudra if you like, which seems comfortable to you. I don't remember whether Indian images of the Buddha show the Buddha more with the right hand in the left or the left in the right. Perhaps we should examine them and see.

Personally, I have always put the right in the left. That seems quite right and quite

comfortable. But one can experiment. I suspect, if it has anything to do with the Far East - with Ch'an or Zen - it may have something also to do with Taoism, with yin and yang and all that sort of thing. That is a possibility, in which case it would not have a very Buddhist basis. I think the commonsense, perhaps truly Buddhist, position would be: adopt a position which you find comfortable and helpful.

At the same time, we could well examine images of the Buddha, ancient images, just to see whether there is any standard practice or standard procedure in this.

Prasannasiddhi: I had heard when I started meditating that if you placed your right leg on top of your left during one meditation, then at the next meditation you should place your left leg on top of the right, so that in that way your spine wouldn't tend to develop a curve, because it does affect your spine. In that way you would end up with spinal problems. I thought maybe the hands would also have that kind of similar effect, though not as strong as the legs.

S: I must say also that in India I never heard this question of changing posture - that is to say right leg on left or left on right - ever mentioned, all the time that I was in India. But that does not mean that there may not be something in it. But I think it is a question of people experimenting and finding out. It's not a question of saying some old yogi says this or some old yogi says that. Just practise and see: does it make a difference? Or do those who are well versed in hatha [143] yoga, experienced in hatha yoga, have anything very definite to say about this? For instance does Mr Iyengar, say, or anybody who is concerned with maybe treatment of diseases by means of hatha yoga - do they have anything to say about this? Let's have some solid information, based on experience, rather than go on bits and pieces of hearsay. It may well be that there is something in it, that it does make some marginal difference, and that we ought maybe to observe certain things in this respect. But we should know very definitely before we start saying anything very definite.

But as I said, all the time I was in India, when associating with people, especially Indians, who practised meditation, I didn't ever hear any reference to this particular matter.

Amoghacitta: Certainly in the case of the way some people sit, with one leg on top of the other, it (...) (...) (...) spine, so that if you do have (...) spine. But certainly sitting in that kind of posture can twist your spine.

S: But can it twist it to a significant or a harmful degree? That is really the question, I suppose. Because sitting cross-legged means you are sitting in a cross-legged posture; your body is bent in a way unnaturally. But presumably you come out of it when you come out of that posture. The general Indian tradition is - certainly one thing that is stressed is that you sit up straight. It is not that Indians who practise meditation ignore or overlook these things, but what they usually insist on is that you sit up straight; that you hold yourself really erect; that the chin is tucked a little in, that the hands are either folded in the lap or they are stretched out and resting on the knees - that's also a quite common posture for meditation in India - and the eyes are either closed or the gaze just kept down. And the tongue is supposed to press against the palate, the roof of the mouth. So these things they do insist upon. But I've never heard anyone insisting on this change of the posture as regards the legs. But none the less there may be something in it. We'll just have to investigate further, perhaps.

Subhuti: Another one on mudra.

Gunapala: Last night we heard a little bit about gesture and the hand movements of speakers - about how important it was what we do with our hands. And we were talking about mudras and [144] I was wondering whether the awareness of what we are doing with our hands and actually deliberately concentrating on mudras was something we could develop. We seem to be unaware of this practice - whether it is something we develop, or whether it is best just to tie your hands together and not fiddle with them.

S: Well, it basically comes down to a question of awareness: one should be aware of one's body and bodily movements. And if you are aware of your body and bodily movements, that will surely include the hands. And your hands will tend, say, when you are speaking, when you're giving a talk, to make graceful, significant gestures rather than just be aimlessly throwing themselves all over the place.

Gunapala: In a mudra, they are quite deliberate, aren't they? They are quite deliberate gestures.

S: Yes, but how did they start? How did the deliberate gestures start? In Buddhism there are five basic mudras which are associated with the five important episodes, the five principal episodes, even, of the Buddha's life, and are the appropriate mudras or positions of the hands for the Buddha at those times. For instance, when he is seated beneath the Bodhi tree ... meditating, his hands are in the meditation posture. When he goes to Sarnath and he teaches, (he is making his point?), that's the dharmacakra mudra, that of turning the Wheel of the Doctrine. And you may find, when you are giving a talk or when you are giving a lecture, when you are explaining something your hands may quite spontaneously adopt this sort of position.

And then again, when the Buddha is reassuring people, he says, 'Don't worry; fear not' - the abhaya mudra. And when he is giving somebody something - 'All right, take it, here you are' - the dana mudra, the varada(?) mudra, rather which applies to giving.

And - what's the other one?

: Bhumisparsha.

S: Ha! And when he's seated underneath the Bodhi tree prior to the Enlightenment and Mara challenges him, he says, 'Let the earth goddess come' - he calls her, and if she's living underneath the earth he taps the earth with the appropriate gesture.

[145]

But later on, in the Vajrayana, this was vastly developed. And there were mudras especially for the different offerings. I did learn these at one time; there are many traditions in Tibet, all the different schools, even sub-schools, have got mudras for different purposes.

Mudras can be very graceful; they can sort of flow into one another. It's a bit like T'ai Chi with the hands, if you know what I mean. And certainly it's very aesthetic. But I think before people come to that stage they should be much more mindful, and perhaps if they are more mindful certain mudras will naturally, spontaneously suggest themselves.

Gunapala: One doesn't follow the other, like we don't deliberately try and develop the same

way of holding our hands when we are speaking on a certain subject? It's just something that naturally comes out - it's not ...

S: Yes, (...) and from a basis of actual experience.

Subhuti: We wanted to do a bit of sorting out about the psychic centres. The head centre is connected with the body?

S: Well, there are all sorts of systems, there are all sorts of correlations. If one speaks in terms of body, speech and mind, the head centre is associated with the body, and the throat centre is associated with speech, and then the heart centre is associated with mind. But there are other correlations.

Subhuti: What about OM AH HUM?

S: In the case of OM AH HUM, the association is usually OM with the head, AH with the throat, and HUM with the heart.

Subhuti: Are they correlated with body, speech and mind?

S: Not necessarily. What were you thinking of exactly?

Subhuti: Whether the OM AH HUM correlated with those three centres, and then again with body, speech and mind; whether the three systems, as it were, overlapped, or is it just two different systems?

S: I think one could say that they overlap. For instance, when a thangka is so to speak consecrated by a lama, when it is [146] as it were vivified, the mantra OM is written opposite the head on the back, AH is written against the throat, and HUM against the heart. So in that way these three bijas would seem to be the bijas of body, speech and mind.

Devamitra: We have two questions from Ratnaketu.

Ratnaketu: The first question comes out of a discussion about body, speech and mind again, and we were in some controversy as to the relationship between mind and consciousness, when mind is in the form of body, speech and mind. We couldn't really decide whether mind and consciousness were the same or different.

S: Broadly speaking, the same, but the word in Sanskrit would be citta here. Citta, vak and kaya for body, speech and mind, or mind, speech and body. So citta is mind in the broader sense; it can be translated as 'consciousness'.

What was the point of the controversy? If 'mind' here is not citta, what else could it be if it does not include consciousness?

Ratnaketu: Well, in a way I would have thought that consciousness included mind and body and speech, and that mind in the sense of the combination of mental activity.

S: What does one mean by 'included' here?

Ratnaketu: Well, mind is a sort of aspect of consciousness rather than mind ...

S: well, we are really concerned with two things here, or two things are getting confused: English terms and Sanskrit terms. In English, 'mind' and 'consciousness' are sometimes used synonymously; sometimes a distinction is made between them. Similarly, in Sanskrit sometimes citta and manas are used synonymously or ... distinction is made between them. But I think in the case of body, speech and mind, the term for 'mind' in this context, in Sanskrit or Pali, is citta, which is usually considered to be 'mind' in the broadest sense and roughly synonymous with what we call consciousness.

Tape 7, Side 2

Khemananda: What I meant in the study group was that you [147] referred to consciousness containing time, and as being a very different level of conditionality than time, whereas I saw body, speech and mind as very much operating within time, and operating at a lower level of conditionality.

S: Well, when one speaks of body, speech and mind, it is clearly a case of, so to speak, the individual mind. It is not mind or consciousness in any deeper or wider sense.

Ratnaketu: The next question was in the Noble Eightfold Path series you say speech is given in Buddhism the same importance as mind, the same importance as body. I always thought that in Buddhism mind was actually given supreme importance over the body and speech. I even found a case in the Pali Canon where the Buddha seems to say this. I wondered what you were meaning when you said that it was given the same importance.

S: ...what I mean by importance here. What do you think it means? Why is this tripartite division made - body, speech and mind? Why is speech distinguished? Why did the Buddha for instance not say simply 'body and mind'? - well, yes, sometimes one does experience or one does come across this division, nama-rupa, which is usually translated as 'body and mind'. But very often, in the Buddhist scriptures, especially the later ones, one gets this threefold distinction of body, speech and mind. So clearly speech is being singled out as being separated from body on the one hand and mind on the other, so to that extent it is being given the same importance, in the sense that it is enumerated separately, just as mind is enumerated separately and body is enumerated separately.

I am not saying that speech is more fundamental than mind; mind clearly is more fundamental than speech - than body. But the fact that speech is enumerated separately suggests, at the very least, that equal importance, practically speaking, is being given to speech as to body and to mind.

Of course, I think I have also pointed out that it is not speech in the ordinary, narrow sense. 'Speech' is the whole principle of communication. Speech includes - well, to go back to the terminology we were using or following last year - speech includes the imaginal. Speech corresponds, in a way, to the rupaloka: if mind corresponds to the arupaloka then speech corresponds to the rupaloka, just as body corresponds to the kamaloka. It is the mediating principle between something which [148] is more subtle and something which is more gross. Speech corresponds to the arts; speech corresponds to literature, to poetry, to music, etc. It corresponds to, yes, the imaginal as distinguished from the Real, the ultimately Real, on one

hand, and the materially existent on the other. So therefore it is equally important, equally important means deserving of a separate enumeration, not more important metaphysically; Clearly mind is more important metaphysically. Buddhism says, manopubbangama dhamma, even though Christianity says ...[Greek]. Subhuti can interpret that to you.

: Can you translate for us?

S: Well, Buddhism says, you know, the first verse of the Dhammapada is: manopubbangama dhamma, which means 'mind is the first of things; mind precedes all dhammas.' Whereas the Gospel according to St John begins with the words '...', 'In the beginning', '... logos', 'was the Word' - speech, Though, of course whether logos is speech in the ordinary sense is another matter.

Devamitra: We had just one more question.

Bodhiruchi: Your splitting of the four levels of Perfect Speech - is there anywhere a traditional mention of this - such as Buddhaghosa or somewhere?

S: The four kinds of Perfect Speech are enumerated in many places in the Pali Canon and Sanskrit Buddhist works: that is to say that speech is truthful, that it is affectionate, that it is - what is the third one?

: Helpful.

S: Helpful, and timely. They are usually enumerated in that order, but seeing them as going as it were successively deeper, seeing these four kinds of Perfect Speech as representing four successively deeper levels of communication - this is my personal way of looking at it; this is not traditional. Though I think actually this is what the traditional enumeration really means. In other words, I don't regard it as an arbitrary interpretation.

Going back a bit: it is pretty obvious that first of all you speak truthfully. This is the first thing you have got to do. But then merely to speak truthfully is not enough: you've [149] got to speak with feeling, with sensitivity, awareness of the other person; so you speak with affection. That carries you more deeply into communication... speak the truth, ... 'what do you mean?' ... communication. Take it a bit further and you've got to speak with affection, you've got to have feeling for the other person, and then you can say more, you can go more deeply into communication. And then you have to speak in such a way that the other person is helped; you care for the other person. What you speak is useful; what you speak does them good, maybe it inspires them; you are going deeper into communication. And then what you speak brings people together, it creates harmony. You are not just speaking to one person, you are speaking to a number of people out of ... You are drawing people closer together, it is a ..., deeper level of communication. So I think if one just considers the order in which these different kinds of Perfect Speech are enumerated, it will become obvious that one is concerned with deeper and deeper levels of the same thing, Perfect Speech or communication or whatever you might like to call it. If you give some consideration to this list, it is evident that you haven't got just four particular qualities of Perfect Speech unrelated to each other; they do in fact represent deepening levels of communication. But, as far as I know, I am the first person to have pointed this out.

It just goes to show that teachings have been perhaps familiar to thousands of Buddhists for thousands of years but into which no one has cared to go very deeply or really look at them or really asked themselves what they mean or what the Buddha was getting at by that particular teaching.

Is that really the last question?

Bodhiruchi: Rather than seeing Buddhism as having a greater emphasis on speech than the Christian or, say, the today Christian, could you give any pointers as to why there is such an extraordinary lack of emphasis on speech in the Judaeo- Christian ethos?

S: I don't think I said that there was a greater emphasis on speech in Buddhism, not ordinary human speech. In fact, I quoted the beginning of the Gospel according to St John, which suggests an emphasis on speaking - a metaphysical emphasis. But I don't know that I would care to say that there was not an emphasis on speech in Christianity. There is some emphasis. Christ is supposed to have said, according to the Gospel, 'Let [150] your "aye" be "aye" and your "nay" "nay", which is related to speech. But certainly this particular formulation of truthful speech, affectionate speech, useful or helpful speech, speech that leads to harmony between ... - this particular enumeration is certainly not found, as far as I know, in Christian or Jewish literature.

None the less, in medieval times, many of those who were leading a monastic life within the context of Christianity were concerned with this question of speech - you might even say right speech. In some monasteries silence was observed; some orders observed complete silence and never spoke: the Trappists, for instance. So some attention, certainly, was given to this question of speech, certainly by monks in monasteries, in the case of Christianity. Also in Judaism there was a commandment: 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour', which clearly concerned right speech, or what we might call right speech. Anything more or have the questions dried up ...

Amoghacitta: If there is no other question, I would like to ask you a bit more about the puja. It's with reference to people doing it before they can really understand what they're talking about, perhaps (...)(...)(...)(...).

S: Well, presumably we are talking about the Sevenfold puja. I think we have to ask ourselves not just what puja means, but what participation in puja means, especially for the relative newcomer. I would say that I think, or at least I suspect - maybe those who have worked around Centres recently will have views of their own here - that for most relatively new people participation in a puja means participation in, say, an atmosphere. It means participation in some colourful happening along with other people. It is a sort of positive group activity. And I think, I suspect, that for quite a lot of newcomers what the words actually mean doesn't really matter very much, and they are not over-bothered that they don't understand what the words mean. I think in many cases they are happy to go along with the celebration, as they see it. They see that there is a beautiful shrine, with this impressive golden Buddha figure and lots of flowers, people seem happy and bright, jolly, friendly - and there's going to be a puja: all right, they don't mind joining in, it's an attractive sort of thing to join in. I think this is the attitude of quite a few new people or relatively new people - leaving aside those who have a definite distaste for such things on account of perhaps past associations.

[151]

So I don't know that understanding the meaning of the words fully and clearly is necessarily all that important. But, as I said, perhaps those who have been working around Centres lately and have come into contact with relatively new people, even complete beginners, may have some views of their own about this.

Gunapala: It does seem that this contact with the past - Christianity - does give them quite a reaction against anything devotional. They don't want to know; a lot of people who have had Christian upbringing don't want to know the more devotional side of Buddhism.

: But at the same time, quite a few people do just get off on the positive atmosphere, they are quite strongly affected by it. It almost takes them by surprise.

S: The atmosphere is different; it's not only a question of the FWBO. You go to the East, the atmosphere anywhere in the Buddhist world, however degenerate it may be in certain respects, the atmosphere in the temple, in a shrine, on the occasion of a puja, is invariably different. It is happy, it is cheerful, it is light-hearted, almost. It is positive, it is happy, it is affirmative. One can definitely say this, whether it's a Sinhalese temple or a Burmese temple or a Japanese or Tibetan temple. It's not an atmosphere of gloom or anything of that sort. So no doubt the atmosphere has a good influence on people; they'll see it seems to be sort of religious, there seems to be something devotional going on, but people are happy, people are cheerful, people are friendly. They can't quite make it out. Just as some people going to, for instance, Burma, years and years ago, couldn't make it out - that the Burmese were such a happy, cheerful people, and were happy and cheerful even when practising their religion. They thought that Buddhism was a pessimistic religion; people ought to be miserable when they're following it. But in Burma - since I mentioned Burma I'm not recommending this, or anything of that sort; I mention it just as a sort of illustration, they are so relaxed in their attitude to their Buddhism that they smoke great cheroots while they do their puja. You can see monks and lay people doing their puja: 'wur-wur-wur-wur...' [puffing] They don't see anything wrong with it, they are quite relaxed in their attitude. They don't see anything wrong with smoking these great big cheroots anyway. They ...in ordinary life; the shrine is no different.

Aryamitra: Do you see any way we can improve our attitude [152] - do you think there is any room for improvement in our attitude to puja? I notice ...

S: Did you say 'our' attitude? Whose attitude?

Aryamitra: I mean generally, the sort of level of pujas in the FWBO that we are experiencing at the moment. I tell you why I say this: because I remember when you took a puja at Padmaloka you put the lights right up, you chanted quite vigorously, I thought, even fast, and there was a much more attitude of festivity rather than - ...

S: I must say - I don't know whether this is just personal preference - I do prefer a bright puja, a brightly lit puja. A lot of people seem to prefer a dark room with a few little candles, and I can't help thinking that this is a little left over from Christianity, maybe especially Catholicism. But I think partly because of my experience of 20 years in India, I definitely prefer a brightly lit shrine. Not necessarily with very bright ... lighting, but certainly it should be bright rather than dim. I don't like this 'dim religious light'. I think in the case of Buddhism

it should be a brilliant dharmic light. And therefore I like plenty of light and illumination, and if possible, if it's a long puja, the sun streaming in through the window. This seems to be more Buddhistic. I definitely prefer a brightly lit puja; I do not like dim pujas very much. Especially if you've got a little candle and you are trying to (Laughter)(...)(...).. see people's faces [as] light patches appearing through the gloom. That seems to strike a definite note to a beginner, that it is bright.

And I think the chanting should be vigorous. Clearly you can overdo it, and be a bit insensitive. And I think perhaps if I sense that people are a bit sluggish or a bit dull, I tend to chant not only a bit more vigorously but even a bit faster.

Aryamitra: I notice also there seem to be two attitudes. They might both be valid. One is where somebody just has their eyes quite closed and you can't quite hear them, just sort of mouthing the words, maybe like really trying to get into the meaning of the words. The other one is with eyes quite open, looking around, chanting. Do you think - ?

S: Well, I suppose it's just extravert and introvert. There may be ... feel: whether they make you maybe feel more strongly by as it were concentrating more within yourself - fair enough. But if you feel more, ... more strongly by looking about you and seeing the lights and the flowers and the people, [153] fair enough, you do it that way. The important thing again is that we feel.

But what we must beware of is an undue solemnity. Sometimes the chanting - maybe this is why I sometimes try and chant a bit more vigorously or even more fast - sounds quite dirge-like. I sometimes sit at a distance from the shrine just to hear ... It really sounds dirge-like and mournful. This is not really very Buddhistic. It really does sound as though you are bewailing your sins... I expect to hear the whips crack at any moment.

I have also noticed that a morning puja has a different atmosphere from an evening puja. It is brighter; people seem to have more energy. Perhaps that is only to be expected. We mentioned this, I think, the other day.

Amoghacitta: Is it a strong tradition to perform puja in the evenings? Because it seems as though a morning puja is much brighter.

S: Well, in monasteries, certainly, you have pujas at all hours of the day. I think in Tibet I remember hearing there are always three pujas in the course of the day, and on special occasions there are five, which everybody has to attend. There are certainly morning pujas, yes.

But I suppose we tend to have in the FWBO evening pujas more, or to place more emphasis on the evening pujas, for obvious practical reasons, especially in the case of Centres, because that's when people come along.

Amoghacitta: But perhaps more in the context of retreats, even this retreat it would be a good opportunity to do ...preferable.

S: Well, perhaps that could be considered.

Any further points? We've got four minutes left. Anything more about pujas? Aryamitra inquired whether it wouldn't be possible to ... improve the pujas, whether there were ways of improving them. Has anyone got any suggestions? I mentioned my personal preference for a well-lit puja rather than a gloomy one.

Gunapala: I think you made the point of putting more [154] effort into it, and I think that is the key factor, of just deliberately putting more energy and more effort into what we do, each person doing that. And I think puja would just take off. The puja itself seems to work, if you put the effort in. You end up with the result; I think if people don't put the effort in, they don't get the result.

S: You get out of it what you put in.

Gunapala: I think it's as simple as that.

Ratnaketu: I was thinking as well that quite often we just do - it's really common just to do puja in the clothes that you were using to do something else, even work clothes and things like this. And I think we are a bit afraid of putting on special clothes or having special puja clothes. I think we are a bit afraid of that.

S: I remember on my first visit to New Zealand I noticed that they dressed up for pujas in those days. They wore all sorts of colourful kaftans. Some were purple and some were emerald green - men! But by the time of my second visit, for some reason or other that practice had died away. People used to keep their colourful kaftans at the Centre and slip them over their heads for the puja. It did look quite good.

Gunapala: That means they'd have to build a wardrobe for their clothes. We'd have to build a changing room and a wardrobe at the centre.

S: No doubt there is a point here, because it does have some psychological effect if you change your clothes. A change of clothes does help to bring about a change in your state of mind. But certainly you should go into puja in dirty, dusty clothes; this would be quite inappropriate, and not at all helpful.

Gunapala: I think there's a good point there.

S: Again, Tibetans, one of the things they do, they always rinse their mouth out before puja. Yes, this suggests that before you recite the holy words as it were you just wash your mouth, which has been perhaps talking about all sorts of ordinary, everyday, vulgar things, not to speak of eating food and disagreeable things like that. So you just wash your mouth out so then your mouth is clean and pure, so to speak, for the [155] recitation of the words of the puja. They can't wash before a puja because of climatic conditions, but they always rinse their mouth before a puja.

Cittapala: I'm sorry, I can't remember in what connection, but on some previous occasion we've actually had some sort of tea ceremony, or something along those lines, in the connection of the puja.

S: That's true, yes, it described itself as a tea ceremony, but it was just simply a quiet

semi-ceremonial allegedly Japanese-style pseudo-... Zen sort of cup of tea. It did go down very well, some ... there.

Gunapala: It used to bring people together more in the Shrine Room.

S: Well, ... if the puja can't bring them together (Laughter); if only tea can bring them together - !

Cittapala: Can you actually - how did it actually happen?

S: As far as I remember - I forget whose idea it was, but at the very end by pre-arrangement people just continued sitting quietly without speaking in the shrine, and the two people previously appointed went and brought in cups and saucers and - no, I think it was bowls actually, Japanese-type bowls; and it was jasmine tea, I remember, which was the in thing at that time in the FWBO ... And a big kettle of hot water, and these were all placed in front of me, and I poured out hot water over just a pinch of jasmine tea, and people handed it round. I remember I wasn't always very happy about this because people hadn't really thought that this enormous kettle of hot water ... pour it quite gracefully, which was rather difficult. But no doubt things could be improved.

But, yes, it did add something to the proceedings. It kept people a little longer sitting in the shrine quietly, and together; we made a sort of rule, so to speak, there should be no talking, everything should be done in silence. It meant people spent about 20 minutes more in the shrine in this way, just sitting together in silence, and that was all to the good.

Gunapala: It brought a domestic situation into our Buddhism.

S: I wouldn't like to think of it in that way!

[156]

Subhuti: I hesitate to mention this, but one of the only features of Christianity that I remember enjoying was hymn singing. I don't suggest we use the Hymns Ancient and Modern, but it would be really good to have some songs in ...

S: Well, some of the Chinese Buddhists of Malaysia have tape recorded what they call Buddhist hymns. We perhaps could get them and listen to them. I know in America some of the indigenous Chinese and Japanese Buddhist groups in the Buddhist churches, as they call them, with their Buddhist ministers and Buddhist weddings and baptisms, do favour the singing of Buddhist hymns, and that they have adapted some Christian hymns. There was one I remember reading which started like this: 'Buddha loves me, yes, I know, 'Cause my sutras told me so!' (Loud laughter) I don't know how well that would go down... Some people are vomiting already ... But apparently Malaysian Buddhists regard hymn-singing as a very exotic practice; it rather appeals to them, much as the tea ceremony appeals to us. It's a bit of a novelty. They sing Buddhist hymns to a harmonium, a little organ.

Anyway, perhaps we can close there.

Day 8 Tape 8, Side 1

Vessantara: It seems that we are finding it quite hard to find questions from the text. It seems quite straightforward. Our group certainly hasn't got any. Suvajra's going to ask...

Suvajra: We were discussing transmission systems. You spoke about on the Tibetan Book of the Dead seminar, the Buddha offering the book as the thing that is needed in the animal realm, and you spoke of it in terms of a sort of transmission system, a system whereby information, knowledge, could be transmitted in some other form and re-used.

S: Not quite, but anyway carry on.

Suvajra: So the question was - first of all, were the Vedas written down at the time that the Buddha was around? And, if they were ...

S: No.

Suvajra: No? Ah. The second one was, if they weren't [157] written down, why did not it occur to them to write these things down?

S: It seems that the ancient Indians considered writing to be a very unreliable form of transmission. They considered oral transmission to be more reliable. That was one point. Another point was that in the days of the Buddha writing was regarded as something very secular and worldly. Writing seems to have come into India from Babylonia, from ...sia, and it seems it was originally associated with things like commerce, keeping accounts, so that the associations were all very secular. And it was only after the time of the Buddha that writing began to be used for recording religious teachings. Until that time, they were transmitted entirely by word of mouth, and the Vedas were transmitted for many, many generations - many, many centuries, in fact - by word of mouth, as were most of the Buddhist scriptures. So it was the people who knew certain traditions or teachings by heart who were the, one might say, living transmission system, the living books. This is one reason, originally, why the murder of a brahmin was considered such a serious matter, because if you murdered a brahmin you murdered someone who knew the Vedas - at least in theory he should have known the Vedas - so you cut off your own sources of knowledge - apart from killing a human being.

Coming back to this question of the book, it's not so much a question of transmission in the narrow or limited sense as of preservation and handing on, handing down. It's because human beings have written records, largely speaking, that the knowledge, the experience, the discoveries of past generations can continue to be available even in the present; so knowledge and experience gradually in this way accumulate. This is why the animals have no way of recording, and by recording transmitting, their experience from generation to generation. Human beings have developed that facility, so in the case of human beings experience is not limited to your own experience; you can draw on the experience of other people, even of people long dead.

So the fact that the Buddha in the Wheel of Life presents the animals with a book suggests that he presents to animals, or even to animal-like human beings - the possibility of an increment to their own experience, thus enabling them to become human or truly human. It's the book that makes all the difference between human beings and animals - taking the book as a symbol.

[158]

Shantiprabha: We had quite a lot of discussion about the value of television in propagating the Dharma in the West. One of the points which emerged in the discussion was that we see the television as being something quite worldly as well. We wondered if you had any thoughts about whether we could use television constructively.

S: I personally don't agree that a particular facility can necessarily be regarded as in itself worldly or unworldly. A great deal depends on the use you make of it. No doubt at present television is used largely for worldly purposes; there is no reason why it shouldn't be used for other purposes, as in the case of writing. But whether one will actually be able to use it in that way to any extent that would really make a difference, that would really help, that is another question: I just don't know.

Cittapala: You haven't given any thought as to the possibility - the extent to which one might be able to use the medium of television or, say, video or something of that nature?

S: I am quite sure it could be used. I have no doubt about that at all, just as any other medium of communication could be used. But then that means first of all one needs quite a lot of money; one has got to have the skilled people, and one also needs to give very careful thought to the presentation of the Dharma through that particular medium. Quite a few people in the FWBO are interested in films, interested in television, interested in videotape; but whether they have actually thought out, really seriously, how, if at all, one is to present the Dharma through these media, I don't know. But there would seem to be no a priori reason why one shouldn't utilize a particular medium for the communication of the Dharma. It is well known that in America, for instance, there are all sorts of privately owned TV stations; I say privately owned - they are owned by very often one-man religious corporations, and they put out religious programmes all the time. Well, they put out their own sort of programme. We would probably not find what they put out very acceptable: I have heard specimens of actual material. But no doubt we could do better.

One has also, of course, to take into account the nature of the medium itself. This is why I spoke of giving careful thought, because we all know that to some extent at least the medium is the message. One has to consider, when you use [159] television, to what extent television is itself a message; to what extent, even though you are, say, putting across Buddhism through the medium of television, you may not perhaps be putting across, inasmuch as you are using television at all, a different sort of message; perhaps one that is not compatible with Buddhism. One has to consider that. I am not as it were prejudging the issue, but these are the sort of considerations that one needs to think very carefully about.

Cittapala: Would that have any connection with the Buddha's strictures on actors and theatrical events and that sort of thing?

S: Well, would it? Perhaps that is one of the ... that we need to consider. But one also needs to consider the basis of the Buddha's strictures on the acting profession conveyed in his words to Talaputo, the impresario as that word is translated: the stage manager... I take it everyone is familiar with those quotes?

Voices: No.

S: Oh dear. There was an occasion on which a sort of stage manager, or actor-manager, perhaps, called Talaputo, came to the Buddha, and he wanted to ask the Buddha a question. I don't remember whether this was one of the occasions on which the Buddha refused twice to answer the question and then answered on the third occasion: perhaps it was. But the question was what truth there was in the ancient tradition, current among stage folk, that actors (presumably actresses also, but only actors were asked about) on the break-up of the body after death go to a happy heavenly world, the world called the Heaven of the Laughing Gods, because during their lifetime they made people laugh. So Talaputo wanted to know whether there was any truth in this tradition. And the Buddha said there was no truth in that tradition: that, far from going to any heaven, they went in the opposite direction, they went to a state of downfall. And he gave the reason for that. He said 'Themselves being subject to lobha, they give rise to states of lobha in other people' - that is to say by their acting. 'Themselves being subject to dosa, they give rise to dosa in other people; themselves being subject to moha, they give rise to moha in other people.' So they are as it were doing the work of Mara: they are not only bringing about unskilful states in their own minds, but they are bringing them about in the minds of other people, which is a very serious matter.

So one can infer from this what was the state of the [160] primitive drama in ancient India in the Buddha's time. It could not have been anything very refined: it could not have been anything very noble. It could not have been anything very elevating. It probably corresponded to a great deal of the sort of stuff one can see on television today.

So what about the moral, the karmic, responsibility of the people responsible for purveying that sort of material? The same applies to film, the same applies to all sorts of other media. But conversely, one could say, if through the medium of acting, even through the medium of television, yourself being, say, full of faith you were able to communicate faith to other people, yourself being, say, full of joy you are able to communicate joy to other people - surely that would be meritorious, and perhaps you would go, if not to the Heaven of the Laughing Gods, perhaps to some other heaven.

But I think the Buddha's indictment of the acting profession as it then existed is a very terrible one, and it applies, I think, to the acting profession - whether as regards the live theatre or as regards TV - today. Really, if one - I don't watch television; I think I've seen it twice in my life - well, no, no; maybe I'm exaggerating. No, I've actually watched it consciously and deliberately for the sake of seeing a programme, I think twice; and I have been forced to see it when visiting relations, I think, twice. But I listen to radio quite a lot, and even though I generally listen to the Third Programme, even there there is a lot that from a Buddhist point of view is not very desirable. Even when one listens to the news, the straight news, the content of which is often not very uplifting, but anyway it's news, it's information or it purports to be information - you have to get it very often via sort of chat and backchat between a male and a female announcer, which is really quite irritating; as if to say even the news can't be presented in this unsexualized form. It really is, one might say, quite disgusting. But this is to be expected as things have gone. It is this sort of medium that one has to take up, perhaps, and use.

I think the media themselves, in themselves, are quite good, but it's such a pity that they are put to such very unworthy uses, usually.

Cittapala: Would you then feel that, even if the FWBO were to produce a programme, or even

a series of programmes, presenting them as it would be in between slots, other stuff over which we wouldn't have any control, it might have a debilitating [161] effect?

S: This is one of the considerations which would have to be weighed. I don't know, I can't give the answer straight off now. I am sure there are all sorts of factors to be taken into consideration. One might consider that one would do better devoting one's energy not to TV shows presenting Buddhism or putting across Buddhism, but to a campaign for the abolition of television altogether.

Amoghachitta: You have taken part in a few programmes, interviews yourself. Do you generally feel that that has been worthwhile?

S: As regards interest created among people, or people coming along to the FWBO as a result of that, or writing to me - very, very little indeed. It was no doubt fun for me to do, but not anything really very productive or useful, perhaps. As far as my programmes on TV are concerned, their main function seems to be to keep my relations happy (Laughter), because they like to see me on TV. But ... reasons, if you go on TV you really do exist! But any dharmic consequences seem to be negligible. I had two letters, I think, as a result of my last TV appearance, and I think both were from people who were obviously cranks. On the other hand, it may be that the format was not suitable, or things could have been done in a better way, etc. etc. One must also consider that. However, I did have a very nice, agreeable, pleasant, charming lady interviewer, putting very sensible and intelligent questions: but maybe that is not the way to put Buddhism across through the medium of TV.

Perhaps we need to explore these things much more thoroughly. Maybe interviews aren't the best medium, not the best way to present Buddhism.

Amoghacitta: Have you seen the films - trilogy, I can't remember exactly what it's called, of Tibetan films?

S: I did see two of them.

Amoghacitta: What's your view on that because they were very popular.

S: I personally found them very interesting indeed, yes. But what function they perform or fulfil in awakening interest in Buddhism, or bringing people into contact with Buddhism, I just don't know; I've no information in that way. But perhaps [162] at least one might say that they help to keep the fact of Buddhism in the general consciousness of people, and they do communicate, as far as I can remember, a sympathetic impression; and maybe that is all to the good in the long run, taking a broader view of things.

On the other hand, one might argue that though very interesting they are very Tibetan and they confirm the impression of Buddhism as something foreign, something exotic - as a cultural phenomenon; one could also argue even in that way. Again, one thing needs to be weighed against another.

Vessantara: When you say that television interviews might not be a good way to present the

Dharma, have you any speculations about what might work better?

S: Well, I've only some tentative thoughts. Television is a visual medium. If you just show somebody being interviewed, and the main content of the programme is oral, let us say, and conceptual, you are not making full use of the possibilities of television, so I would think that perhaps a more purely visual approach would be more interesting. I remember seeing a film - where was this? I saw a film somewhere - it might have been, in fact, in Malaysia, in one of the Chinese temples there - about the history of Buddhism, and that was done really well, it was done almost entirely by visual means, with a little commentary. It was an American production. And you saw a map of India - it wasn't just a map of India; it was done in a quite interesting contoured sort of way, and you saw little illuminated arrows flashing in all directions, and you could really see, you could watch, the progress of Buddhism all over Asia; and there were shots of famous buildings, and there was something about the teachings; sometimes the shots illustrated the teachings - the Wheel of the Dharma, where the commentator spoke about the Wheel of the Dharma revolving, there were actual carved Dharma wheels going round, and things like that. So even though there was a commentary, the visual content was much greater and much stronger. And I thought this was quite a good film from that point of view. And aesthetically it was quite pleasing; you saw some very beautiful works of Buddhist art.

I am thinking aloud; and this applies perhaps as much to film as to television. Perhaps one should think in terms of, say, cartoon films on Buddhism: representing things like the Wheel of Life, and showing the Spiral and the Mandala of the [163] Five Buddhas. Maybe that sort of approach - I don't know, this is thinking aloud and just speculation - but again I rather wonder, as I said, whether an interview on Buddhism, interviewing someone about Buddhism, is the best way of using TV. It seems that you are not making full use of those visual possibilities which are offered by TV.

Cittapala: So you feel that animation techniques definitely do have a possibility? We were talking about this the other day in connection with Tibetan depictions of Bodhisattvas and so on, and I noticed some people feel quite strongly that unless an artist has some insight as to what the experience of a Bodhisattva would have been, to depict it in a pop-art type of form or something is denigrating and doesn't help at all.

S: No, I don't think Bodhisattvas should be depicted in a pop-art form while one has traditional Buddhist art to fall back on.

Cittapala: But do you feel that, as you said just now, animation techniques could be used - ?

S: Broadly speaking, yes. I certainly saw them used quite successfully in this little film that I mentioned: not animated figures but diagrams and so on. Maps and things of that sort. And an animated dharmacakra actually turning round.

But I think first of all one has to consider the general question of whether one should make use of a particular medium, a particular facility, at all, in view of perhaps its overall position in and effect on current society. Then, two, one should consider the particular nature of that medium if one does decide to use it, so that one uses it properly and to the full. And, thirdly, one has to make quite sure that one is really in touch with the Dharma material which one is purporting to put across. You must really know what you are doing from the dharmic point of

view. It isn't enough just to be enthusiastic and have an interest in these media.

Vessantara: Suvajra had a question.

Suvajra: This question was on the value of keeping a diary. Have you any views on the value of keeping a diary or journal, and especially -

[164]

S: It comes in handy when you do the Confession of Faults. You can just refresh your memory.

Suvajra: And especially in meditation, because one of your Indian contacts - I think it was Anandamayi - suggested to you that you keep a meditation diary. I have never done this myself, nor have I recommended it.

S: I did keep a meditation diary for a number of years, and I then destroyed it. I kept another sort of meditation diary for a short period - maybe some time after, during the late period; that I did not destroy, I still have it. I think it can be useful. I found it useful, I think, in two or three different ways. First of all, it enables one to check one's regularity of practice. If you look back you can see how regularly you have meditated, how many days a week, for instance, you have meditated once or twice; whether there were any serious gaps. If you keep a meditation diary, you can at least see that.

But I also noticed that if you recorded, however briefly, different experiences that you had had, this could be quite encouraging later on when you just leaf through your meditation diary, because one very often forgets even quite significant experiences. You forget that you had them. This was certainly my experience, and leafing through the pages of one's meditation diary you discover you have had quite a number of different experiences; something is happening. And that can be quite encouraging. So from this point of view also I think it is useful to keep a meditation diary.

Bodhiruchi: Why did you destroy it?

S: I'm not quite sure. I don't even remember exactly when I did. It might be that I had accumulated several volumes and they were impedimenta, things one had to carry around or look after, so it might have been for that reason. Or it might have been that I felt I didn't need to look through them or keep them any longer; they had fulfilled their function, they could just be destroyed. It might have been just that. I don't clearly recollect, because it was quite a few years ago - well over 20, say - or maybe nearer 30. But I kept them in some detail.

Also perhaps it has the function of confirming your feeling that meditation is a serious business; that it is something to be kept watch over, you need to keep a constant [165] check on what is happening - without being too precious about it. There is a saying: you plant a flower, you mustn't pull it up every few days to see how it's getting on and whether the roots are sprouting. In the same way, you shouldn't bother about your meditation, you shouldn't worry about it; just get on with it regularly. So your meditation diary shouldn't be a source of worry. If you find yourself worrying more because you are keeping a meditation diary, just don't keep one.

Another reason is that you can see the ups and downs of your practice. You might see that for a whole month your meditation followed a particular pattern, or that there was a particular difficulty recurring and that then it faded away. In that way you can come to know yourself better and understand and realize what sort of effect the meditation is having on you.

So I think it can be useful; it can be a useful thing to do. I think also that one should keep one's diary strictly for one's own private information; I don't think it's probably a good idea to show it to other people, unless it's some spiritual friend whose advice, perhaps, you are seeking. I don't recollect that I showed my meditation diary to anyone.

Suvajra: If you're teaching meditation at Centres, do you think it would be useful to suggest to someone to try - somebody at the beginning stage?

S: No, only when someone is established with a regular meditation practice, otherwise there is no point in it, not really. Maybe you shouldn't suggest it to anybody who isn't a Mitra, or in that respect equivalent, that is to say even though they may not be a Mitra at least they keep up a regular meditation practice. Then they have got something as it were to keep track of.

The later diary which I kept, the short one, was a very brief notation; that was all I needed then. The earlier ones were of a quite lengthy description.

Vessantara: Other than material for your Confession of Faults, would the same points arise in keeping a general diary?

S: General diary: why does one keep a diary?

Bodhiruchi: To write one's memoirs.

[166]

S: Well, that suggests if one hasn't got a diary one can't write memoirs. That makes things rather difficult for me. Well, one function that the keeping of a diary fulfils - more so, perhaps, the keeping of a journal - you get regular daily practice in writing. I think this is very useful for anybody with any sort of literary interest or intentions, or even ambitions. I think regular practice of actual writing is very helpful, and one of the easiest ways of doing that, apart from writing letters, is keeping a diary or journal - because, as I say, a journal differs from a diary technically inasmuch as in a journal you can indulge in reflections and so on; it is not just a record of day-to-day events, it includes your thoughts.

When I was in my teens I kept a lot of journals. They have all, I'm afraid, been lost. I kept a very lengthy journal, kept it up for quite a few years - filled many volumes. I think I did it mainly for this reason - just practice in writing, exercise in writing.

Amoghacitta: It also helps you to clear up what you've been thinking, to clarify your ...

S: That's true, yes.

In the course of the last year, I have been thinking more and more that writing is in fact a spiritual discipline - writing in the literary sense is a spiritual discipline. Do those words convey anything to anybody? - writing is a spiritual discipline? Why is writing a spiritual

discipline? In what sense is writing a spiritual discipline?

Cittapala: Could it be anything to do with the first element of Perfect Speech - truthfulness?

S: I think it very much links up with that. Before you can express, you must clarify and you must define. You must ask yourself what you really think, what you really feel; and sometimes you come to know that, you arrive at a knowledge of that, an understanding of that, only in the course of the process of writing. This happens even with regard to writing letters. For instance, you might start writing a letter to somebody, and you start writing: 'Thank you for your letter, which I received about two months ago. Sorry I couldn't write to you before, I was so busy.' You stop - oh no: it wasn't that you were so busy that you didn't write. Do you see what I [167] mean? You ask yourself: 'Why did I not write? I could have written; I could have made time, why did I not write? It wasn't that I was so very busy.' So then you might have to ask yourself very seriously, and go into this question, so that your writing is honest and not dishonest. In this way, writing, even writing a letter, becomes a sort of spiritual discipline. You are having to be honest with yourself; you are having to ask yourself 'What really happened?'

So in the end, you find it such a complex business, you might simply write: 'Thank you for your letter, received three months ago. I am sorry I haven't written before', full-stop. But then you might say, 'Am I sorry? (Laughter) Am I?' Are you using that word sincerely? Do you actually feel sorry? We know that in ordinary correspondence a certain amount of cliché is permitted, even expected, but supposing you are writing to a friend, supposing you are writing to a spiritual friend: you shouldn't engage in clichés of that sort, you should write in full sincerity and honesty and truth.

So in this way writing does become a spiritual discipline. Supposing you want to describe something: supposing you want to describe a scene or an object or an incident. You have to look at that. Supposing, for instance, you want to write to somebody: 'It's a fine day, it's a lovely day.' How are you going to give content to that expression, which is after all a cliché? You say: 'The sun is shining, the sky is blue.' Well, can't you do better than that? Is that all that you see? Can't you convey it more vividly, more honestly, more truthfully? Or have you perhaps not really experienced that the sun is shining and the sky is blue? So that these things are just sort of verbal counters that you play with, not really anything that you experience.

So, yes, writing can be a spiritual discipline. It is a spiritual discipline if you take it seriously, and you really try to write, to communicate, or to express and to communicate.

Bodhiruchi: What I find among my friends is because of the general increase in availability of communication, telephone, things like that, that there is much less writing going on. Writing to me seems quite an active process, so that people generally become more lax. It's only when a friend may move, say, three or four thousand miles away that it really shows its importance.

S: My personal feeling is that the telephone should be [168] used for business communications only. I must confess that fairly recently I've had quite good communications with one or two people on the phone. For instance, I had a very good communication with Nagabodhi on the phone a few months ago. But before that I would have been rather sceptical about the possibility of such a thing. I tend to feel that the telephone is not really for that sort of purpose, and if you want really to communicate you must either speak face to face

personally, or write.

Gunapala: Before I came to England, Ratnaketu used to send us taped letters, as it's called, he would tape a letter and send it over. They were really good. The whole community sat round listening to Ratnaketu's letter. Very enjoyable, especially when you are on the other side of the world.

S: I get taped letters from Vajradaka. He prefers to do it that way, partly because his spelling is rather weak. But it is also good to hear the sound of somebody's voice.

Gunapala: Yes, you can feel them much more when you hear their voice.

Ratnaprabha: Why should it be so difficult to communicate well over the telephone?

S: I suppose the main reason, or at least one of the reasons, is that you don't actually see the other person. You hear their voice as you would if you were together, but you don't actually see their face; which is rather an odd situation. You've sort of got part of them but not the rest.

How is the time going, by the way, because my watch has stopped?

: Ten past twelve.

Tape 8, Side 2

S: Any further points?

Ratnaketu: I've got something which is half observation and half question, which is one of the things from the Question and Answer sessions which we've had. The thing that has come over most strongly to me from them is that -

[169]

S: On this occasion?

Ratnaketu: On this occasion - is that you seem to be always saying 'What do you mean by - ?' and always saying 'Going back to the original sources; going back to the Pali Canon and the Sutras.' And also saying 'Going back to personal experience.' And this came over very strongly. I wondered whether this was something new that you have been thinking about a lot recently, or is it - ?

S: I can't say that I have been thinking about it recently. No. It just seems to be called forth by the situation. It may be that I have become more conscious, or even more conscious than before, of the extent to which people don't in fact know what they mean, or don't really understand sometimes the meaning of their own questions, or at least the implications of their own questions ...

But I think perhaps if I have become more conscious of anything, or have been thinking

consciously about anything, it is of or about the need for a more thorough approach. I think very often people are not very thorough in what they do. When they, say, go in for studying the Dharma or they go into a particular topic, they don't do it sufficiently thoroughly. They don't bother sometimes to look things up in, well, say, the dictionary or in an encyclopedia, when they could in fact do that very easily. This is something that I was emphasizing on the last women's study retreat. It seems news to some people that you can actually look things up; they seem in some cases not to know how to do this.

I think - here again I am thinking a bit aloud, and I may be over-generalising - I think that in England there is the tradition of the gifted amateur. Professionalism in some respects is rather looked down upon. But if you are not careful it means that you just dabble, you are a dilettante. You don't do anything very well and thoroughly and deeply: you are just satisfied with a smattering of knowledge. And I think this attitude, this approach, sometimes carries over into Buddhism itself. One could be much more thorough; one could explore much more exhaustively, ask much more fundamental questions. But very often there seems a definite limit to people's interest, a point beyond which they do not particularly want to go. Do you see what I'm getting at?

[170]

: Do you think that is due to lack of commitment - that if you commit yourself to doing something you - ?

S: I think it's really lack of interest. Interest leads to commitment, one might say, in this sort of case. Certain questions should interest one, one should feel like pursuing them, want to go on thinking about them, finding out about them, going more deeply into them. In other words, there needs to be more *cintamayi prajna* - wisdom that comes of turning things over in one's own mind on the basis of what you have heard or learned or experienced.

: What was the term you mentioned?

S: *Cintamayi panna* or *prajna*.

Cittapala: Another question which I had from these talks was that you quite often say that when you have gone into a particular area or topic - somewhere already, some seminar or whatever - it does seem to me that the availability of this material is very restricted - obviously not intentionally, but - do you think the Movement as a whole could try and make sure, do the necessary work to ensure - ?

S: It certainly should. I think if there is the necessary interest, they will. At present, the person who has consistently shown a lot of interest in this particular respect is Padmaraja, and he has been trying to get together a transcription team; and he hopes eventually to have a group of women connected with Aryatara, connected with the Croydon Centre, living in a community together fully occupied with transcribing seminars and so on, and supported by the Croydon Centre. This is what he wants to do. He is doing whatever he can at the moment: I think one person is being supported. But it needs a concerted effort on the part of quite a lot of people. First of all, all the stuff has to be transcribed, and then perhaps published in a limited edition in unedited form, and then it needs to be properly indexed, so that one knows what has been discussed where.

For instance, I know that I have spoken at length upon the Trikaya doctrine from at least three different points of view, quite exhaustively, on three different study retreats - all of them, I think, five or six years ago. So that material needs to be available, which means there is a certain amount of indexing [171] and cross-indexing to be done. So that supposing someone is giving a talk about the Trikaya doctrine, he knows he can look up quite easily what I said in *The Three Jewels* and in the *Survey*; but then he also needs to have what I said in the course of various study retreats. If there was a proper index of this material, if that material was at least in typescript form, he could have access to what I have said on that particular topic. This would be a very, very useful thing to do. But it's a question of interest on the part of some people, and doing it, making it available to the Movement. I certainly can't do it myself - well, it would be ridiculous for me to try to do it myself, as I could be producing fresh material instead of having to occupy myself with old material.

Sooner or later we shall also need more people to edit these transcripts. I have been editing myself to a very limited extent, but in a way that also seems not exactly a waste of my time, but I could be doing other more original things, which would be more useful. But there seems to be hardly anybody in the Movement at the moment possessing the necessary skills. One needs some literary skill, some understanding of the Dharma, some understanding of my particular approach and mode of expression, etc. etc. But we have upwards of 1,000 hours of seminar on tape; and, of course, we are adding to it all the time.

Ratnaprabha: Something that I have noticed from these Question and Answer sessions has been that you quite often emphasize how we can become too attached to the particular words that we use, the particular conceptual formulations that we use. Again, has that been a conscious thing, or have you been trying to stress that more recently?

S: Not consciously. It has been a preoccupation ever since I can remember.

There is something I have been a little more concerned with or occupied with, which represents an extension of that concern with words: a concern with images. I am thinking or speaking now in terms of iconography. I have referred several times to something that Ruskin said or wrote. I read it about a year and a half or two years ago, and I have referred to it several times since. He was writing, as far as I remember, about Apollo. I think it was in *Modern Painters*. Anyway, he was writing about Apollo, and he said in effect that we have seen all sorts of figures, all sorts of statues, of the god Apollo, but do we really know what Apollo looks like? That is quite an interesting question. He said you could assume that because you have seen all these images, all these statues, all these figures, or paintings even, you know what Apollo [172] looks like; but do you? To know what Apollo looks like, or what Apollo is like, you must be in touch with a certain quality, a certain spiritual quality. It is not just sufficient to be acquainted, even familiar, with a sort of standard of traditional iconography. You have got to have some feeling for Apollo before you can have Apollo.

So it's not enough to acquaint oneself with the details of Buddhist iconography and to know, say, that Amitabha is red, and Avalokitesvara often carries a lotus, though that is a necessary stepping stone. But one has got to acquaint oneself with the spiritual qualities that those figures represent or embody, and experience those qualities for oneself. Doing that would be really knowing Amitabha or knowing Avalokitesvara, and so on. The traditional iconography has its limitations. You do not know the Buddhas or Bodhisattvas concerned simply by knowing the iconography. Even you have to ask yourself sometimes: 'Does the iconography

adequately represent that particular figure, even so far as my own limited experience is concerned?' You have to take a hard look, say, at the thangka and say, 'Look, that's supposed to be a representation of Avalokitesvara. That's supposed to be a compassionate smile. Is it a compassionate smile? Does it really express that quality?' So if it doesn't, what would a compassionate smile be like?

I remember when, I think it was Subhuti, gave a talk on Padmasambhava, he had trouble with that wrathful smile; in fact, he described it as a wrathful grin, which some people thought terrible. But anyway, one has to ask oneself, 'What would a compassionate smile look like on the face, on the countenance, of an Enlightened being?' And it may be that particular Tibetan thangkas of Avalokitesvara give one no help whatever. They are just visual cliches; just as you find - I think I mentioned at the time - in the case of Padmasambhava, you don't get a real wrathful smile in the case of certain thangkas. The artists seem to think it sufficient - well, if you curl up the corners of the mouth, that's the smile, and draw together the eyebrows, that's the frown, and that's that; you've done it, that's your wrathful smile. But that isn't nearly enough. The artist in this case has not asked himself 'What is a wrathful smile? What would a wrathful smile look like?' If you have these two qualities of wrath and smile, what would they look like if they came together? He should ask himself that, [173] experience that particular quality, that wrathful smilingness or smiling wrathfulness; he doesn't know anything about it(?).

So we have got to go beyond the traditional iconography, beyond the images on thangkas that we see or which we acquire, often at great expense. Sometimes they give us a hint of the particular quality that the image or thangka is supposed to be of, but often they don't, so we've got to go beyond, we've got to think for ourselves and feel for ourselves, imagine for ourselves. And perhaps those among us who are artists may even be able to render something of this afresh, in terms of painting and sculpture and so on; or literature, poetry.

So I have been more conscious recently, not just that words have their limitations and you've got to ask yourself what words really mean; you've got to ask yourself what the traditional images really mean, what the traditional iconography really means; whether it's really doing its job, whether it's fulfilling its function, or whether it isn't falling rather flat after all those hundreds of years.

But for instance - again, the other evening Subhuti was giving a description of Manjusri or Manjughosa, and I thought as Subhuti was speaking that a definite visual image formed in my mind. And I thought that that visual image which formed in my mind, just listening to Subhuti's description, was really much more adequate than many of the thangkas that I had seen.

Cittapala: Do you think it would be good enough for an artist to listen, say, to Subhuti's talk and then to produce a thangka on provisional lines, on - ?

S: I think it would. Because then that would be a discipline in the way that writing is a discipline. It would be trying to arrive at the truth of the matter. First of all, he would have to listen very carefully to what Subhuti was saying, would have to feel what he was saying; and then, perhaps, if he were sensitive, a visual image would arise in his mind. And if he were sufficiently skilled he would try to translate that, so to speak, into terms of actual form and colour, with the help of pigments and his knowledge of painting or whatever. I think that

would be legitimate, at least as an experimental, provisional approach, and as a discipline for the artist himself.

Cittapala: Would this have to incorporate the traditional, say, mudras and other traditional positions of the [174] body? ...

S: I think they would, at least to begin with. But I don't rule out the possibility of their moving away from the particular, let's say, cultural appurtenances, or modifying them later on; as in fact the Chinese did, the Japanese did. For instance, the Chinese didn't quite like the idea of a horse-headed Bodhisattva. That seemed to them rather indecorous. So they represented this particular Bodhisattva in the usual way as a human being; but among the ornaments of his head-dress there was a little horse's head. That fitted in more with their culture, with their conceptions of what was fitting and proper and artistic.

Dhirananda: Who was that Bodhisattva?

S: Hayagriva, which literally means 'horse-neck'; a form of Avalokitesvara.

Amoghacitta: Wouldn't one have to be extremely careful doing these kind of transformations?  
...

S: One would. In exactly the same way that one needs to be careful in even speaking about the Dharma. It's an exact parallel, there's no difference in principle. When speaking about the Dharma one asks oneself, 'Have I understood? How deep is my experience? And am I giving adequate expression even to that limited experience? Am I really in tune with the person to whom I am speaking? Am I clear? Am I direct? Do I know what I am saying?' There is no difference in principle.

Amoghavajra: A few days ago we were talking about the medium of communication of the Dharma, and saying that it had highly intellectual, and you said that in your opinion ... seemed to be ... the Abhidharma and Madhyamika. Do you think that the spirit of the teaching could be transmitted in a less intellectual way, but using just as well, so that you got the ... in a less intellectual form? I was thinking that in the Tantra we get people - some of the yogis and they didn't seem so intellectual but they definitely got to Enlightenment.

S: I think that the category of 'intellectual' itself needs some examination. 'Intellectual' is a good word that has become debased in the course of centuries. But there is no doubt that for the sake of Enlightenment you don't need much in the way of academic equipment, let us say - let's avoid the use [175] of the word 'intellectual' - you don't need much in the way of academic equipment; you don't need, perhaps, a great deal of information about all sorts of things. But I think, as regards the communication of the Dharma, the more directly it is done the better. Also I think the fewer the number of people to whom it is communicated at one time, the better; which of course creates tremendous problems. I think I have probably got a wider experience of this sort of thing than anybody else here, because I have communicated the Dharma at one end of the scale to maybe 100,000 people at a time - not on my recent visit but on some of my earlier travels in India - and of course, at the other extreme, to one person; and in between to groups of 20, 30, 100, 500 or 600, 2,000 or 3,000, 10,000, 20,000. But I certainly do notice that the subtlety and delicacy of one's communication, or the degree of subtlety or delicacy which is possible, diminishes, other factors being equal, the larger the

number of people whom you are addressing at the same time.

So I think that one needs to be aware of this, and aware of the fact that the most effective Dharma communication - assuming the person to whom you are speaking to be ready and to be receptive - is that which is one to one, and you just play it by ear; you draw on your own experience, and you talk and you make use of concepts and of images; you may use gestures; you may even use a friendly slap on the back; you may use physical contact, even, to communicate partly what you want to say. But I do think the most effective communication of the Dharma is on a one-to-one basis.

That doesn't mean that you are necessarily spending your time best just with one other person. It's got to be one other person to whom, in fact, you can communicate the Dharma. It's not simply that you take one person out of an audience and you communicate to him just by himself what you might otherwise have communicated to a lot of people; no, you've got to be able to take full advantage with that other person of that different situation, otherwise in a sense you are wasting your time, because there is no point in telling to one person after another one by one what you could just as well and just as easily tell them all together. Your getting together with one person on a one-to-one basis is justified only if you can say to that person what you couldn't have said in a larger situation. And sometimes, of course, you have to balance, you have to weigh one thing against another: whether it is better to communicate the Dharma deeply to one person or to three people, or to communicate it less deeply to 10,000 people. How are you going [176] to weigh one against the other? Sometimes it's very difficult. Perhaps one needs sometimes to consider one's personal predilections or personal feelings.

Cittapala: Going back to your point about thoroughness in the approach to the Dharma, have you any thoughts about how beginners - or at Centres - one should try and incorporate that thoroughness in getting the Dharma across?

S: I think one should incorporate that at every level. Of course, it may take different forms with beginners. The thoroughness would involve, for instance, checking up if the beginner is seated comfortably; that he knows where the toilet is; you find out if he takes tea or coffee. Thoroughness would involve all this, and being quite sure that you explained whatever he needed to know. You would check whether he had been before at all, how much he already knew, what he understood; thoroughness would show itself in this way. You wouldn't just assume he had heard certain things; you would make sure, you would check, because you would know that if he wasn't quite sure what he was supposed to be doing you would create uncertainty and interfere with the actual practice.

So thoroughness is necessary on every level; but it takes different forms. Your thoroughness on this occasion wouldn't involve - you know, if you are teaching the metta bhavana - going into everything that Buddhaghosa says about the metta bhavana, etc. That would not be thoroughness, that would be forgetting or losing sight of the actual needs of the person in front of you and just indulging your own particular interests.

So thoroughness does not mean exhaustiveness irrespective of circumstances. Thoroughness means doing something as well as you can, or as well as it needs to be done.

Cittapala: Do you have any thoughts on Dharma courses themselves, as to the particular

subject for attention, or how it should be introduced? Would you say that the chapter headings in your Three Jewels would be a good way to start off ... ?

S: I don't really know; I must say I haven't given consideration to this question. I don't know that I've taken a Dharma course as such. Oh yes, I did once in Poona, about 1961 I think it was. I think I haven't taken a Dharma course under the auspices of the FWBO - someone please correct me if I [177] am wrong; no, I haven't, Subhuti says, and he should know. This is something that developed since I stopped taking much part in public activity. Maybe I should give it some thought, some consideration.

Cittapala: I was just wondering whether, in that context, you thought the Mitrata Omnibus - do you feel that that is a particularly exhaustive and thorough approach to the Dharma, or is it just that the particular lectures included in that you just thought were pertinent to people coming up to the Preordination Retreat?

S: Well, the Mitratas in that omnibus were edited by Padmaraja, and at that time he was very mindful of the needs of Mitras. At that time, Mitrata was intended as a manual for Mitras; it departed from that subsequently and is now in the process of returning to that. But the material is definitely geared to the needs of Mitras, or certainly the needs of Mitras as they were a few years ago.

So I think that, yes, certainly that particular material is suitable for study perhaps in the context of the Dharma study course. I am not saying it is exhaustive or complete, but it represents at least a part of what people should know, what they should familiarize themselves with. And I believe it has been found to be a good basis for study. For further information or maybe other opinions you would have to ask those who had taken that sort of study. I don't know whether Subhuti has got anything to say about this, or Vessantara?

Subhuti: Well, everybody here has actually done study on it. There are certain deficiencies; it needs to be brought up to date in certain ways, but basically, yes, it's a good basis. But I think that probably for beginners, people who have got no contact with the Dharma at all, it is actually a bit much. They would probably need something a bit more simple to begin with.

S: Perhaps this is a point that needs to be stressed; maybe it should be the general point. I think one should be very careful not to feed beginners with too much material. Sometimes one gets into the subject one is talking about, one gets enthusiastic and one goes into it to such an extent that the poor beginner is bewildered and confused. I think, in the case of beginners, whether one is conducting a Dharma study course or whether one is giving a lecture, one should select a very limited number of points and put them across very thoroughly and [178] very clearly, rather than try to convey a lot of material, a lot of information, at the same time. I think clarity and thoroughness with regard to a small number of important points which you expect those people to remember, which you expect to make a deep impression - that in fact is important.

Harshaprabha: It almost works both ways: from the point of view of the person giving the lecture - giving the lecture very simply means that those points come home true to that person as well.

S: It is not enough to ramble on in a vague way. You need to be very clear, very sharp, and to

have produced something - to have made up your mind beforehand what you were going to put across, not just a general waffle about the Dharma. You want to put across, for instance, the connection between craving and suffering: that is the point that you are going to really hammer home this evening, say; or the nature of metta - in what way metta differs from ordinary affection - you really go into that thoroughly. That's your point, say, for the evening, supposing you are giving a talk of, say, 20 or 30 minutes; and you really make that clear, so that everybody who has attended that talk or whatever goes away clearly understanding the nature of the difference, whereas before they would probably have been quite confused. You can take up two or three points; but I think don't, as I said, feed the beginner, the new person, with too much material at one and the same time: go slowly and steadily, be very clear, be very definite. Be very thorough. And invite questions, deal with their questions, consider their questions, take their questions seriously, however stupid, even, they may appear to you sometimes. For those people they are not stupid. Well, they might even be stupid, in a sense, but even a stupid question has a sort of value of its own. It may be that the question is stupid, or perhaps it cost that particular person a tremendous psychological effort to ask a question at all; and that is the significant thing which should not escape your notice, perhaps. That they have actually asked a question - that is the chief thing that has happened - that they have overcome whatever inhibitions they had about asking questions, ... so it doesn't matter what the content of the question is; you ... to encourage them to ask more questions, never mind about whether the question is foolish or stupid or whatever, for the time being. So you have to spot that sort of thing.

And, of course, in order to give the talk in that way, or [179] take a Dharma study group, you've got to be on the ball, you've got to be fresh, you've got to be bright; you can't be jaded, you can't be tired, you can't be overworked. You can't be run down, you can't be in need of a holiday. You can't be going through a bad patch, etc. You've got to be really on top form.

Harshaprabha: Do you suggest taking the whole day off beforehand?

S: If need be; if need be. Be quite honest with yourselves and your fellow workers, the rest of the team. This is the sort of matter that should be discussed. If somebody is asked to take a Dharma course or asked to give a talk, this factor should enter into consideration. Supposing you've got, say, half a dozen or a dozen people coming for a Dharma course, it is very important that the person taking that course should be fresh and bright, or you could put them off maybe for the rest of their lives. In some ways you have to be more careful with beginners than anybody else. If you give a bad talk, or you are indulging in a bit of dharma waffle, you won't put off any Order members who happen to be there; they are already committed, they don't depend upon your talk. They will be sorry that they didn't get more from it, but it won't affect their commitment, much less, say, their interest; but, in the case of a new person, he has everything to gain and everything to lose, just from your talk. So in a way it's a much more crucial situation for him and for you.

Gunapala: That's quite a big point; when we go back to our Centres, if we are going to take any classes then surely it is more desirable to take classes where Mitras or regulars ...

S: In a way, yes. One shouldn't think that the beginner - or the inexperienced Order member - is to be let loose on beginners; no. Keep your more experienced Order members for the beginners. The Mitras will forgive you; even the regulars might forgive you; but the beginners, the new people, they might not, in a sense. They might just not come again.

Gunapala: I mean all Centres might be that way, they might let us at the beginners, but from our own point of view we should know this, that we have to be very clear and healthy if we are going to come in contact with classes for beginners.

S: No doubt one would go back with a certain amount of [180] zest and enthusiasm and positivity. That conveys its own message, but it's also very important that other qualities also are needed - your knowledge is needed, clarity of presentation is needed.

So the real point here is that no one should assume - I hope no one does assume - that it's all right to let the bright new young Order member loose, so to speak, on beginners. No. The assumption being that since they are only beginners, they don't really need anyone very advanced to teach them. That's true in a way, but on the other hand you need to be particularly ..., particularly clear, particularly inspiring for beginners because they are the people whom you are trying to attract and keep. The others have already been attracted; they are already involved, they are already committed. So one bad class by you, one bad or inadequate talk by you, is not going to put them off, but it could put off a beginner, even for life. So one should bear that in mind.

Anyway, let's bear in mind that it's now lunchtime.

[181]

Day 9 Tape 9, Side 1

Subhuti: ... lecture on Perfect Speech. I think we've all been doing the last two levels of Perfect Speech. Again, there are not many questions on it. Alan had a question in our group.

Chakkhupala: It's a plumbing question, on specifically drainage. We were talking about useless speech; it is quite draining. It seems a common experience that sometimes after indulging in frivolous or useless speech the result will be a headache and sometimes a degree of exhaustion ... need to lie down and be quiet. It does seem, however, that in the as it were outside world, frivolous and useless speech is engaged in quite heartily, without this consequence. That seems to indicate that there is a degree of heightened sensitivity or preciousness, almost, which I was quite having difficulty reconciling with the resilience that you would expect to develop in the course of spiritual development.

S: Well, perhaps we could start by establishing the point in question - whether in fact it is so, and whether it is in fact people's experience that if they engage in useless talk, frivolous talk, for any length of time, that is people's experience within the Friends or among you yourselves, that they then experience exhaustion, being drained, etc. Is that people's experience? Those that do sometimes perhaps find themselves indulging in this way: is that so?

Voices: Yes.

Gunapala: Especially if you are very clear; especially if you are experiencing a very clear state of mind. It seems like if you take up this useless speech, it's just a waste of your energy and eventually you fall from that clear state very quickly.

S: All right, so that point is established. But there is a second point, that people in the world,

let's say - that is, outside the FWBO - apparently indulge in this same sort of frivolous and useless conversation but don't ever seem to get drained. Now is that so? Is it generally agreed that that is in fact the case? Casting one's mind back to one's own worldly days, was it the case for oneself then? Because we need to be a bit sure about our facts before proceeding to consider the [182] significance of those facts.

Silaratna: It seems like in that situation it wasn't that you went from perhaps a skilful state to a drained state; it's just that you were constantly engaged in useless speech, so perhaps you didn't notice the fact that you were getting tired. Whereas, say, in the Friends you might engage in useless speech and you go through periods of quite skilful [states], so you notice it.

S: Yes. Going back to my own recollections, as far as I can remember - not only remember, but I have observed it only very recently - that people in the world, so to speak, engaged in, say, useless and frivolous conversation, do not usually seem to be or to become exhausted or drained by that at all. They seem thoroughly absorbed in it; they seem even stimulated by it. They seem to be enjoying it. One has to recognize that fact. Whereas people in the Friends don't; they experience a different, even an opposite reaction. So what is the reason for that? I think there is some clue to be found in what (Silaratna) has just said about, in the case of people within the Friends, there is this transition from the skilful to the unskilful state when they succumb to the temptation to indulge in frivolous and useless talk. So that, as I say, may give us a clue.

Devamitra: It's conflict, surely, between ...

S: It's conflict. Yes, it's conflict.

Devamitra: The conflict is absent in the world.

S: Yes. In the case of, let's say, people in the world, there is an absence of conflict. They are genuinely interested in the trivial things that they are talking about, the useless things; they are genuinely interested, they get enjoyment and pleasure talking about those things. But in the case of someone who is in the FWBO, it would seem that there is a sort of split. There is still a part of oneself which is interested in those trivial things and enjoys talking about them, up to a point; but there is another part of oneself, so to speak, which is not in the least interested, which even recognizes that those trivial things are indeed trivial and not worth engaging in conversation about. So I think the feeling of tiredness, exhaustion and being drained that one experiences arises partly out of the conflict itself and partly out of the frustration of one's, let's say, better nature, one's higher nature, that is [183] involved when you give way, so to speak, to the lower nature, let's say, and engage in useless talk in that way. You feel that you have betrayed yourself, you have been untrue to yourself. You have strayed away from your better self and your truer self.

What I have explained may not be the whole story, but I think it is an important element in it, at least.

Gunapala: Do you think that with very negative speech in the world, people don't seem to fall any further than they are. I've noticed some people will indulge in this very negative speech almost continually, everything they say is negative, and yet they seem to get on fine; they wallow in it year after year, and yet still really enjoying it. It doesn't drain them. And we

quickly, if we just take up any negative trend at all, we quickly fall.

S: Yes, it doesn't drain them because in a sense they are that. But it drains someone who is trying to lead a spiritual life, because in a sense he isn't that; and to the extent that he is trying to lead a spiritual life, that is foreign to him, and represents a betrayal of himself by himself.

Ratnaketu: It would show in years anyway, when they become an old person. You get some old people, they do look really drained.

S: Well, very often one doesn't have to wait for them to become old to see them looking like that. I myself am often aghast at the utter triviality of people's conversation - I am afraid even within the Friends I do encounter, or at least overhear, this sometimes. It seems to me sometimes astonishing that people could be absorbed by such insignificant matters, but they are.

: Are there any particular areas of triviality, so to speak, that seem to be ...?

S: Well, domestic trivia. I'm afraid I notice it more in women, talking about minor domestic matters. Sometimes it really is amazing the amount of interest and enthusiasm they can bring to things which seem to be so totally devoid of interest. It never ceases to surprise me.

We'd better get off this subject of useless and frivolous [184] speech; perhaps it is useless and frivolous even to talk about it too much. But I think that does to some extent clear up the point which Alan made.

Ratnaprabha: I had a question about harmonious speech, which is not very well formulated at all, I'm afraid; I don't know whether you will be able to make anything of it.

S: I'll try.

Ratnaprabha: I was thinking about - you talk about self-transcendence in respect of harmonious speech; that is ... it involves one transcending oneself in communication with the other; and I was wondering about this ... rather lower level that we do sometimes experience in communication, and also times when we don't experience it; and why it is that we are not experiencing it when we don't. And in connection with this, it seemed to me that when I am talking to somebody and there is a very strong feeling of separation, it's as if it's my ego that is encountering their ego, perhaps; and I am a little confused about exactly what is going on. What is this thing, the ego, that is preventing real contact between us, and how does one overcome its influence?

S: One point that occurred to me, just as I was listening to you, was that in what one might call - risking a contradiction in terms - an unsuccessful communication - one thing that occurs to me is that, to fall back upon Blakean terminology, emanations fail to meet. Your emanation isn't brought into the communication, or neither of your emanations is brought into the communication; that perhaps to begin with you are not sufficiently in touch with that side of yourself, with your own emotions. So the communication is, so to speak, one-sided, it is perhaps just intellectual, it's rather barren, it's rather sterile. It's brain meeting brain - a few sparks may be produced, but they are a cold blue light rather than a warm red glow, if you see what I mean.

But certainly I think that is one of the reasons for unsuccessful, or comparatively unsuccessful, communication - that feeling does not enter into the communication. And this may, of course, be that feeling has not sufficiently entered into your own conscious life and experience generally.

But you ended up by asking what was ego. Well, the ego is a bit of a mystery, isn't it? But continuing to use the term, [185] and recollecting what I have just said, it would seem - perhaps one can risk a provisional definition or partial description here - it would seem that ego or sense of ego, or functioning in an egoistic way, has got something to do with absence of feeling. Because if there is absence of feeling there is no sympathy - if you don't feel you can't feel with the other person, so you tend to impose yourself on the other person, you're not sensitive to the other person, to the needs of the other person, the experience of the other person. So you can, so to speak, come across as hard, unfriendly, unyielding, separate, even opposed. And that is presumably the ego; that is presumably what it means to function in an egoistic way. I hope I am not being unduly simplistic.

Harshaprabha: Have you met many people who are totally devoid of feeling?

S: I wouldn't say that anybody is totally devoid of feeling. What happens is that their feelings go underground and are unacknowledged, and they may be rationalized. I have met quite a number of such people, especially in academic and scholarly circles: people who believe that they are being very objective and scientific and rational, but who are motivated by very powerful emotions - but emotions which they do not recognize and which are often quite negative...

Amoghacitta: Such people almost encourage a split within themselves, don't they? They deliberately don't want to be emotional about anything.

S: They profess not to be emotional about anything; they profess to be objective, but often they are wildly emotional. But they will not admit that, they will not recognize that.

One can recognize this state of affairs in some of the debates which one reads or which one hears about, or controversies, among intellectuals, in which everybody is professing to be so rational and objective and so on, but clearly they are all motivated by very strong subjective feelings and ...

Gunapala: It's a problem, isn't it? People lack feeling in themselves. It's ... they lack feeling for another person, as if feeling for people is the ...

S: I think the problem first of all is that people are [186] alienated from their own feelings; they don't recognize their own feelings, or the strength of their own feelings. So that is the first step to be taken: to re-establish contact with one's own feelings, to admit what one feels, to integrate what one feels with what one thinks. Then one will be something more like a human being. Then perhaps you can begin to empathize with other people.

I think it's difficult to be in touch with other people's feelings if you are not even in touch with your own.

Devamitra: Isn't that a bit of an understatement? Surely it's impossible.

S: Yes, it's impossible. You may logically or rationally infer somebody's feelings without actually feeling your own feelings, but you can't be in touch with them; that is impossible if you are not in touch with your own feelings.

Jinavamsa: Could you say that people trying to overcome their feelings identify with just a small part of the whole process? I was thinking like - say a rock in the sea; it's like the waves being their emotions, coming again and again, but trying to identify with a rock standing against it. Rather than identifying with the entire process, when one meets the other ... Does that make sense?

S: I am just trying to think whether it does or not! Do you mean the rock to stand for something in you which refuses to acknowledge the emotions, the waves, and sort of stands against them?

Jinavamsa: Yes, ... stand against the emotions, identifying as an unmovable entity, a rock, instead of identifying yourself with the entire process and really standing, and just let the waves come at it.

S: I am not sure that I am happy with this word 'identifying' or 'identification', but certainly it is a question of acknowledging whatever emotions one has. Some of them may be unskilful emotions, and one may choose, though one acknowledges them, not to accept them. One may try to get rid of them, so to speak. And if they are really negative, if they are really unskilful, one does well to make a stand against them; but to begin with one needs to at least recognize that they are there, and to be taken a stand against.

[187]

Jinavamsa: That's what I had in mind, identifying with the whole process. You do make a stand; at the same time you just let the waves come at you. It produces energy with it, the conflict between them, produces energy.

S: I don't see that there needs to be a conflict, necessarily. Because one might see some waves, some emotions, as very acceptable [break in recording] ... there's no need for any conflict; there's no need to stand against them. But in the case of others it may be different.

Subhuti: That's all from our group.

Aryamitra: It was concerned with in the harmonious speech, talking about mutual self-transcendence, and the question arose - say, in mutual self-transcendence, does that imply Transcendental, or is that - ?

S: I think it could. I think it could. I certainly wouldn't like to rule out that possibility; but I think it may well be of comparatively rare occurrence, certainly in situations of ordinary life. But in the context of, say, Dharma-intensive, dharmic concentration - as, for instance, the classic one between, say, the Zen master and the Zen disciple - well, yes, that might well take place. It clearly took place from time to time between the Buddha and his disciples.

Aryamitra: But then again you can have - there's that saying you can have mutual self-transcendence which isn't the actual Transcendental, it's a sort of lower level?

S: Well, it depends in this connection what one understands by self, and therefore what one understands by self-transcendence. I wouldn't insist too strictly on the word 'transcendence' here, or link it too closely with Transcendental with a capital T; to transcend means to go beyond, and you can transcend, you can go beyond, within the context of the mundane. So one could have a mutual self-transcendence in the course of intensive communication, whereby the two parties to the communication were stretched to such an extent that their respective selves were considerably enlarged, so to speak, but still within the context of the mundane. That would be the self-transcendence, in the sense that they were both stretched beyond the normal limits of their being, even though they didn't go so far as to touch the Transcendental with a capital T - though they might on occasion do even that.

[188]

But I think it is the experience at least of some people that, in the course of intensive communication with another person, you do as it were go a bit beyond yourself. You become conscious of many areas or capacities that you had not realized you had, you had not realized were present. Your experience of yourself is extended, your experience of yourself is enlarged. To that extent, then, there is self-transcendence. The boundaries of yourself are enlarged in the course of that kind of communication.

Bodhiruchi: So would you then say that - previously you distinguished between, say, Right Vision and Perfect Vision, so to distinguish between Right Speech and Perfect Speech - there's that element of the Transcendental - Insight - that distinguishes Perfect Speech from, say, Right Speech?

S: Yes. And ... within the context of Right Speech there can be - well, Right Speech is Right Speech. It isn't Perfect Speech. You can have speech which is even more right, which can stretch the limits of the self within the context of the mundane; but you can also have speech which is Perfect Speech, in the course of which, or communicating in the course of which, you do touch or reflect or embody the Transcendental.

In this connection, there is an interesting term in the Abhidharma which is mahaggata. Mahaggata means 'grown great' or expanded, and it's an adjective of citta; one speaks of mahaggatacitta, 'expanded consciousness'. And mahaggatacitta is a sort of collective term for dhyana experience, because in the dhyana the mind expands. I gave a lecture once, I think, on 'Meditation or the Expanding Consciousness', wasn't it something like that?

Voices: Yes.

S: People might have thought that I was just using some newfangled term, 'expanding consciousness', to describe meditation, but no, it is strictly traditional. Because the Abhidharma does speak of the dhyana states as representing expanding or expanded consciousness, mahaggatacitta. So one can in the same way speak of expanding the self through one's experience of intensive communication. Because the dhyanas are mundane, so you can expand the self within the limits of mundane experience. So to expand the self is the same thing as transcending the self. In expanding the self you transcend [189] whatever you formerly thought was the self; not that you leave it entirely behind, you go beyond it while continuing to be in touch with it.

So in successful communication, in successful human communication, there is an expansion

of consciousness, an expansion of selfhood, so to speak, on both sides.

Devamitra: So in the context of the lecture, when you speak of mutual helpfulness leading to mutual self-transcendence, you mean it in that lower sense of not implying Insight, because ...

S: It could be either. Just taking the phrase - I don't recall the full context - but just taking the phrase, you could certainly apply the word to the mundane situation, or a situation in the context of which Insight actually does arise, Insight with a capital I.

Devamitra: It's just that in the context of the lecture you do say that 'this mutual self-transcendence, we may say, is Perfect Speech par excellence', and I would take that to mean implying Insight.

S: Well, yes, that would imply Insight, yes. But short of that there is still a self-transcendence which is limited to the mundane sphere. An expansion of self rather than a transcendence of self in the strict sense. Expansion also means refinement; one could also speak of refinement, let's say.

Suvajra: Mahaggatacitta - is it used only of mundane experience?

S: Yes, it is applied to the dhyana state. [Asked to spell it and does so.] Literally 'gone great', become great or expanded.

Suvajra: ...going back to what you were saying some days ago about the maha-atta. Is it connected up with maha-atta at all?

S: It doesn't actually, or it is not connected traditionally. In fact, traditionally they might be rather cautious of connecting things in that way.

Devamitra: I think we may have had one more question. Did you want to - ?

[190]

Dhirananda: Yes, we were talking about the highest form of communication, the perfect telepathic. I would be interested to hear if you had any experience of this ...

S: Yes, I have had experiences from time to time. A lot of people within the Friends have - usually, I think, in connection with people that they knew quite well. I can't think of any specific, especially striking incidents at present. But perhaps I can. I don't know whether it would count as telepathic, though; one might give it another interpretation, or even regard it as ... coincidence. Some years ago, I happened to send a picture postcard to Ananda. At that time I was not into writing letters - I think it was in Cornwall - but I used to send not just ordinary postcards but picture postcards. And I sent Ananda a picture postcard of a burning house - it was a quite vivid feeling for the picture. So Ananda subsequently wrote and told me that he had received it on a certain morning, and that morning he had got up and meditated, and then he had read the chapter of the White Lotus Sutra describing the Parable of the Burning House, and he came straight downstairs and found that postcard on the doormat. So one could take that as an instance of some sort of telepathic communication, I don't know. But at least it was interesting; even if it was a coincidence, it was interesting, but one can't prove it one way or the other.

But certainly one hears within the FWBO from time to time some quite interesting instances of telepathic communication or people thinking of the same things at the same time, and someone mentioning something and the other person saying, 'I was just thinking of that' or 'I was thinking the same thing.' It seems to happen quite frequently. Even, I have heard of instances of people having the same dreams on the same night.

So one would expect this if, say, people within the FWBO are on a common wavelength, if they are meditating, if they are experiencing similar states of consciousness and if they are thinking about the same things, a lot of positive emotion is involved, then one would expect that there is a sort of whole network of telepathic communication existing among the Friends.

Ratnaketu: I think it helps just being around with the same people. Once in FBS we were on a weekend retreat; ... we had been working together, a lot of us had been living together, then we were on a retreat together. It was strange [191] because on the retreat we went for a ride in the van, and people would say things - 'Ah, look at that pond' or something like that, but they weren't talking; the things they talked about was - we found a lot of it, we were all thinking about the same things at the same time. It was really interesting.

S: Sometimes, of course, the fact that people are thinking about the same things at the same time does have an explanation inasmuch as they are involved with the same things, or involved with things which spark off similar reflections. But it cannot always be explained in that way, because you might find that you are suddenly thinking about something quite remote, which has got nothing to do with the present circumstances or conditions, and you find that somebody else is thinking about that remote thing or remote situation at the same time.

I have a theory - it is only a theory; I mention it as a possible matter of interest - that people communicate through gesture far more than they realize. What caused me to think about this was something I read about bees. You know that bees have a very complicated communication system; you know that a bee can go, say, two miles from the hive and discover a particular kind of, say, clover, and collect honey, and he comes back to the hive and he executes a sort of dance in the air, which constitutes a message telling other bees exactly where to go and get the honey, what sort of honey it is, in which direction and how much there is of it and how many bees it needs and so on and so forth. This is called the bee dance. I also noticed - I have noticed it in myself in connection with other people - that every little fluctuation of thought is accompanied by a corresponding very subtle movement of the body, or a part of the body. It is very, very subtle - it certainly couldn't be perceived by the eye, but there is a subtle movement of the body. And I think if you are associated with someone for any length of time, you come to know, you come to pick up subliminally, that certain mental states or thoughts are associated with certain bodily movements; very subtle movements, I don't mean anything so gross as a gesture. It's almost movements of the nerves.

For instance - let me give you an example. Supposing, say, you are out for a walk, and supposing there is a possibility of continuing the walk and going further. The idea that one of you may have, say, of going further is accompanied by certain subtle bodily movements, muscular movements, in the direction of going further. These can be picked up by the other person, and he [192] therefore knows that you are thinking of going further; and he might therefore say, 'Well, no, let's go not further today' - as though you had actually suggested it. So it's not exactly that you are reading his thoughts, but you are picking up these very, very

subtle physical signals. I think a lot of so-called telepathy can be explained in that way.

Has anybody got any experience of this sort of thing, or observed anything like this?

Voices: Yes.

Ratnaprabha: Piyasilo had a little book called Body Magic, I think, which explains how one can look for signs of this sort. One which he mentioned was: if you were thinking cerebrally, if you were thinking about, for example, a mathematical problem, you would tend to look down to the left (I think it was). But if you were thinking about something that was more emotional, more spatial rather than temporal, you would tend to look down to the right. And he tried this on a number of people - this is while we were in Glasgow - and apparently it worked.

S: Well, presumably this is connected with the two hemispheres of the brain.

Ratnaprabha: Right, yes.

Subhuti: It reminds me of the behaviourist definition of thinking: it's 'refraining from speaking'. It is as if, whenever you think, your body is going through the preliminary motions of speaking, and presumably when you think - when you are in a particular mental state - you go through the preliminary motions of expressing that state. So it's just very, very subtly ...

S: It is said that, let's say, uneducated people (to use that term) find it difficult to think without speaking. There is a well-known joke about the woman who was asked what she was thinking about something, and she said: 'I won't know until I've heard myself talking about it.' (Laughter) ...

But also, perhaps, it illustrates the truth that there is no independent action of the mind without at least some subtle action of the body, and even perhaps of the speech. It does perhaps suggest that body, speech and mind are a unity.

[193]

Is there anything else?

Bodhiruchi: I was quite interested when you were saying that Insight may arise during, say, a conversation or a communication with somebody. It just seems that it elevates that spiritual practice, because we think of meditation as a direct means, and therefore ...

S: Well, but is it extraordinary that Insight should arise in the context of communication? - I would say spiritual communication, because this is what we find happening on almost every page of the Pali scriptures. The Buddha speaks, the Buddha communicates the Dharma, usually in the course of a conversation - it's not just a one-sided discourse by the Buddha; it's an exchange, it's a communication, a two-way communication. And Insight arises; in technical language, traditional language, somebody's Dharma-eye opens, the dharmacaksu opens, they receive the Truth, Insight arises.

Gunapala: Thinking about it, it seems like it's the most obvious way, it's mind affecting mind, and an Enlightened mind affecting an unenlightened mind, and so on, to inspire each other ...

S: And also in the Zen dialogue - I mean the genuine article, not the modern imitations.

Bodhiruchi: I find if I speak to somebody, and it's quite - it's really going into something. It's not so much at the time, but I may go away and think and ponder on what that person has said. While at the time it's quite stimulating, but it starts something off and it arises then.

Harshaprabha: Could you quote a genuine Zen story?

S: Well, if they are quoted they cease to be genuine Zen stories because it's lifted entirely out of the original situation, so you just have the corpse of a Zen story, which you then cut up for the delectation of your readers and make quite a lot of money, perhaps, out of yet another book about Zen. You have to make up, or you have to act, your own Zen stories, I would say. There is no such thing as a Zen story as a Zen story, a certain form of words occurring in a book, which you then read and then quote off or use in some such way. Stories which purport to be Zen [194] story - the one about, you know, the two monks and the pretty girl and one who picked her up and carried her and one who was carrying her in his mind - etc. etc. You could say it was a Zen story; but is it a Zen story to you? It might have quite another quite another point in the story.

Tape 9, Side 2

S: Anything more or have questions dried up today.

Ratnaprabha: Many of us were asking whether you could suggest how we can generate questions more effectively.

S: Well, that's quite easy: just by thinking... about the subject ... simple.

Anyway, if there are no more questions, there is some time left. I thought I might raise a topic. I don't know whether it has been considered or not. If it has, well and good, but if not we might raise it and perhaps, if not go into it, at least suggest that there is something to be gone into.

One is concerned here, of course, with the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. I don't remember exactly what I have said in all these talks, but have you so far at any point considered the Eightfold Path in terms of the Middle Way? This is quite an important point, isn't it? Whether or not one regards the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta as you have it in the Pali Canon as actually representing a first discourse delivered by the Buddha to the five bhikkhus in the Deer Park at Visipatana, none the less it is quite an important document for Buddhist thought; it is quite an important summary. And the Buddha's point of departure is this same Middle Way. He announces to these five bhikkhus, his erstwhile disciples, that he has found a Middle Way. Do you remember that? It's his point of departure, presumably, because he is basing himself on his own experience. Formerly he had practised self-mortification with those five companions, who had deserted him when he gave up self-mortification and tried a saner approach. And before that, he had lived at home, in the midst of worldly life and worldly pleasures and so on. So he was drawing attention to the fact that he had found a path, he had found a way leading between, so to speak, the path of self-indulgence and the path of self-mortification. He had found the Middle Way; he had found the Noble Eightfold Path. He defines or describes in this discourse [195] the Middle Way in terms of the Eightfold Path.

So this question of the Middle Way is very relevant to the Eightfold Way or the Eightfold Path. In this first discourse, mainly three things are mentioned. There is the Middle Way, the Four Truths and the Eightfold Path. So if one wants a full understanding of the Eightfold Path one has to understand it as a Middle Way, and perhaps one has to go back to these historical alternatives of self-mortification and self-indulgence, and ask oneself what these two really mean, and how the Eightfold Path is a middle path. One has really to understand this.

So has anybody any thoughts on this, or has anybody thought about it?

Cittapala: I gave it some thought. It did seem to me that it wasn't a question in terms of just being the middle between self-gratification and self-mortification. It seemed like the middle path was as it were the pinnacle of a triangle, so it wasn't the middle on the baseline, it was something above that and transcending it.

S: Yes, one might say that the Middle Path does not represent a compromise between hedonism and asceticism.

Ratnaketu: One thing that in a house meeting last week we were talking about the FWBO, the FWBO's approach to Buddhism, and the way in which you live your life as well. And some people said that they thought that the FWBO and the way you live your life were the extreme; and ...

S: In what respect?

Ratnaketu: Well, they were looking at it from the world's point of view: that it was extreme, that there's no TV, spending a lot of - hardly getting any money - just the way that...

S: The dreadful truth!

: Yes. But ...

S: I don't have any TV. As I confessed the other day, I've only watched it twice willingly and twice, I think, unwillingly.

Ratnaketu: Anyway, my point was going to be I saw that they were viewing things from the point of view of the world, in [196] which case the Middle Way looks like an extreme from the point of view of the world. But is the Middle Way for all Buddhists - is it exactly the same? Does it come down to the same thing? We hear of monks who meditate 14, 16, 20 hours a day; we hear of people like Milarepa going right off into the hills for decades. And presumably he was practising the Middle Way.

S: Presumably. We hope so. Otherwise he would have been very much astray.

Ratnaketu: Then we have our situation, and are we practising the Middle Way? Compared with Milarepa, we live in the greatest luxury. Are we practising the Middle Way?

S: In that respect, one might say, the Middle Way is comparative, in respect of, say, material things and standards of living and so on. But I think one can get back to a more fundamental point. When people outside the FWBO describe us - not to say criticize us - as going to

extremes, what do they really mean? They mention, perhaps, TV sets and motor cars and - well, we've got motor cars but we are not using such good ones as other people have:(Laughter) they break down ... But what actually is the point that people make, what are they really saying when they say that we (or I, for that matter, or anybody in the FWBO) is going to extremes? What is the real point that they are making, getting beyond the refrigerators and the TV sets? What are they really saying?

: That we are not doing what they are doing.

S: No, I'm not thinking of that - though that is true.

Amoghacitta: They find what we are doing unacceptable, they can't see any reason for it.

S: What are these things symbols of, for them?

: They are symbols of the things of the senses.

Ratnaketu: The group giving up the world.

Cittapala: It's like you're going beyond the very verges of group acceptance, you might step outside.

S: No, I think it's something even more fundamental.

Devamitra: They're the things that make life bearable.

[197]

S: Or more than bearable?

Devamitra: Well, sort of happy.

S: This is what they really mean. Yes, what they are really saying is we are going to extremes in the sense that we don't enjoy ourselves, we are practising self-mortification. And this is what they think. This is really the respect in which they think that we go to extremes: that we don't enjoy ourselves, that we are denying ourselves. Because they themselves can't think of life as enjoyable without those things, so they think - quite wrongly, of course, quite erroneously - that because we don't have those things we are not enjoying ourselves. They think we are denying ourselves in some sort of spirit of self-mortification. They think we are not enjoying ourselves; therefore they think we are going to extremes. They really think that we are following the path of self-mortification, which is of course an extreme according to Buddhism.

But are we, from our point of view? We are not, but why are we not?

: Probably because ...

: ... don't actually give you satisfaction.

S: Well, not only that; not simply that we have deprived ourselves quite sensibly of those

things that don't give us satisfaction, but going beyond that.

Bodhiruchi: We have our own values.

Voices: We are enjoying ourselves.

S: We are enjoying ourselves, that's the point. That is what they find very difficult to understand and accept: that actually we are enjoying ourselves; that actually we are more happy than they are. So actually we are not going to extremes, in the sense that they think we are. We are not practising self-mortification, we are having a jolly good time without TV sets and all the rest of the things we have enumerated. Maybe if you told - as some of you might have told - your friends or your relations that you were going away to an old convent (Laughter), a tumbledown old place with no modern conveniences worth speaking of, and you were [198] going to spend three months there without going into town, without having any fun, without eating meat or even fish, and that you were just going to be studying an ancient philosophy called Buddhism ... and there would be no women, and no wine: well, in what ... ?... a sort of hell (Laughter). They couldn't perhaps imagine what a good time you are all having (Laughter). Perhaps it is sometimes very difficult to imagine it yourselves!

This is the point, that people in the world can't accept or can accept only with reluctance the fact that, in leading this apparently simple life, this apparently ascetic life, you are in fact enjoying yourselves. So you are not really going to extremes. They have charged that you are going to extremes, i.e. the extreme of self-mortification; ..., you are enjoying yourselves.

So this brings us to a quite important point about the Middle Way. I was thinking about this recently, and it occurred to me that if you look at it quite simply, what the Middle Way represents is this: on the one hand, there is the life of pleasure without any ideals. On the other hand, there is the life of ideals without any pleasure. What you have to do is to bring together the ideals and the pleasure. People think in terms of either you have the one or the other. If you really want to enjoy yourself, forget about ideals, forget about principles, have a good time; or if you want really to devote yourself to the Ideal, devote yourself to the realization of a higher spiritual principle, forget about having a good time. It's going to be a hard grind. You are not going to enjoy yourself.

But the Buddha would seem to be saying, on this basis, that the spiritual life and the happy life must be brought together. People shouldn't think that there can be a one-sided life of pleasure divorced from ideals, or a one-sided life of pursuit of ideals divorced from pleasure. Of course, in the case of the pleasure that is married, so to speak, to the pursuit of the higher ideal, it will be a more refined pleasure; it will be something very much more positive than the pleasure one usually experiences divorced from any ideals.

So in the case of the Middle Way you are bringing together your emotional life, your pleasurable life as it were, and your spiritual life, your spiritual life in the sense of your life as consisting in the pursuit of higher ideals. One might say this is reflected even in this distinction between the Path of Vision [199] and the Path of Transformation. The Path of Transformation represents the transformation of one's emotional life into something skilful and genuinely positive; it doesn't represent a repudiation of emotional life or a repudiation of pleasure or a repudiation of happiness. It represents a purification of them by bringing them into line with the ideal that one is pursuing, and the truth that one has perceived.

Freud speaks in terms of pleasure principle and reality principle, and he regards the two as being completely antithetical. But it is as though, from a Buddhist point of view, and above all from a Vajrayanic point of view, reality principle and pleasure principle have to be brought together.

Gunapala: It seems that Milarepa also had this very strongly.

S: Well, he sang frequently about his joys. So, to come back to somebody's point, he was following a Middle Way. Because the Middle Way doesn't consist in whether or not you have or don't have certain external things, but whether you have that combination, so to speak, that integration, of pleasure, happiness, bliss, and on the other hand understanding and clear Insight. And Milarepa certainly had that. So whether he was just wearing a cotton sheet or not, or whether he was going completely naked, he was following, in the true sense, the Middle Path.

So that is the following of the Middle Path, not whether you have got a car or haven't got a car, but that in your life there is that - combination isn't quite the right word - but that conjunction, let us say, that unification, let us say, or that yuganaddha to use the traditional word, of intensely blissful experience and very clear penetrating Insight. So you've got to have both. If you have only the pleasure, or what people think of as pleasure, and no ideal, no Insight, that's the worldly life. But if you've got lots of high ideals, you're pursuing them perhaps rather forcefully, wilfully, and there's no pleasure in the pursuit, that is the pseudo-spiritual life. That's the life of self-mortification in some form or other.

Jinavamsa: Why do people tend to make that split?

S: Well, I think some even genuinely religious people, people who really are going in pursuit of ideals, may (this is perhaps only one reason) because they are afraid of pleasure. Pleasure, after all, is a very powerful thing, it's a very [200] seducing thing. It's very easy to be led astray by pleasure. So it might seem easier if you are going in pursuit of higher ideals and you want to lead a spiritual life, it might seem safer to forget about pleasure, to keep it at a distance. And that may work for a while. You can get so far, but without some nourishment or pleasure, preferably in a refined and genuinely positive form, say as with meditation, you don't get very far in the spiritual life. You run out of steam, you run out of inspiration.

But at this point a question may arise: what about that sutta which Tony Bowall spoke of the other day? What was the title of that sutta?

Silabhadra: The Catuma Sutta.

S: The Catuma Sutta. So there the Buddha refers to a newly ordained monk going down into the village and seeing people occupied with indulging the five - how is it translated?

Silabhadra: The five sense pleasures, ...

S: It was - I thought as I was listening to you there might be a misunderstanding here. Not that there were five different kinds of sense pleasure, and five different pleasurable objects: no. The reference is to the five senses, it is the pleasures of the five senses. And then such a young, newly ordained monk might think: 'Let me live in that sort of way.' So is the Buddha

saying here that pleasure is completely reprehensible? ... think about this. Does it seem that the Buddha is saying that pleasure is completely reprehensible: that if you want to be a bhikkhu or if you want to be an Order member you must eschew pleasure completely, and not experience any pleasure through your five senses? Is he saying this? Because if he is saying it, we have to take it very seriously, and stop up all the sources of pleasure. Is the Buddha saying that you should not experience pleasure through the tongue, through the eye, through the ear? Is he saying this?

Devamitra: Surely he is saying that that shouldn't be your main pursuit; that the sense pleasures shouldn't motivate you entirely, so that you just pursue that and avoid pain.

S: Perhaps he is saying something like that. But in any case it would seem that the possibility that he is contemplating is that of a life of nothing but pleasure, only pleasure: that the young monk, your newly ordained monk or newly ordained Order [201] member sees the possibility of leading a life without ideals, solely devoted to pleasure. It is not the pleasure element which is reprehensible, but the fact that the enjoyment of the pleasure exists in a context devoid of any ideal.

So I would take it that the Buddha is not in fact saying that pleasure is to be eschewed, but that there cannot be only pleasure in the human life. A human being who wants to be truly a human being cannot be concerned only with pleasure; there must be a concern with the Ideal. But the pursuit of that Ideal cannot be divorced from the experience of pleasure. And of course the experience of pleasure should be on an ever higher and higher level. That is the Middle Way.

So people do in the West, I know from experience, tend to see Buddhism - that is to say, people who don't know very much about it, but even some who do know something about it - as a form of self-mortification. I remember I encountered this when I came back from India in 1964; I encountered it all the more because I then had a shaven head and wore yellow robes; that people would tend to think that you were following no doubt a very worthy path, but one which they assumed could not in any sense be pleasurable, or certainly which could not include anything enjoyable in the ordinary sense.

Amoghavajra: Presumably this could tie up with the idea of subha as one of the laksanas, the laksana ...asubha ... possible relative pleasure to something that is more pleasurable.

S: Yes, indeed. Well, the Dhammapada makes this point. It speaks in terms of giving up the lesser sukha for the sake of the more abundant sukha. I comment on this in that little review I wrote entitled Hedonism and the Spiritual Life, that here hedonism and asceticism coincide. Because you are giving up the smaller happiness for the sake of the greater happiness; you are giving up something, and that is asceticism. But you are giving up a lesser happiness for the sake of a greater happiness, and that's the hedonism. So here asceticism and hedonism coincide.

Ratnaketu: What about, then, you've sort of resolved the dilemma between world and us - people seeing us as extreme?

S: I have resolved the dilemma really, but they won't believe you. They'll say oh you're some sort of masochist. They'll find it very difficult to believe and you will find it very difficult to

convince them that you really are leading a happy life, that you [202] really are enjoying yourself. They may see your smiles and your good humour and the way you bounce around and all that, but they might think it's just a show for their benefit.

Amoghacitta: I think if you speak to people in terms of leading a simple life they will understand it easier. I think they respond to that idea of leading a simple, happy life.

S: Well, some people do, yes. But others might think it pretty pointless. Why lead a simple life when you could lead a life which isn't simple? Why live in Bethnal Green when you could live on the Riviera? What's the sense of it?

Ratnaketu: I was going to go on to say what about the difference between the way we live our life and the way hermits and people in the monasteries live their lives? - which seem, from our point of view, extreme. Presumably we both ...

S: Again what it comes back to is the principle outlined in the case of Milarepa. They are not leading an extreme life, because extreme refers to (?) pursuit of ideals and enjoyment of happiness, or even pleasure. If they had brought those two things together, if they were enjoying their hermit life, as Milarepa enjoyed his hermit life and sang songs of bliss as well as developing Insight, then they are following the Middle Path. Following the Middle Path does not consist in enjoying a certain number of material goods and not some other number of material goods, otherwise it becomes very relative. What is luxury in India becomes asceticism even in Bethnal Green. In India it is luxury to sleep on a mattress; in England no one thinks it's a luxury to sleep on a mattress.

But yes, simplicity should be adopted as far as possible, because one can look at it in this way: if you spend money on things which aren't really necessary for you to lead a spiritual life, that money is not spent on propagating the Dharma. At least you can think in that way.

Dhirananda: How does this connect with what you said on the Eightfold Path session at Padmaloka? - that sometimes, as in the case of Milarepa, he had to counter an imbalance in his life.

S: In his life?

Dhirananda: Well, he had to counteract an imbalance -

[203]

S: Well, he had led originally a very unskilful life, so he had to be all the more careful to lead a very, very skilful life for the remainder of his existence.

Dhirananda: But this doesn't mean that he cut down on his pleasures?

S: No, if anything the opposite, judging by his songs, anyway. No, if you've led, say, an unskilful life, you don't punish yourself for that by cutting down on your skilful pleasures. He was enjoying skilful pleasures in the form of meditative bliss.

Gunapala: The change-over from sukha in the lower sense to this greater sukha, sukha... or whatever it is called, it seems like for us we are still quite attached to physical sensations of

pleasures. We begin to desire pleasure, whether it be lesser or greater, we need this to feel happy. From my own point of view, it seems that we have to have a certain amount of these physical pleasures as well, because they give us a certain amount of positivity before we can head off to a greater pleasure. To deny the senses and say the only pleasure worth having is this great sukha just doesn't work.

S: Well, no, it doesn't. But on the other hand, one has to recognize, as I said earlier on, that pleasure is very powerful; pleasure is very dangerous. So one has to be very careful that one does not involve oneself in pleasures in such a way, or with those kinds of pleasures, which are likely to overrun one. One has to consider one's own limitations in this respect, and certainly not see the spiritual life in a polarized way, and not have your pleasures outside the framework of your spiritual life. Try as much as possible to have your pleasures, even your sense pleasures, within the framework of the spiritual life itself.

Gunapala: I was thinking of things like playing tennis, swimming, or going on picnics and so on.

S: Take the example of tennis. If you do want to play tennis, play it with one of your kalyana mitras, so that you get to know him better in that way. Persuade him to play with you if necessary, so that afterwards you can have a good chat, a good exchange, a good communication on the basis of that more friendly relation you have established by playing tennis. [204] Perhaps you will get to know a different aspect of his character, and he will get to know a different aspect of yours. But what you shouldn't perhaps do is, since you enjoy playing tennis, think: 'Playing tennis is an unskilful activity, I need I'd better go off and join some tennis club right outside the Friends', and go and play tennis there. That is what you must not do. That's what I mean by bringing your pleasure, even your worldly pleasure, within the framework of the spiritual life: play tennis with your spiritual friends.

Gunapala: Yes, I suppose that's what I'm getting at. We have to bring a certain amount of our worldly pleasure into our spiritual life.

S: Yes, bring it within the framework of the spiritual life. So that even when you are enjoying a worldly pleasure you are not completely out of touch with the spiritual life. To continue this example of playing tennis: if you were just to play tennis in a club outside the context of the FWBO with people who knew nothing about the FWBO, if you did become a bit friendly with them, what might you do? You might go off with them afterwards, have a drink; talk about cars, talk about women, etc. etc. So you are carried further away from the spiritual life. But if you go and play tennis, have a few good games, with a spiritual friend, what do you do afterwards? Well, you talk about something connected with the Dharma, or at least you deepen your own communication.

On the other hand, in relation to your kalyana mitras, you mustn't have so many as it were worldly activities that you are engaged in together that the spiritual activities get squeezed out. You need also to study the Dharma together, to meditate together, as well as play tennis together. There must be proportion and balance. But not that you have spiritual friends with whom you do spiritual things and worldly friends with whom you do worldly things. I think this sort of split must be avoided at all costs. You have either got to introduce a bit of worldliness into your spiritual life or a bit of spiritual life into your worldly life, but you can't divide yourself into two people, as it were, a spiritual person and a worldly person, with

spiritual friends here and worldly friends there, and two different circles of life. Even if you do, it won't be good for you; you would end up sort of mildly schizophrenic.

Anyway, that had better be it. Well maybe a schizophrenic isn't a [205] very positive note on which to conclude. But you see what I mean. All right, then.

Day 10 Tape 10, Side 1

Subhuti: We have first of all got a question on the decline in moral standards ...

Richard Clayton: Bhante, do you consider that in Western society there is a decline in natural moral sense, and in the light of the growing technological and materialistic society do you see that there are areas we need to have to become more active in, to be truly and genuinely creative with society?

S: It certainly isn't easy to estimate the general moral standard of a society. It isn't easy to generalize about the moral standard of a society. We do hear, from time to time, from certain well-known sources, laments about the decline of morality. It would seem that morality has always been declining, ever since morality was first invented. It has been ...

But there are two points at least to be made here, two preliminary points at least: the first being that morality may not be, so to speak, evenly distributed throughout society. Different sections of society may even have different moral standards. The second point is that of moral standards themselves. What one person would see as a decline of moral standards, another person might see as an improvement, an advance of moral standards: we have to take that into consideration, too. For instance, if one was to listen to a sermon or read an article by such a person as, let's say, the Archbishop of Canterbury about the decline of moral standards, he would mention such things as the rising divorce rate as a sign of the decline of moral standards; to him it would be evident that marriage was something sacred, something indissoluble, that that conception of the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage was an integral part of ethics. So a higher divorce rate would therefore indicate a decline of ethical standards in that particular area. But on the other hand, we might not agree with that. We might think it an ethical advance that two people who no longer could get on together and be happy together should be free to separate.

So I think, bearing in mind at least these two points, it is very difficult to generalize and say whether on the whole [206] overall there has been a decline in moral standards - presumably one means in the West - presumably one means in England, or at least in the Home Counties.

None the less, perhaps one could look at certain areas - I won't say where morality has declined, but where the question of morality didn't before arise, or at least not in such an urgent form. And perhaps it is those sort of areas that you have in mind.

Richard: Well, we were thinking of a natural sense of morality in one's empathy with others, i.e. how much cares for others, so we were wondering within that context whether there had been a decline.

S: Is it possible to estimate that? Is it possible to compare, say, the extent to which people empathized with one another, say, in the Buddha's day and the extent to which they empathize

with one another now, say, in south-east England, or the extent to which they empathized with one another, say, even, in Renaissance Italy - is it possible really to compare? Does one know enough? What would constitute evidence? One would need to go into those sort of questions first.

Richard: I was thinking of the type of cultural activities that we get up to as a populace, and the way we live, i.e. that we all live in separate houses, separate units, we have separate cars ...

S: It is true that we all live in separate houses and have separate cars, but on the other hand we all watch the same TV programmes. So how is one to strike an overall balance? This is what I am getting at. The question is very complex. One might say it's worse in certain respects in certain areas; it's better in certain respects in certain other areas. But I find it personally very, very difficult, if not impossible, to strike an overall balance. I am not saying that an overall balance might not be struck, but at present - certainly speaking off the cuff - I don't really feel in a position to strike one. I have, say, lived in India, I have lived in England, I have lived for shorter periods in other countries. Living in India one can see certain good things about their society; one can see certain weaknesses in their society. Living in England one can see certain good things in English society, one can also see certain weaknesses. But whether on the whole Indian society is better than English society, whether on the whole ethical standards are better observed in India than they are in England or Italy or [207] France, I think it's very difficult to say. The number of people involved is so big, the societies are so complex, they are so different; the number of factors to be taken into consideration is so great.

Richard: I do understand what you are saying, but even in an increasingly materialistic society, where we can say we are aware that people are becoming more alienated, ...

S: I would again like to look into that sort of statement more closely. What does one mean by the materialist society, first of all? And then is this society more materialist? How does one estimate that? Is one necessarily more materialist because one has a larger number of worldly goods? Is it not a question of attitude? Is it not a question of philosophy also? Are people, for instance, in India, more materialistic than people in England? People in India love to say that people in the West are much more materialistic than they are, but I really rather doubt this, because I think very often, in India, religion - so-called religion - is harnessed to purely materialistic objectives, purely materialistic aims. It's a sort of magic to help you bring about worldly success. When people go to a well-known holy man, what do they usually ask for? They ask for a blessing. What do they want a blessing for? That they may pass their examination, that they may get a son, that they may find a good bride for their son, that they may get promotion - Is this religion? Are they less materialistic than people in the West, who don't seek the blessings of holy men for such purposes?

But it may be; I am simply cautioning against generalizations or hurrying rashly to conclusions. I don't deny that ethical standards are not as high as they could be, not as high as they should be, probably anywhere in the world. But how they can be compared with ethical standards as they were 100 years ago or a few decades ago or as they are in other countries, other cultures, other civilizations - I think that is quite difficult.

Prasannasiddhi: It seems to me that you could virtually say that the people in a society had a

lot more possessions than people in another society. That seems to imply that they have to involve themselves more with the production and acquiring of those possessions, and that once they have them and presumably involving themselves with the using of these possessions, so to that extent you could say they would spend quite an amount of [208] their time consuming or relating to these possessions. Whereas in a society where the people had less possessions, presumably they would, like the Indians, spend more time with other people, or something like that.

S: Yes; well, even if one was to ascertain that, and even if one was to institute a definite comparison, that is still only one factor to be taken into consideration amongst a large number of factors. But with regard to India, here one might well doubt whether the Indian, even though he has fewer possessions, is less preoccupied with them than people in the West who have more. Sometimes very, very poor people are very much occupied with the few possessions that they do have.

So again it's also a question of mental attitude, and that is very difficult to estimate, very difficult to ..., very difficult to compare. One can say that where one is more occupied with material possessions, yes, ethical standards will be lower; that presumably is quite clear. But it isn't so easy to ascertain whether people in a certain society are more preoccupied than people in another society, because such preoccupation is not as it were quantitatively related to the actual number of possessions.

I would say, in many respects in the West, certainly in England, there has been an advance in moral standards over the last few hundred years. It wasn't so very long ago that we considered slavery tolerable. It wasn't so many years ago, it was less than 200 years ago, that you could be executed for committing any one of about 130-odd crimes, including minor shoplifting; and the whole bench of bishops, apparently, with one exception, saw nothing wrong in this. Well, it seems there has been an advance in moral standards and something to rejoice in in certain areas. I can't be confident that there has been an overall improvement of moral standards, but in certain areas there has been a great improvement in the West, and we are more moral, I think, than we were generations ago. Whether we are more moral on the whole, that is what I feel unable to say, but that we are more moral in certain respects I think we can say. It may be, of course, we are less moral in certain other respects.

Richard: This is an important area? You are saying that I am asking the wrong questions. What sort of questions should we be asking?

S: Well, I don't know. One can ask any questions one [209] pleases. Perhaps there isn't any imperative here.

: You began to say ...

S: I mean what is the purpose, why does one want to compare? One knows people do compare; Archbishops of Canterbury do compare. Popes compare, all sorts of people - Mrs Whitehouse compares; all sorts of people compare the ethical standards of one age, one period, one generation, with those of another. Why does one want to do this? Perhaps this is a more basic question. What is the utility of it? Does it help in any way? Is the question possible at all? In what sense are moral standards collective?

Devamitra: Isn't it a question of people wanting to re-establish a status quo after it has changed, and trying to get back to a former - ?

S: This is always the implication in the statements made by the sort of people I have mentioned. But first of all they lament the terrible decline of moral standards; point two is, we must get back to the old moral standards. How do we get back? Christianity. Three stages of the argument. So, yes, what you say is correct. Certain people feel that certain principles represent moral standards; they are not being observed, they would like them to be observed. So they try as it were to reinforce their argument by appealing to the ... we used to observe these standards in the good old days; we have degenerated. No one likes to think that they have degenerated, whether literally or practically, so let's get back, let's re-establish those lost ethical standards from which we have fallen away so disastrously. And there is only one way of doing that: in the past we were moral, we had high moral standards, because we were Christian, we were a Christian civilization. That's what we've got to get back to. This is, broadly speaking, the line of argument. It's questionable on many scores. First of all, whether moral standards have declined in that disastrous way, and whether what declined, if they did decline, were moral standards at all, or rather in some cases not immoral standards; and whether we want to re-establish them.

So it is true that when, very often, the decline of moral standards, or the view that certain people take that moral standards have declined, is associated with a desire to return to the past, to the status quo ante - whether the ante was two generations ago or 20 generations ago; some people would like [210] to go right back to the Middle Ages. Well, I don't mind going back - it depends how far you go back; I'd rather go right back to ancient Greece or ancient India, but it's probably impossible anyway. It can only go forward.

I think the only question that we can really usefully ask is what sort of moral standards do we have, individually and collectively - whether they are the right moral standards; if they are the right ones, whether they can be improved; if they are the wrong ones, how they can be discouraged. What are our ethical attitudes here and now? What constitutes ethical attitudes? What is ethics? I think perhaps these are the questions we can well usefully ask. How does one compare ethical standards, say, in - let's say ancient Rome with, say, modern London? Well, in Rome they had things like gladiatorial contests, which were a pretty awful sort of thing; They had them on quite a grand scale, in the latter days of the Roman Empire. That weighs very heavily in the balance. On the other hand, they spoke Latin (Laughter). Even quite ordinary people spoke it, so presumably they had quite a high standard of civilization and culture. Anyway perhaps I've laboured that point sufficiently.

There is also this whole question of the complexity of society. When a society is relatively simple, it isn't very difficult to determine perhaps the general nature of its ethical standards, but when a society is very complex and all sorts of things are happening in all sorts of ways, where some of those things have not only good results in certain respects but bad effects in certain other respects, it becomes increasingly difficult to strike a just balance.

Anyway, perhaps we have spent enough time on that topic; perhaps there are other topics that people want to ask about. I am afraid I haven't shed very much light, but at least I don't think I've shed any false illumination.

Ratnaprabha: This is on the same subject, but it's looking ahead rather than looking

backwards. We were discussing the moral order, and how a new moral order could be brought into being, and the role that the positive group, notably the FWBO, could have to play to bring this into being. So we were wondering when the transitions occurred between the personal morality, if you like, in the community, and the more - how shall I put it? - formal morality that might have to arise when the positive group gets much bigger. So when does that transition occur, and what sort of moral order might come into [211] being in the FWBO as it gets bigger, or as it maybe even takes over whole countries, perhaps eventually, or becomes very influential.

S: Well, in that sense, a moral order, a new moral order, comes into existence when the positive group acquires power, power in the political sense - say, in a democracy, power to legislate, power to enforce the laws. On the other hand, you cannot introduce, you cannot create a new moral order, you cannot introduce a new moral order by legislation; legislation is really needed to confirm and clarify existing generally accepted attitudes. So one cannot really bring a new moral order into existence without a preliminary process of intensive education, intensive public education, let us say. And then there is always the question of individual practice, individual influence, individual example. Clearly the positive group must be outward-going; that smaller positive group which exists within the context of the larger general society, that small positive group must be very outward-going, must have many points of contact with the larger group, with people in the larger group. It must exert an influence, and that influence must be exerted primarily on other individuals or other people, and when the educative process is sufficiently advanced, and when the positive group has perhaps sufficient power, which means political power, then the new moral order can perhaps begin to be reflected in appropriate legislation.

But persuasion must be the keynote. You can't really dragoon people into being more moral, more truly moral, because morality is essentially a matter of individual attitude.

Ratnaprabha: But presumably there will always be people in society who will go against the general moral standards, no matter ...

S: It would seem that there always will be, and that therefore the majority will need to invoke force, that is to say the weight of the majority against the minority, at least to restrain them from their anti-social conduct. I don't think one can get around that one.

Ratnaprabha: Is this something that won't really be relevant until the positive group gets political power in the whole country, or will it already be relevant even when, say, the Friends is very influential in just a small part of Bethnal Green?

[212]

S: Well, power exists on different levels within different contexts. It's not that there is just one completely unified national power - not in Britain, anyway - power at the national level. Power is a very complex structure. As I've said, it exists on many different levels within many different contexts; within, even, many different circles. One could take, for instance, the simple parish council, such as we have in Surlingham. Well, it is possible for a member of a positive group to go along, even to attend meetings of the parish council and influence, possibly, in a positive way. I would certainly not discourage people within the FWBO from operating in that manner. In fact, I think it is probably even more desirable to start trying to operate in that way than on a larger political scale, even if one was in a position to do so,

because on the smaller, on a lower level, within the smaller power unit, let us say, you are more closely in touch with people, you can exert more of a personal influence. And also you can see much more easily and clearly what exactly you are doing. The particular question, I think, which one of our Friends went along to a parish council to, I think, say something about and hear what they were saying about it, was connected with drainage. It wasn't a very complicated issue, and certain interests - a certain spiritual community living in the area were going to be involved, perhaps; so that was a quite simple, straightforward matter. Whereas on a higher level, where there is a much more complex power structure, sometimes you don't really know what you are doing; whether you are helping or whether you are hindering or harming.

But on the lower level, within the smaller units, the more simple power structures, one can very often see more or less what one is doing, and one can certainly influence people individually in a legitimate way by constructive suggestions, by arguing, by discussion. But I wouldn't be at all averse to some members of the FWBO infiltrating, as they have every right to do, in fact a duty of doing, and exercising a positive creative influence. When I say 'duty' I mean duty as a citizen.

Khemananda: Surely one problem with that is that, say, in London, even at the very local level, power is very much organized or controlled by political parties. In order to take any part in any council you have to involve yourself with political parties, which means meeting with people whose aims and aspirations are very different, and that person should be very strong, very - to be able to cope with that -

[213]

S: Well, London is rather a special case, or rather let's say a special case in principle, but it's a special case inasmuch as it is a large area with a sort of political structure even at the lowest level. But I was thinking more in terms of rural areas to begin with, where that problem doesn't exist.

But perhaps even in places like London we can find some way around that. Perhaps we can see ways of breaking the stranglehold that party politics has, really on matters where party politics need not enter in. For instance, I spoke of drainage. Well, suppose the parish council is divided politically; if someone has supported the extension of the drainage system, if he happens to belong to one party, the people in the other party will automatically oppose, they wouldn't consider the question on its own merits. And that is the great disadvantage of this party political system, at least at lower levels - perhaps even at a higher level. But no issue is decided on its own merits.

Ratnaketu: I was thinking it might be possible to just bypass all these councils of power; I was thinking that the Benson & Hedges' adverts, I have heard that their sales had tripled, 300% increase in sales, due to their advertising, and that was without any legislation. It was just ... these adverts, and I was wondering whether in another way we could influence people, not necessarily by advertising but find some way of just influencing people without going through councils and making laws, just sort of ...

S: Well, I don't consider that the one excludes the other. One must advance wherever one finds an opening, wherever one finds a weak spot. Perhaps a massive advertising campaign would help; I am willing to try anything, especially if we have the money for it. But of course

- Benson & Hedges is a brand of cigarette?

: That's right.

S: They had a great advantage, which was the craving of a large number of people for their particular product.

Gunapala: A big advantage! I'm sure we can find something. (?)

S: Well, advertising does make a difference. We do know [214] that a lot of people have come into the FWBO through advertisements in Time Out, and we know that certain posters have attracted people. We know that certain posters have definitely attracted people much more than certain other posters; we even know, or suspect, that some posters have put people off, or at least put some people off. We know, for instance, that that egg poster has been very very popular, and that it has caught the eye of a number of people and drawn them in, or at least induced them to make contact. Perhaps we shall have to look more into things of that sort. Why was that poster so popular, and why was perhaps a certain other poster not so popular?

I think I am right in this assumption that the egg poster was especially popular, was especially successful as far as you can ... tell?

Suvajra: We've got another question from Bernie.

Gunapala: A bit of a conflict I had before coming on retreat, I've just been reminded in the study group, was between working in society and developing, being involved with the moral standards of the society, and living in a spiritual community, say this environment. It was almost the conflict was so bad it was whether I would prefer to live in an environment like this for the rest of my life and not work in co-operatives, working in the world at all - whether this would be the best way to spend the rest of my life, or whether to work in the world ...

S: It's almost a conflict between the arhant ideal and the Bodhisattva ideal. Well, it may be a conflict for a given individual; I don't think it should be a conflict for the Movement as a whole. I think the Movement, to the extent that it is a movement, has to be operative in the world; but it is operative in the world. The Movement as a movement can't ignore the world; it's impossible. Well, to begin with, the Movement as a movement has to have a sort of legal existence - well, that at once involves you with the world. But it may be a question for certain individuals within the Movement whether they shall operate exclusively within the Movement - live, say, exclusively within communities, operate exclusively with people within the Movement; or whether they should mingle with the world and try to influence society outside in one way or another.

I will say only two things here. First of all, I think if you are working outside in the world and trying to, let's say, [215] enhance the moral standards of at least some people in that world outside, if you are going to improve the world outside to however slight an extent, I think you absolutely need to live in a community, because you need a base from which to operate. You can get so easily lost in the world, and influenced by the world, carried away by the world, submerged by the world, even while you are trying to help it. One finds lots of very well-meaning social workers and reformers and people of that sort who in the end are

swallowed up by it, they just sink into the morass; society is too much for them. They end up worried, hassled, harried, hurried, and all the rest of it, and not in a very good mental state. So if you really want to operate out there in the world, I think you need to base yourself firmly in a community, and maybe work out there in the world with friends who are living with you in the same community. You need to operate from a basis of strength, and you need to be inspired by the Bodhisattva ideal.

The other point I would make is that no doubt there is a place within the Movement for at least some people who operate exclusively within the Movement, who don't have any contacts outside, who live all the time within spiritual communities, perhaps who are engaged in full-time or more or less full-time meditation. They can also be, to a great extent, a sort of power-house or inspiration for those who are living outside. Maybe sometimes they can see things more clearly than you can because you are immersed in [it]; maybe you would need to turn to them sometimes for guidance or for inspiration.

So I think for the Movement as a whole, there is no choice; we exist in the world. But those individuals, those individual Order members especially, who choose to operate out there in the world, who try to change the world, need to operate from a basis of strength, and that means, I think, membership of a spiritual community. And, secondly, that even though the Movement as such exists in the world, there is the possibility that some Order members remain and operate within the Movement itself exclusively, either because they are on sort of permanent retreat or for some other reason. And they have a contribution to make to the Movement as whole, especially perhaps to those who are operating outside.

That doesn't, of course, solve your personal problem. The only person who can solve that is you.

Gunapala: It is strengthening your contact with the [216] community. It seems like you cannot operate the other way in it; from a weak point of view operating in the world is suicide. You only have two options, really: to be solidly in a full-time situation or solidly again in a full-time situation and operating in the world. It's either just meditation and study or being committed to a single-sex community and operating in the world - they seem like the only two options.

S: Yes, for the vast majority of people. There might be the odd heroic soul who can station himself somewhere all by himself and start up something. That is quite exceptional; I certainly wouldn't advise it, much less still encourage it.

But even a small group of comparatively well-meaning even Order members perhaps would not be advised to go too far away from - to use that expression - I was going to say the mother movement, but that's not really quite right - the Movement as a whole. Because even, say, four or five Order members operating in some far-flung outpost of the Movement could get submerged if they weren't careful, didn't keep up sufficient contact with the rest of the Movement. That could happen. The world is very much with us; the world is very much bigger than we are. In a sense it is very much more powerful - in a sense. And the world is a Goliath and you are a little David. Fortunately, you have your little sling, and your little stone from the brook. (Sorry for the biblical analogy. I ought to have found one out of classical poetry.)

Devamitra: Where does that saying come from - 'the world is too much with us'?

S: One of Wordsworth's sonnets.

The world is too much with us; late and soon, Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.

He is having a go at commercial civilization. It's one of his well-known sonnets.

Tape 10, Side 2

Devamitra: We have one question from our group from Ratnaketu.

Ratnaketu: Our question, or my question, arose out of our discussion of Perfect Action, and we were talking about kusala and akusala action and akusala action, unskilful action having [217] hatred and aggression and violence, and we started talking about hatred. And my question comes out of that. Basically, is there any connection between hate or hatred and wisdom, and is a hate-type person any more likely to develop wisdom than a greed-type person?

S: Well, that is the tradition. Dr Conze has an interesting essay on this subject, called 'Love, Hate and Perfect Wisdom'. It appears in, I think, the first volume of his Collected Essays. Buddhaghosa, for instance, discussing the different temperaments, does maintain that there is an affinity, so to speak, between hatred - or aversion - and wisdom, and prajna. And he explains the affinity in this way: he says that it is characteristic of aversion to seek out faults in the object towards which the aversion is felt. In other words, if you don't like something or someone, you will always be finding fault with that thing or with that person. You have a very keen eye for the faults of that thing or that person, you will seek out faults, you will seek out imperfections.

In the same way, he says, wisdom seeks out the faults, the imperfections, of conditioned existence. It penetrates into them, it pierces into them, it kicks holes, so to speak, in conditioned existence, and for that reason, according to Buddhaghosa, there is an affinity between aversion and wisdom; and therefore someone of dosacarita is likely to develop into the buddhicarita, the wisdom ...

Ratnaketu: But isn't that like saying that the love that a mother has for her own child is like the metta is like this. Does that mean that a mother with an only child is more likely to develop metta than somebody who doesn't have an only child?

S: No, that is only an analogy.

Ratnaketu: But isn't that the same with hate, that hate is analogous, and that it hunts out faults and things like that, goes out and crushes them, whereas that is just analogous to wisdom, it's not - because hatred is concerned with ... ego-identity, whereas wisdom is the total dissolving of the ego-identity.

S: Yes, Buddhaghosa doesn't maintain that there is an analogy; he does maintain that there is an affinity between aversion and wisdom.

[218]

I must say I have noticed this in the course of my contact with people, that the people who have got this critical, attacking attitude have also got quite keen, sharp, critical minds; they can see the implications of things. And they are, it seems, closer to a sort of wisdom - certainly ...

: ... wisdom?

S: Well, we mustn't forget that we are dealing with Buddhaghosa, and Buddhaghosa does see wisdom very much in Abhidharma terms. He might not agree with me that there was such a thing as an emotional equivalent or counterpart of wisdom. But that is certainly traditional.

Ratnaketu: Yes - would you agree with that?

S: I have met quite a few people - I can think of ... past, who have definitely been of dosa type, this sort of person, definitely the hate type, but had at the same time very good minds, very penetrating, critical minds. So there does seem to be at least sometimes a sort of connection between the two things.

Ratnaketu: This sharp, penetrating mind - is that analogous to wisdom?

S: I think it is certainly analogous to one aspect of wisdom, because wisdom needs to see through things: it needs to see through the appearances of things, it leads to seeing things as they really are.

Ratnaketu: Wouldn't it be that they use the same faculty of a penetrating seeing, but in fact are different ... ?

S: I'm not quite sure what ...

Ratnaketu: There's a faculty - it's almost a mode of operating, of being quite sharp and critical, and finding faults and keeping track of things, and people who have wisdom quite often operate in this way. But isn't that merely their way of - not wisdom but merely a way in which they use their wisdom, the way in which they operate?

S: Well, one can make a distinction between wisdom itself and the way in which wisdom is used. Whether that is a helpful distinction in this context is another matter. But what I would [219] say is this: that there are such things as micchaditthis, and one of the functions of wisdom is to pierce through these micchaditthis, to see through these micchaditthis. And it would seem that it's here that this sort of piercing and cutting and penetrating, slashing and chopping aspect of wisdom comes in. One could, of course, say that that isn't wisdom itself; that is wisdom operating in a particular manner. Well, there is something in that, no doubt; because if there were no micchaditthis would there be no wisdom?

But it does seem an important and prominent aspect of wisdom, just to say the very least - whether it exhausts the content of wisdom, that's quite another matter, or whether wisdom might not express itself in operating other ways, other modes, that again is quite another matter. Wisdom does not necessarily pierce and cut and slash and chop, but quite often it may find it necessary to do so. So that leaves Buddhaghosa rather in the air, doesn't it? - whether

there is an analogy, or an affinity, between hatred and wisdom as such, or an affinity between hatred and a particular mode in which wisdom may operate under certain conditions.

One might press the point and say: if prajna, if wisdom, represents something integral and whole and complete and perfect, one particular character type which is by definition one-sided cannot have any greater affinity to that than any other character type, because a character type is by definition one-sided.

Ratnaketu: You could equally say, then, that the expression of wisdom is compassion, the action of wisdom is compassion, so a person who's a greed type is just as likely to develop compassion - I mean greed is analogous to compassion, and ...

S: Oh, it's got an affinity for it, according to the Mahayana. This is why one of the Mahayana sutras says that, as far as the Bodhisattva is concerned - I was going to use the word 'sins', but ... translation ...; let's say unskilful actions - which arise out of craving are less serious in the case of the Bodhisattva than unskilful actions arising out of hatred, because they at least show an affinity for beings. At least one likes people, at however lowly a level. That's very important for a Bodhisattva. You can't even think of being a Bodhisattva if you don't like people. If you are anti-social, you may have all sorts of other good qualities, but it is very [220] difficult for you to be a Bodhisattva. But if you like people, at least you stand a chance.

This question can be raised in another, perhaps more aggravated form, by asking: 'Is there such a thing as a religious type of person?' In ordinary conversation one sometimes hears, or used to hear, this - 'He or she is a religious type', as though there was a certain psychological type which can be characterized as religious. But then again, if religion, the word religion, indicates or points to something of universal interest, something of ultimate concern for every human being, how can there be a religious type? Man himself is the religious type, you might say, he is the religious species among animals. How can you have a religious type of human being and then non-religious types? But sometimes you do hear people saying this, especially in the negative form; if you ask them 'Are you interested in Buddhism, or even in Christianity?' or something like that, they say 'No,' and then they say, 'I guess I'm not the religious type.' But can one reduce religion in this way to the interest of a particular psychological type? Because if one does this, if one can do this, it negates the very nature of religion. It reduces it to a hobby for a particular kind of people. One man is a religious type, another is a racing type, or gambling type. It's much the same sort of question, isn't it?

Gunapala: It does seem to come quite close to my own, ..., as it were, this idea of say you've got a lot of people coming to the Centre, and it seems like sometimes you feel that some people just have it in them, they can develop spiritually, and others don't. I don't know how to put it - it seems like some people have Buddhist leanings and others don't have Buddhist leanings. Some are spiritual types and others are not spiritual types. I do have that sort of feeling.

S: But at the same time I think appearances can be misleading. Sometimes people who would appear to be quite promising after a while fade out of the picture; and others who haven't been considered quite so promising just stay around and do very slowly and very steadily make progress. I think it's very difficult to generalize. Though at the same time one does get the sort of impression that you mentioned. I think one should be rather on one's guard against such impressions.

: ...

[221]

S: Yes, to the extent that it can be proved, yes; certainly staying power.

Cittapala: Would you say that it's a question of approach to the so-called non-religious types, it's really a question of finding the right language in which to communicate the Dharma?

S: Yes, not only the right language but the right approach in the more personal sense. I think that there are many more people who could become involved in what, for want of a better term, we call the spiritual life and even the FWBO, if only one could find that right approach and could establish a sufficiently personal connection with them.

Gunapala: What is the spiritual type, then?

S: Well, I think the first thing that you have to do is just to get to know people, and establish some kind of friendly connection with them, if not communication, and play it by ear. Then if you do enter into communication with them, whatever is in you will flow into that communication, it cannot but flow into it in one way or another, in one form or another, one form of words or another. You can't keep yourself out of your communication if you are really communicating. And then if Buddhism is part of you you can't keep that out of your communication if you are really communicating, though you may not necessarily, at least to begin with, bring in the word or the name Buddhism. Sooner or later you will have to, in simple honesty.

Suvajra: [Maybe we should be] much more adventurous and creative in actually going out to people.

S: I think so, yes. I think our - what shall I say? - our front, so to speak, is quite narrow. I am speaking of 'front' in the military sense. We are advancing, but on a quite narrow front. I would like to broaden our front, penetrate deeper into enemy territory (Laughter), bring them under heavier fire. Of course, we mustn't stretch our lines of communication ... We can't all live at General Headquarters. What we really need is the spiritual equivalent of the SAS!

: What would be their contact(?)?

(Voices talking at once.)

[222]

S: Sabbe Satta Sukhi Hontu.

: SBS - Special Bodhisattva Service.

Silaratna: Do you think ... could also ... One thing that I noticed... like ...in Sydney there's a lot of businessmen who were living in the area around where the community was and the thought crossed our mind that even perhaps holding specialized meditation courses for businessmen; that sort of thing could be included.

S: You could try anything, if it brings you into contact with people and you get them

meditating; try anything at all. I mean if doesn't contravene any moral principle.

Silaratna: In that respect your approach would have to be very suited to the businessmen in ...

S: Yes, you would need to have decent premises. The place would have to look attractive, even a little plush. You couldn't hold a course, probably, in such shabby halls, it wouldn't work. You'd have to give them a total package.

: ...

S: I'm sure we could broaden our front; we could be much more imaginative in our approach and contact a much wider range of people. I am glad we are getting into schools, that London Order members are giving talks in schools.

Gunapala: Morality would be the most important, surely, in that area, in educating young children.

S: Well, yes, making it clear what morality, what ethics, really was; that it wasn't necessarily identical with the rather stuffy notions that were being inculcated perhaps in their particular school; perhaps in that particular school nothing ethical of any kind was being inculcated.

Ratnaketu: I think people in school would be just delighted to know that they don't have to lead the life that is planned out for them. They have various other possibilities.

S: Yes. There is an alternative - a real alternative, not a seeming alternative.

Suvajra: Our group had two questions. The first one [223] was Robin to do with duty.

Cittapala: Yes, we were talking about duties and rights within the context of group membership, and you mentioned earlier on the duties of a citizen. We very much want to talk about what was the definition of duty within a positive group situation when somebody was attempting to follow a Buddhist ethical code. Do you have any thoughts on that?

S: I can't say that I have given much thought to the subject of duty. I have given some thought to the subject of rights, partly because people are very concerned with rights, and rights and duties are closely connected - in fact, I wrote an essay about them years and years ago.

But duty - the word duty does correspond to some extent to the word dharma, or rather to one aspect of dharma. I can't remember what the etymology of the English word duty is; does anybody know? - duty? The main ingredient in this concept of duty is of something being incumbent upon you; something that you can't avoid. This is why Wordsworth, to quote him again, in his Ode to Duty, apostrophizes Duty in the course of the sonnet, as 'Stern daughter of the Voice of God'. She is stern. This might give one food for thought. But duty does represent something that is absolutely incumbent upon you; but usually what is incumbent upon you is imposed from outside. You are as it were told that this is your duty, 'This is the whole duty of Man', it is said; this is your duty, say, as a father, this is your duty as a husband, or this is your duty as a citizen.

But from a more Buddhist point of view, one might say - and here I am being a little tentative,

because I'm thinking about the question you asked - that your duty is what you impose upon yourself, what you see as incumbent upon yourself, in view of the principles that you follow, the principles in which you believe, and the situation in which you find yourself.

Well, let's take the example I mentioned in that lecture I gave on A Case of Dysentery. There was the sick monk; there were the other monks living in the same place. It was their duty to look after him. Now what does that mean? It wasn't their duty because the Buddha said it was their duty simply. The Buddha did not lay it upon them as a duty; the Buddha pointed out to them that they had the duty by virtue of the very principles that they had accepted and the very situation that they were in. They should have seen it themselves, but they [224] didn't. It naturally flowed from the principles that they had supposedly adopted, and the situation in which they actually found themselves - that they should have looked after their fellow monk.

Practising meditation, practising metta bhavana, feeling, experiencing, the solidarity with one another that one does experience when one lives in a spiritual community, when they saw that sick monk they should - in the sense that it should have been the natural consequence - have [been] looking after him, doing something for him. But they didn't; they failed in their duty, because presumably they were not sufficiently imbued with the principles that they were supposed to be following, and they were not sufficiently aware of the actual situation. Otherwise they would have seen for themselves that this is what has to be done, this is what needs to be done, and have done it. They would have done their duty. They would not have even thought about it, it would have been a natural thing.

So it is not that the Buddha has made a rule that you have got to look after sick fellow monks, but if you really are living together as fellow members of the spiritual community, with all that that involves, then when one of you is sick the others will naturally, spontaneously, look after him. And that can be seen in terms of doing their duty.

Cittapala: We were talking in slightly more mundane terms, of washing up and going to meditations and pujas; and we agreed that there seemed to be - there should be - a natural response, so to speak, or events spontaneously arising out of metta for one's fellow community members. But if that was lacking, should one feel incumbent and duty bound to participate in particular activities, or should one perhaps take a different viewpoint?

S: I would say on the whole, I would take the view, that one is duty bound, if one is a member of a community at all; because if one does not regard oneself as being duty bound, or if too many people regard themselves as not being duty bound, the structure of community life falls to the ground; you don't have a community. If no one feels any obligation to do the washing up or take their turn at washing up, or to get up and meditate in the morning, well, you might just as well not have a community. Well, you won't have a community. So there has to be, I think, if you cannot do something out of a natural sense of responsibility - if you don't have a natural willingness to do what needs to be done - then you have to do it more as a [225] discipline, if you want to live in a spiritual community at all. Because, without the mutual discharge of common duties, common responsibilities, there can't be a spiritual community. There will just be a mess.

And if it happens that any particular community member consistently and repeatedly fails in carrying out his duties, whether he does it spontaneously or as a matter of discipline, other community members will be justified in asking him to leave; because they want to live in a

spiritual community, with everything that that implies, and you cannot have a spiritual community unless all the members of that community more or less equally accept a responsibility for the way things are in the community at every level.

Of course, one knows that sometimes one may have to give a bit of leeway to certain individuals; maybe they are going through it, maybe they are reacting for the time being. All right, there is a certain amount of leeway to be given. But that has to be by general understanding and consent of the rest of the community, and of course even that cannot go on too long, otherwise it becomes disruptive of the community.

Cittapala: Doesn't it link in a sort of way to lifestyle, going to different communities - [you can] obviously see there are different approaches to living there? What happens if two or three people just want to live in a different, simple way?

S: Well, that's all right, they can live together in that different way. For instance, they all agree that they don't want things like washing up rotas and so on; well, fair enough, let them live together, see how it works out. But if they want to live in that sort of way, they shouldn't try to join a larger community where things need to be done in a more regular manner.

Devamitra: It seems sometimes that there is quite a bit of practical difficulty in communities when it is very difficult to see whether you are just not giving any leeway at all in certain individual cases, or you are giving too much. It seems that there is a very fine balance to be struck.

S: I would say, generally speaking, older and more experienced Order members, let us say, should give a little bit of leeway to those who are younger and less experienced; certainly more leeway than they would give themselves or give one another.

[226]

But if - to give an example - all the members of a community consider, for instance, that meditating together daily is an integral and essential part of the life of the spiritual community, then if someone consistently fails to join in that particular activity, in effect he opts out of the community, and there is no point in him continuing to live under the same roof; and therefore he can be asked by the rest of the community to leave. If it's because he may be working a lot or going through some personal crisis, he misses once or twice, fair enough; you can allow him a bit of leeway there. He has not repudiated the principle. But supposing he says, 'I don't believe in meditating every day, and I don't particularly want to meditate with other people' - well, he is undermining the foundation at least of that particular spiritual community, so he can hardly be a member of it.

But living as a member of a spiritual community does involve doing things with other members of the community. It does not mean simply a sharing of facilities. It means doing with other members of the community things which you all consider as important. If you don't want to share in the doing of those things which are considered important, you don't really belong in that particular community; you need to find some other, if you want to live in a spiritual community at all.

I think there is general agreement as to what activities you all need to participate in for there to be an effective spiritual community at all. They are such activities as meditation, study,

meals and recreation. I think that just about sums it up. I don't enumerate communication separately, because I take it that communication pervades all of these different activities in one form or another.

So if you don't want to meditate with other people, if you don't want to study with them, if you don't want to eat with them and if you don't want to play with them, what business have you in a spiritual community at all?

Jinavamsa: Would you put work under the heading of recreation?

S: Did I leave out work! What a terrible omission! I think we could include work under that heading. You take work for granted in that case.

: ...

[227]

Suvajra: Robin had a second question as well...

Cittapala: Well, in a way it stems almost directly out of this question. You were talking about pleasure and the ideals in terms of the middle path. I was thinking that in modern society at least sex has come to be one of the more heavily underlined pleasures available to people. I was wondering how you saw the context of sex for heterosexual men in the context of single-sex communities, how they could bring that within the spiritual framework of the community life.

S: Taking the modern conditions it's very difficult, because they necessarily do involve women, and women have got their own way of looking at things. For instance, they may want to settle down in a relationship, they may want to get married, they may want children. So it isn't just a question of sex. Along with the sex come all sorts of other considerations that you will have to give very serious thought to; and that is a question which is probably very difficult to generalize about. You have to make your own individual decision.

For instance, in India, in I think, yes, nearly all our Indian Order members - I think with one exception, who is an anagarika - are family men, are married men, and they certainly don't find it easy, especially as most of them have full-time jobs. They've got families, they've got extended families. It is a little bit more easy for them than it is for married people in the West, inasmuch as the family is usually an extended family; so that when they are off, or when they are away working with or for the FWBO, the wife is not left in isolation, she is not left on her own. There are a whole lot of other people in the house that she can talk with, and so she doesn't mind her husband being away so much. But that isn't the case in the West, and very often, especially where there no children, you go off to follow your spiritual interests or pursuits, and your wife is left on her own, and she resents that and there is trouble. So this is definitely a difficulty.

Cittapala: But how does one cope with the 'Was he here last night?' syndrome, in terms of accommodating that desire which inevitably seems to come up - ?

S: Well, if one is thinking in terms of accommodation - let's think of it in those terms at least for the time being - it is very largely a question of proportion. It is a question [228] of whether

that particular interest is peripheral or whether it is central. It may happen very occasionally that maybe once or twice every two or three months the question arises, 'Where was he last night?' But in some cases it might arise today, it arises tomorrow, it arises the day after, it arises almost every day of the week, and then the question arises, 'Is this person really here? Is he really a member of the community? Is his heart in the community?' This question then arises in a quite serious form - how much of his energy, how much of his interest, how much of his emotional life, lies outside the community? So if just a small part of it lies outside the community, perhaps fair enough, but if it would seem that a very large part of it lies outside the community, or maybe even the majority of it lies outside the community, then the question arises: can he really be an effective community member? Supposing he never opens up with anybody within the community? Suppose, when he is going through any difficulties or any problems, he just goes to someone outside the community, he doesn't even discuss that question with anyone in the community? Suppose it's obvious that his source of emotional solace or support is outside? Can that person be an effective member of the spiritual community?

But if it's just a question of an occasional disappearance, and doesn't create too much of a break in community life, maybe one should just say, 'fair enough'. But it really needs to be no more than that. It shouldn't be a question of people persistently asking the question and saying 'Where was he last night? Is he still around?'

Silaratna: Presumably in that situation you would open up anyway, you would tell your spiritual friends in the community that you ...

S: In a sense, some people at least should know. This brings us, maybe, to a broader point. I have noticed this even in communities in which I have lived myself, or stayed myself, that there is a reluctance to let other people know where you are going. And I must say sometimes I have been quite annoyed when somebody has just gone off - maybe for the afternoon - and not told anybody where they are going or when they are coming back. And there are telephone bells ringing and people asking for them and you don't know what to say; you don't know whether to say they are going to be back in two hours' time, or they will back in the evening; you don't know what to say. So this is quite annoying and irresponsible. And I myself, when I go out, I always tell someone in the community where I am going and [229] when I'm going to be back, and when I will be available.

So there is this general consideration. Don't just disappear for the night. At least say to somebody that 'I am going out for the night, I'll be back tomorrow'; so that people at least don't worry. They might even worry, they might think you had had an accident; they don't know where you are, where you've gone ...

Tape 11, Side 1

Ratnaketu: ... the other day. He was saying that you should try to get the whole of all your activities within the actual spiritual community. What you're suggesting there is a sort of compromise on that.

S: Well, I should take this as the ideal, but it may not be possible, in all cases, to realize that. You might like to play tennis, but you might not be anybody in the community who likes to play tennis. (Laughter) ... Maybe someone else in the community likes to play tennis, but the

community presumably doesn't have its own tennis court. You might have your own bats and even your own balls but you have to play on a tennis court somewhere else.

Ideally, every facility should be in the spiritual community, but it's not very easy to realize that. But certainly if you are a member of a spiritual community, the greater part of your life, your activities, your interests, your emotions, your energies, should be there. If too much of any of these is draining outside, that is destructive ultimately of community life. That is the general principle. And no doubt there will be difficulties in certain areas for certain people - not only in connection with sex but in connection with other matters too. One particular person who has asked for ordination feels a very strong involvement with Alcoholics Anonymous, so he spends several evenings a week there - well, how would that, for instance, affect his membership of the spiritual community, if he wanted to be a member of a spiritual community? There's quite a difference sort of interest but it raises the same sort of questions.

Anyway, was that the last question?

: Have we got enough time?

S: Well, it's 12 minutes past one, so whether we've got more time or not is up to all of you to decide. I can also [230] remind you that any unanswered or unresolved questions, or questions you would like to go into even more deeply in a smaller context can be brought up in the course of the afternoon discussion groups. That is partly what they are for, once we've got through our life stories. I think one - two groups - are practically through the life stories; I think there is half a life story left in each case; others are about in the middle of the life stories, they are half way through. So ...

Day 11 Tape 12, Side 1

Vessantara: Today I think all the groups have been going through Perfect Action and we've more or less all got to round about in the first discussion the First Precept. Devamitra's got the first question.

Devamitra: Yes, it arose out of our discussion of the First Precept.

Bodhiruchi: Bhante, the First Precept, non-violence, abstention from violence, led me to consider the various what one could call maybe pacifist religions. such as Manichaeism and the Cathars, and how they were obliterated; they were only alive for so long. And yet Buddhism - one could loosely call it a pacifist religion - has managed to survive through quite a lot of repression. Could you say why?

S: Why it managed to survive.

Bodhiruchi: Yes, and the ramifications for the First Precept.

S: Well, first of all let's question the assumption behind the question - the extent to which it has survived. What does one mean by 'survive'? The teachings survived; some of the institutions have survived. There is a Buddhist tradition which says, so to speak, that the Dharma exists, and therefore presumably survives, on three different levels. There is the level of Transcendental attainment; there is the level of doctrinal understanding; and there is the

level of institutional observance. So when one is speaking in terms of the survival of Buddhism, is one speaking of survival on the first level or the second or the third, or all three? What would count as survival? For instance, in the case of Ceylon, most people would say that Buddhism survives in Ceylon. Admittedly, there is the institutional observance there; admittedly, there is doctrinal knowledge, if not always [231] doctrinal understanding; but the Sinhalese Buddhists themselves maintain that since, I believe it's the eleventh century - it might be a little later than that - there have been no arhants in Ceylon; in fact, they don't believe it is possible for there to be arhants any more.

So one might say that, even though Buddhism had survived in Ceylon, it had survived only on two levels, the two lower levels; not on the highest level. So to what extent does that count as survival? But again, that raises the question what does one mean by the survival of Buddhism? And that in turn raises the question of what one means by Buddhism itself. There is no doubt that the Cathars, the Albigenses, were wiped out completely; their institutions were wiped out. The Cathars themselves largely were wiped out personally and the tradition of their teaching was largely wiped out; it went very, very underground and survived in only very obscure and indirect ways.

Buddhism has done better than that. To begin with it could overspread a much larger region. There was a very much greater cultural importance. And also it was established in many regions for a very much longer period than Catharism was ever established in the south of France.

But I think we shouldn't be too complacent about the survival of Buddhism, certainly not in the East. It has been pointed out by Dr Conze, among others, that in a sense for the last 1,000 years Buddhism has been in retreat. Once India was, if not entirely Buddhist, at least Buddhist to a very considerable extent. Buddhism certainly did flourish in India for centuries. But by about the thirteenth century practically all trace of Buddhism had disappeared from India. What a terrible loss that was! Then it was only very recently that Buddhism has been revived in India, and even then on a very limited scale.

Then, if one goes a little further into it, Buddhism once flourished throughout Central Asia, but at present there is no Buddhism in Central Asia. It was displaced from Central Asia as it was displaced from India largely by militant Islam and resurgent orthodox Hinduism.

Again, Buddhism once upon a time flourished throughout the whole of what is called Indonesia, in Java and Sumatra, even in Borneo. There is hardly any trace left of it there. Once again, displaced by Islam. Buddhism once flourished in China; what the condition of Buddhism in China is today we don't really [232] know, but it certainly isn't flourishing; that is the very least we can say. What about Tibet? It can hardly be said to be flourishing there. What about Mongolia? After upwards of 50 years of communist rule, Buddhism has virtually ceased to exist in Mongolia.

So it would seem that throughout practically the whole of the Eastern world, for upwards of the last 1,000 years, Buddhism has been in retreat. Its institutions have been destroyed; doctrinal knowledge has dwindled; what the position is with regard to Transcendental attainment, of course it is hardly possible for us to say, but at least we might say that if fewer people are practising Buddhism the likelihood is that the number of people attaining to the Transcendental Path will be proportionately smaller. At least we can say that.

So we are in no position to be complacent about the survival of Buddhism. It has survived, we may say, but only just.

I did go into this, in fact I did emphasize this, in the course of some of my lectures some months ago in India. And I pointed out that, so far as Buddhism was concerned from this particular point of view, there were only two rather bright spots in an almost uniformly dark picture. One of those was India itself, where Buddhism has been very definitely revived in the course of the last 20-odd years - especially in the last 20-odd years. And the other bright spot - comparatively bright spot - being the West, and I think especially England. Otherwise, the story of the last few centuries is quite dark, is quite gloomy.

So in a sense, considering its greater spiritual depth, considering the far greater extent of its area of influence, considering its far greater cultural importance, in terms of survival Buddhism in the East, at least, has not done very much better than the Cathars.

I didn't mention the south-east Asian countries - what is happening to Buddhism in Vietnam we don't really know. It certainly can't be said to be flourishing. What is happening to Buddhism in Cambodia, Laos? Well, again, it was practically wiped out only a few years ago; what the present position is it's difficult to say. Maybe there are very small signs of survival; not much more than that.

[233]

So we are certainly in no position to be complacent about the survival of Buddhism. We might say Christianity and Islam, if it comes to survival, have done considerably better. It might be connected with the fact that they are less pacific teachings. A pacific teaching is very vulnerable in a non-pacific world. That raises a question which perhaps this is not the time and place to go into; that is to say, how does a pacific teaching survive in a non-pacific world?

Devamitra: In a way, we did have another question surrounding this which almost implies that question. It was: certainly as I understand it, pacifism seems to be quite passive, or at least as I am acquainted with it from Western(?) ... current understanding of that term. But clearly that can't surely be - it can't be said that non-violence is entirely passive, or can it?

S: Well, etymologically there is no connection between passivity and pacifism. The question, of course, arises whether one does consider non-violence to be a purely passive virtue. But first one has to explore or one has to reflect what one means by passive virtue, or passivity, in this connection. Is the practice of non-violence ever passive, and if it is, what does one mean by being passive? Is this at all clear? If one is asking whether non-violence is always passive, what does one mean by being passive, in at least some instances? In what sense is it a passive virtue? On what basis does one distinguish between passive virtues and active virtues?

Devamitra: What makes me think that it is certainly viewed as being passive is that I had the idea, at least, that pacifism is seen as non-resistance to violence. In that sense ...

S: In the gospel sense of 'Resist not evil'.

Devamitra: I don't know. I don't know my gospels well enough.

S: Non-violence in the sense of not resisting violence; that is to say, not resisting violence by means of violence, presumably?

Devamitra: Yes.

S: So you are asking whether there is any other way of practising non-violence other than by simply not resisting violence? Is this actually the question?

[234]

Devamitra: I suppose it could be.

S: I would say that in an increasingly violent world, or in a world which would appear to be increasingly violent, I think one can't leave things as late as that: that is to say, one shouldn't allow things, if one can possibly help it, to get to the point where one has no alternative as a Buddhist except not to resist violence with violence, when one has an interest, so to speak, in taking as active steps as one can to prevent violence occurring, so that one does not find oneself in the position of being able to resist it only non-violently, if one is to be true to one's Buddhist principles. Therefore I think that, as part of one's practice of non-violence, one should take such active steps as one possibly can either as an individual or as a member of a group working with other individuals, or at least with other people, to try to ensure that violence is not as prevalent as it certainly is at present, and that the amount of violence in the world does not increase. That would be, or could be considered to be, a part of one's active, or relatively active, practice of non-violence - to, for instance, conduct propaganda in favour of a non-violent approach.

I am not underestimating the nature of that task. It is very, very difficult, and sometimes one's pleas will fall on deaf ears. There does seem to be in the world today, judging by what one can pick up from the papers and magazines and so on, a quite strong feeling on the part of more and more people, exacerbated by this whole question of nuclear weapons, that war is not the solution; that war must not be allowed to take place; that war now is so frightful and could have such terrible consequences for humanity as a whole that it simply cannot be allowed to take place, and more and more people are feeling this and beginning to express their feelings. If we felt that we should express our feelings too, then that would be certainly in accordance with taking active steps to practise and to promote non-violence and a non-violent way of life.

I distinguish that from advocating specific policies, about which people who in common accept non-violence may perhaps disagree.

Ratnaketu: What did you mean by that last sentence ...?

S: Well, everybody - a lot of people agree, or think, that nuclear weapons should be abolished, that nuclear war must be [235] avoided - quite rightly think that - but they disagree about the means. Some people in Britain, for instance, think that what Britain should do is to unilaterally divest itself of all nuclear weapons. Others, who are equally concerned with the avoidance of nuclear conflict, are convinced equally sincerely that that is not the way and that that could make matters worse rather than better. They believe that Britain should for the time being retain its nuclear option, its nuclear weapons, in the interests of the ultimate abolition of nuclear weapons and abolition or avoidance of nuclear war.

So in making this statement that one who believes in non-violence could take active steps to promote and practise it in this way, I am not therefore suggesting that he necessarily follows any particular line of action. That isn't a line of action which follows ...

But it would seem that the forces involved are really enormous, the interests involved are very powerful; and whether the still, small voice of humanity will make itself heard in time is quite a question. Some governments do not permit anti-war propaganda or anti-nuclear weapons propaganda. It is permitted to criticize other countries and other powers for their warmongering, etc., but it is not permitted to criticize one's own government. But unless there can be some sort of expression of opinion on the part of outraged and afflicted humanity in all these countries, there is not much prospect of any worldwide abolition of nuclear weapons and therefore, hopefully, avoidance of nuclear war.

Bodhiruchi: Where do you see the roots of this violence? Can one put a finger on any reason why there is this violence?

S: I think it is simplistic to say that it all springs from the heart of man. Of course, to a great extent it does, but it is not simply because people are violent, or that there is this violent tendency in human nature everywhere. It is also because of the greatly increased complexity of world affairs, that sometimes things go wrong, even when one has no intention that they should go wrong. Situations escalate, they get out of hand, unforeseen consequences arise, and sometimes one is simply swept into the maelstrom of violence. Some students of the First World War believe it was a war that need not have happened, but it seemed to come about as a result of all sorts of rather stupid accidents, and even coincidences. It was not really a war that anybody seemed to want, but it [236] happened, and it was up to that time the most terrible war in history. It was as though nations stumbled into it, hardly knowing what they were doing. Not that they were keen and eager for it, at least in a number of cases.

Cittapala: It seems that the arguments on either side of the nuclear arms debate both trade on people's fears. Possibly there is a strong case for actually dealing on positive foundations (?).

S: Well, I think it's not just a question of avoiding nuclear conflict, with all its terrible consequences, simply so that one can go on living in the old way. One needs to hold out a positive alternative. One is not really concerned with the question of one's survival so that one can continue to watch third-rate TV programmes. One is concerned with the whole question or issue of human survival because one has a sort of vision of what human beings might be. So perhaps, yes, perhaps it is a more positive approach to try to put across to people the possibilities that lie before the human race, and what a pity it would be if those possibilities were not realized because of the intervention of nuclear catastrophe. It is certainly a rational fear to be afraid of nuclear war; I don't think people could be blamed for being afraid when they consider that possibility. But they should be afraid not just because nuclear war would end humanity and prevent humanity going on in its present fashion; they should be afraid more because nuclear war would prevent humanity from rising to fresh heights. And it is there, perhaps, that the positive appeal, the positive approach comes in. I am sure this has a place, a prominent place.

Cittapala: You mentioned the other day that the term 'new society' had faded out of consciousness or terminology in the FWBO, ...

S: That was my impression, without wishing to be very categorical about that. It is just that I haven't heard it mentioned for quite a while.

Cittapala: Do you think that there might be a contraction of the wider vision on the part of people in the Movement as a potential for - ?

S: That could be. It could be that they have got their little noses so deeply buried in their own tiny co-ops - all right, ... - that they have lost sight of the wider horizon. [237] That could be; again, I don't want to be categorical. You mentioned it as a possible explanation. I agree, it may be a possible explanation. I don't know if anybody else has any point to offer on this topic? Is it a fact that in the FWBO for the last couple of years, so far as one is aware, in one's own corner of the FWBO there has been less talk of the new society?

Is that true? Could one say that - less than before?

Voices: Yes.

S: And what explanation does one proffer for that?

Cittapala: I was wondering whether it might have something to do with the fact that the early '70s was very much a time of trying - well, it was a general trend within society to try and ... The '70s were going to be the new Aquarian age. I was wondering whether ...

S: Well, within the FWBO we have always distrusted that sort of ideology and that sort of approach. I don't think we were influenced by that. I myself certainly wasn't. I doubt very much that it is simply that we are influenced by a sort of general stream of opinion; it could be, but we ought not to be, if that is the case.

Vessantara: Personally, I don't use the term very much because when I did use it I found that it was already a term which was current, which other people used, and they used it in very different ways to the way in which I used it; and therefore it wasn't actually helpful to talk in terms of the new society. It created confusion. I would like to find another term, which would be fresh and ours.

Devamitra: I've got similar feelings. I have never actually used that term; I don't like it. I appreciate the vision behind it, and I certainly have spoken about that, and feel for that; but I would rather have had another way of putting it.

S: Well, we have sometimes spoken - at least, I have sometimes spoken - in terms of creating, so to speak, the Pure Land on earth.

Gunapala: That's quite strong, actually, I feel.

[238]

S: On the other hand, one also is mindful of the fact that Mao Tse Tung used to speak in similar terms, and he maintained that that was what communism in China was doing - that the Pure Land, which was up in the sky, which the Buddhists used to talk about in the bad old days, he, Mao, and the Communist Party, had brought right down to earth, and that is the new China. It's the Pure Land. I don't know if anyone was aware of this, were they, that Mao spoke

in this way?

Devamitra: Nobody has mentioned it before.

S: Well, it does not mean that we shall surrender our traditional Buddhist terms, because Mao might have twisted or misused them. But the term in itself is perhaps an appropriate one.

: I think I've heard 'building the Buddha Land' used a bit more frequently.

S: Ah. Well, a Pure land - well, all lands are Buddha Lands; there are pure Buddha Lands and impure Buddha Lands. So what we want to build is a pure Buddha land. It's building the Pure Buddha Land.

Subhuti: I must say I still find it an inspiring prospect - to use it as a terminology. But what I have noticed is, people are a little bit cynical about it; I think because the gap between their little co-ops and the new society is quite great, they tend to be rather overwhelmed by problems in their co-ops. So they just don't like to use the two terms in the same mouthful.

Khemananda: Also, in my experience, you can have ideals, like the ideal of a new society, and then you start working in a co-op and you become aware not only of the problems of the co-op but the problems of the world just seem so large that you almost get a failure of confidence, doubting the new society. You lose that kind of vision... failure of confidence ...

S: It has just occurred to me - I suggest this as a possibility - that, in England at least, the fact that one doesn't speak so much now in terms of a new society might have something to do with the present government. Many people feel that a sort of (I'm using the current political cliches without necessarily subscribing to them) - a sort of 'right-wing reactionary atmosphere' has been created, and one might feel the new society, or even the little nucleus of the new society, [239] could hardly flourish in such an atmosphere. One might think that things are rather against one.

Ratnaketu: I think there is - some people really hold despondent attitudes, you know, the Falklands crisis, escalation of war, state of the world affairs. What chance has ... change...?

S: Of course, one could look at it differently and think: all the more need for change, all the more reason for change; and become more determined than ever. I don't think things like the Falklands war should bother one in that way, because wars have been going on all the time. Why should the Falklands war especially bother us in England? Because far more terrible wars have gone on since the FWBO was started, and we haven't as it were turned a hair; why bother about the Falklands war? Was it because it was our war, so to speak? Well, all wars are our wars, to the extent that we identify with humanity as a whole.

Bodhiruchi: The Falklands war disturbed me quite greatly because of the effect it had on people, the very quick reaction to backing up the government. Most people I talked to were quite behind it. It just seemed crazy.

S: Well, should one be surprised at that? In times of danger, in times of emergency, the group sticks together. What else is one to expect? That is of the nature of the group. One saw this during the last war - I mean the war of 1939-1945. I remember it very well; I was 14 at the

time, and I remember the feeling that there was among people of rallying to the support of king and country. This is how the group functions; one should not be surprised.

Silaratna: I am always quite inspired by the thing you said about New Zealand once, the possibility that it could be a Buddhist country in thirty years - I think that is what you said, wasn't it?

S: Yes, indeed.

Silaratna: It's always very much stuck in the back of my mind, that.

S: But you've got to have really determined people. You've got to have people who are really determined, who are going to go all out to do it. Not people who think, well, if they get time, if they've got spare time from other things, then [240] they'll do it, they'll get around to it, sort of thing. No, you've got to be prepared to put yourself totally into that, and believe in it utterly. Otherwise if you are going to do it in the intervals of keeping up your relationships and doing a little painting and a little pottery, and expressing yourself generally, you are not going to get round to doing very much.

Cittapala: So you do see the new society as quite an expansive vision in terms of whole countries, rather than ...?

S: Well, if one looks back even over the last 100 years, whole countries have changed, whole countries have undergone revolutions. Look at Russia. Who would have believed that Russia - who would have believed that that sort of unindustrialized country would ever change to that extent? Even Marx himself didn't expect the revolution to start in Russia; he expected it to start in Germany, apparently. Tremendous changes have taken place in all sorts of societies over the last 100 years. Usually, of course, they have been brought about by violence, unfortunately. Great changes have taken place in India; India ... became independent to a great extent by non-violent means.

Cittapala: Is that really the nature of a religious innovation, or would it be possible for religious/philosophical ideas to have that kind of rapid change, where individuals actually have changed, rather than just the power base?

S: Well, I would have been a little sceptical on this score in this century, had it not been for the example of India, where one has seen Buddhism beginning to work virtually - well, a social revolution in the lives of several millions of people in this day and age. So I am full of hope. I regard that, what is happening in India and in which we are also involved and with which I was involved from the beginning, as a very hopeful sign indeed - not just of the revival of Buddhism in a narrow, as it were religious sense, but as presenting an example of a tremendous upheaval brought about in society by virtually purely spiritual means. This is why I think the example of India on this whole question, this whole movement, of the mass conversion of ex-Untouchables to Buddhism is so encouraging; because there are millions of them involved in it, not just a few hundred or a few thousand as in Britain. But it does mean a radical change in their whole way of life and position in society, from top to bottom - not just a change in religious belief; it's far, far more than that.

[241]

So I think that if one were sufficiently alert, sufficiently active, sufficiently inspired, sufficiently dedicated, and if there were a number of you working together, you could, perhaps, very likely exert a substantial influence on whole societies in different parts of the world, especially where those societies were in a state of flux and looking for some kind of general stability, some kind of vision, some kind of blueprint for the future. It's as though we haven't really got started yet. But we won't really get started unless people put themselves into things wholeheartedly. If they are concerned with their personal development in a very narrow, very subjective, almost narcissistic way, they are not going to be able to do very much.

This is one of the lessons of history - that individuals, even, standing quite alone, have been able to bring about tremendous changes affecting tens of millions of people. If you think of people like Lenin, if you think of people like Gandhi, of people like Luther - they were just individuals standing, at one time, virtually alone. Maybe everybody around them was doubting them, but they didn't doubt. Or if they did have their doubts, they kept them to themselves (Laughter).

Gunapala: I think I find that aspect very inspiring - the effect that one individual can have on society. The Greeks and people like that were quite noticeable in that area. A couple of strong individuals can transform ...

S: In some cases it's as though it doesn't have to be a very talented individual. It doesn't have to be a very gifted individual. But it has to be a very determined individual, a very single-minded individual, an individual with faith, you might say; an individual with vision.

Harshaprabha: South America is an area in which a number of countries have been in turmoil. Have you seen that any of those countries that have been in turmoil have been looking for an alternative?

S: Well, when one says 'countries', that's quite an extensive term. But it does seem that there are large groups of people in many of these countries that are looking for some alternative; in which there are even alternative groups already. I have got a little bit of information about Peru, for instance, because some years ago some friends of mine went [242] there. In many of these countries the situation is much more fluid, say, than it is in Britain, where things are pretty well established and it is very difficult to move anything without moving everything, if you know what I mean.

But I think we will have to carry on a much more vigorous campaign, as it were, of propaganda. I am very glad Subhuti's book is coming out, because that will tell the world, I hope, what the FWBO is all about. It could be, of course, that the newspapers and magazines and reviewers generally just ignore it; it could be. It could be that there is no reaction from anybody; which in a way would be quite unfortunate. But I think we need to push things much more, really to bring our ideas much more to the attention of people - not just Buddhist ideas generally in an innocuous way, but our own ideas, our particular interpretation or application of those ideas; present them as a sharp cutting edge and get into contact with as many people as possible. I still feel we are not doing nearly enough, even the existing Movement; not in England - I am thinking more especially - not doing even a hundredth part of what it should be.

Gunapala: What do you mean, should be - for the number of people involved?

S: To some extent bearing in mind the number of individuals, especially the number of Order members involved; and also the degree of the need. We have got pretty good facilities at our disposal, but I'm afraid we still don't make full use of them.

Cittapala: In terms of current facilities, do you think that those are the sort of organs which would actually facilitate a mass change of the characters which you mentioned such as Lenin managed ... ?

S: No, they will not, not unless they are multiplied many, many times and then influence things by their sheer weight of numbers. I think we do have to extend our organs of contact with people. I think carrying on what would appear to be religious activities in our Centres is not nearly enough. I think we need much more publicity, in the sense of maybe more people writing books, writing articles, writing letters to the papers; at least things like that, to begin with, and just putting our ideas more into circulation.

[243]

One does find that there are quite a lot of people dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs and giving expression to that. But very few seem to have anything like a blueprint for actual change - leaving aside the political blueprints which I don't really consider helpful.

Cittapala: There does seem to have been a tradition in very English - I am thinking about Shelley, for instance, and the milieu in which he existed - that he seemed to publish a lot of tracts. It seems to be quite a traditional English thing.

S: I published one myself a few years ago: Buddhism and Blasphemy, and I was careful to circulate that as widely as I could. I got quite a few replies to that, some of them quite favourable, some of them quite unfavourable. But I did manage to break through into a quite different circle, or quite different circles, of people - people in universities, people in public life, well-known writers and so on. I got quite encouraging and supportive letters from some quite well-known people, like Brigid Brophy and - what's her name - that well-known actress? Rather a bit like a bulldog. Glenda Jackson. And there were various others, like the Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, who wrote rather unfavourably.

But I did manage to succeed, with this little pamphlet, breaking through the usual FWBO or even Buddhist circles, and I think we must do more things like that.

Cittapala: But presumably that particular means of contacting people is aimed at the intellectual or creative elite?

S: Yes.

Cittapala: Did you see that as an effective means of - ?

S: Well, they should not be neglected, they are opinion formers, to a great extent. They have ...

Tape 12, Side 2

S: ...On the other hand, you need perhaps organs of mass contact. I have at present no suggestions to offer about that particular aspect of things, but it certainly should not be neglected.

Silaratna: It seems like if you've got - you can take it [244] right to the level - if you've got a community that lives in the same street, ...you should as a community perhaps make the rest of the street aware of the community in the street ... in letter-box ...

S: Well, for instance, someone was telling his life story - I think it was Campbell - was living in the same street as a community for quite a long time, but didn't know that there was a Buddhist community settled there. Well, she wasn't to know. So that means that they hadn't made their presence known to the street in which they were operating.

Anyway, we have gone quite a long way from the original question. Perhaps there are still more questions.

Vessantara: There are very few. We have incorporated one or two in the discussion. Suvajra.

Suvajra: In one of the paragraphs you mention the positive counterparts of the silas as being known traditionally as the Five Dharmas. Where does the teaching come from?

S: Yes, pancadhamma. I think it's commentarial. It comes especially in Thailand. I have come across it elsewhere, but the Thai bhikkhus make quite a point of this, I was glad to find. So then I gathered that it's a commentarial tradition, it isn't actually found in the scriptures. But it seemed to me a very good thing to have this sort of ..., which certainly fits in with the scriptures; when one is going through the scriptures one can no doubt find all these positive qualities mentioned, and no doubt they have been matched with the silas in the sense of five abstentions. Clearly metta is the positive counterpart of himsa, and so on.

Amoghacitta: You say in the text that we're studying that particularly in the West, the five dharmas haven't been very well or haven't even been put ... as opposed to the five silas.

S: Well, yes, it could be simply that they aren't given much prominence in the East itself, except, as far as I know, in Thailand.

Amoghacitta: But that seems to imply in a way that in ancient India the five silas were seen in a more positive sense: isn't that so? Or were they -

[245]

S: I don't see the logical connection but the pancadhammas imply that the five silas were seen originally in a more positive light.

Amoghacitta: Or would it ... ? In the lecture, in the study, you emphasize that in the West in particular you do really need the five dharmas. You do seem to - Sorry, I haven't quite got the thread of what I want to say.

S: I think that the basic point is sort of practical, it's sort of psychological and spiritual. I think I have said somewhere that one cannot really feed, one can't really thrive on negations. You need something positive. So it isn't enough to tell people that they shouldn't do this or

shouldn't do that. The spiritual life can't be reduced to a whole series of abstentions; there must be something positive that you must do, some positive quality that you must develop. And I have also mentioned that it is no doubt true to say that for people in ancient India, grammatically speaking, the negative has the force of the positive. I mentioned the example of ahimsa itself. In India ... ahimsa, though grammatically negative, has a very positive ring. Similarly for the ancient Buddhists amata(?) is immortal; that has a very positive ring. It is not just a term of negative import, even though it is grammatically negative.

But it's as though, when we translate some of these terms at least into English, if we translate a term which is grammatically negative into an English expression which is grammatically negative, then we introduce a negative connotation which is perhaps not attached to that original Pali or Sanskrit word, even though it was grammatically negative. So we need more explicit emphasis on the positive side of things; hence the greater importance, perhaps, of the five dharmas.

But, in any case, the whole positive side of spiritual life, the affirmative side, the creative side, needs to be emphasized, and that is not always done in the East, especially not in, say, Theravadin centres.

Amoghacitta: Does what you've just said about grammatical negation, particular words tied to whole sentences - say, for example, panatipata etc. - ... a negative word, it's a negative sentence?

S: Yes, it does, because veramani means abstention, so it is negatively couched; whereas if one has the five dharmas, well, they are affirmatively couched, they are couched in [246] affirmative language in terms of qualities to be actually developed.

Amoghacitta: What I meant was you said the word ahimsa, which is a negative grammatical word, is seen as - its positive counterpart is seen as well, ...used. Do they take panatipata veramani etc. in that sense of the word, or do they see the positive counterpart of that automatically?

S: I would say that if they thought about it they would, but the expression itself, the whole sila, is couched in negative terms: that you abstain from, or you refrain from, harming or literally ..., upon living beings. It is not actually stated that you should develop metta towards them, and you could perhaps misunderstand it in the sense of understanding that it would be sufficient if you merely refrained from harming living beings; and that is certainly not sufficient, from a Buddhist point of view, as we learn from other teachings.

It does seem that much of early Buddhist teaching, certainly a lot of Theravada tradition, is negatively worded and a bit negative even in approach, and that isn't really very inspiring. It might have inspired people in ancient India, but it doesn't seem to inspire many people in the modern West, so we need an increasingly positive and affirmative approach - as we get, for instance, with the twelve positive nidanas, broadly speaking, or with the seven bodhyangas. It is not just a question of getting rid of your faults, but of cultivating certain positive qualities, certain virtues, as well.

Gunapala: What do you think is the difference? - that people were more positive in India, so they could use a more negative approach, and in the West people are more negative so we

have to use a more positive approach?

S: I think that is also a possibility: that people were more positive in a broad human sense in the Buddha's day than they are now, at least in some areas of the West. I wouldn't like to generalize too much about that, but usually when one says 'the West' one thinks about a little corner of Britain. So one has to be very careful not to over-generalise from one's limited experience.

Gunapala: I was thinking of New Zealand as well, where a lot of people are not that negative, they are quite positive. I don't know what a more negative approach would do: probably work quite well.

[247]

S: Well, that is a point to be considered. Give up rugby, give up your days on the beach, your pleasures. They can take it because they are already very positive.

Yes, to people who are psychologically healthy, one can more readily speak in terms of giving up things or doing without things; because then that sort of attitude would not be an expression of self-rejection or even self-hatred or punishment and so on... 'It's good to give it up; yes, I can do without that.' For someone who wasn't so psychologically healthy, they might use that action or practice of giving up something as a means of giving expression to their own feelings of self-rejection or self-hatred, or even guilt.

Anyway, that's rather a murky area; ... for now, I think. Especially as we are getting towards the end of our ...

Were there any further questions?

Vessantara: I think that's it.

S: ... This is a very important question, obviously. I have myself increasingly seen in terms of changing, of operating in accordance with what we sometimes call the power mode - changing to operating in what we call the love mode. It is basically that. In some ways, that first precept is absolutely fundamental, because it challenges the whole of one's present mode of operating; because normally one does operate almost exclusively from the power mode. Even one's so-called love mode is a subtle form of the power mode, very often. Perhaps we shouldn't say 'love mode' but metta mode, because 'love' is itself such an ambiguous term. So it isn't just a question of refraining from physically assaulting people; it's a question of shifting over to an entirely different mode of operation. If one thinks carefully, one realizes how often one tries to get one's own way with other people by means of force; not taking them along with you but subtly manipulating them. And that is subtle violence.

Devamitra: Just a few moments ago, you said that even our functioning through the love mode is a subtle form of the power mode. What did you have in mind when you said that?

S: Well, people's ordinary experience of what they call love. Emotional blackmail and things like that.

[248]

Devamitra: Oh, yes, I thought you meant something else.

S: Something subtler?

Devamitra: A bit more subtle than that.

S: Well, it can become quite subtle.

But that is one of the features, that is one of the functions of the spiritual community: that it is a place within which one is free to function in accordance with the metta mode. In the world outside very often you are not free to function in that way, not if you want to survive.

So any attempt to use or to invoke power within the spiritual community itself is really a negation of what that spiritual community stands for, a negation of one's own membership of that. To the extent that one operates in accordance with the power mode you cease to be a member of the spiritual community; you cease to be an individual in our sense, you cease to be treating other people as individuals. That is assuming, of course, you are all individuals together to start with. That is to say, people who respond to metta and therefore who do not have to be coerced; people who are able to respond to metta. If people don't respond to metta, well, if you have got to get some response from them by one means or another, one can only invoke the power mode.

Suppose someone invades your home - might be a burglar, might be an intruder of any kind. Well, you can try invoking the love mode - a lot of people have done this - and have a friendly chat and persuade him to leave. So you could quite genuinely do that, and it might work. You might be able to resolve the issue simply by invoking the love mode. But supposing he doesn't leave; supposing he cuts up rough, threatens to become violent, you may have to call your friends or even call the police and evict that person by force, which means -by force means against his will; it doesn't mean that violence is necessarily committed, but even if he is evicted against his will force is used, and therefore in principle violence is used against him. But if he doesn't respond to the love mode, what else are you to do, assuming that you want to get on with your own life and preserve your spiritual community intact?

But you should try to invoke the love mode first before [249] falling back upon the power mode. But within the spiritual community you must never fall back upon the power mode, because if you do you have accepted the fact that it isn't really a spiritual community; you have ceased to treat it as a spiritual community.

So this first precept is of really tremendous significance. It is not just a sort of little ethical rule. It's much, much more than that. It involves or it suggests a radical difference, a radical change, in one's whole life - that one proposes to operate in accordance with the metta mode, not in accordance with the power mode - certainly within the spiritual community and, to the extent that circumstances permit, even within the group. And in your dealings with people, you will invoke as far as you possibly can the metta mode, not the power mode. You will seek to persuade, not to manipulate, not to coerce.

Gunapala: There is no room for this manipulation, coercion, in attracting people. There is just no - as far as converting people to Buddhism?

S: Well, can you give a concrete example? I am not quite sure what you have in mind.

Gunapala: I don't know - I suppose, without making it really clear what a person is doing, getting someone to move into a single-sex community, say; sort of manipulating them in a certain direction.

S: Well, that is rather different. You are not manipulating. You would explain what it was like to live in a men's community, but unless someone actually lives in a men's community they can't really know what it's like, so you cannot give someone a full and complete idea in advance. But you should certainly do your best, and you shouldn't mislead. For instance, you shouldn't say things like, 'Once you become a member of a men's community all your problems will be automatically solved.' No, that would be false; you couldn't say that. You shouldn't say that. But you will not be able to give anyone a fully adequate idea of what it's like to live in a men's community inasmuch as you have to experience it - you have to experience it to understand it fully - yourself. So you must give as adequate an impression as you can, not mislead him and give a false picture or an unnecessarily rosy picture just to as it were entice him into the community; just give encouragement [250] and stress the inspiring nature of the situation, but at the same time be quite realistic and honest.

It does occur to me just now that all the precepts could probably be interpreted to some extent in terms of invoking or not invoking the metta mode. For instance, if you take that which is not given to you, are you not operating in accordance with the power mode rather than the love mode? If you practise the positive counterpart of that second precept, which is dana, yes, you are operating in accordance with the love mode - unless, of course, you are just using a sprat to catch a mackerel, as they say.

I pass over the third precept - that might take us a long time to deal with. But with regard to the fourth precept, if you tell someone a lie you are committing an act of violence against them. A lie is an act of violence. Supposing - do you see this clearly, or shall I give you an example of this?

: I'd like an example.

S: Supposing someone asks you which is the way, say, to Grossetto? because he wants to go to Grossetto, and you tell a lie; you say, 'That's the road', when it isn't. You are frustrating his intention of going to Grossetto. You are using force against him so that he should not fulfil his wish to get to that place. He wants to get there; you are preventing him from getting there. Therefore ... you are using force, and you are preventing him getting there by means of your lie about the way. So your lie is an instance of using the power mode, operating in accordance with the power mode.

So sometimes we tell people lies to stop them doing things that they want to do but which we don't want them to do. That is using force; that is manipulating people, or worse. Very often we tell lies to people when their interests conflict with ours and we want our interests to prevail; and that is an instance of invoking the power mode. Supposing someone wants to read a particular book or ... We don't want them to read that book for some reason or other, so when they ask us what it's all about, [you say] 'Oh, it's not very good, not worth reading' - we put them off it. Again, by that lie, we are invoking the power mode; we are misleading them, we are using force.

So one could make out a case for saying that that first precept includes all the precepts; that the whole ethical, not [251] to say spiritual, life consists in that gradual transference, that gradual shift, from operating in accordance with the power mode to operating in accordance with the love mode, the metta mode. I think this is something that one should constantly ask oneself about within a community: how is one operating, how is one functioning? Is one functioning in accordance with ... the metta mode in relation to other members of the community, or in accordance with the power mode?

So if one is to operate with regard to people in accordance with the metta mode, it means you've got to be completely honest with them. You've got to tell them everything, you've got to put all the facts at their disposal. You've got to leave them free to make up their own minds. That doesn't mean to say you can't put your opinion strongly and even make it clear that this is what we think they should do; but you mustn't seek to coerce them in any way, by slanting things or keeping certain facts away from them. But very often there are all sorts of subtle ways whereby we are operating in accordance with the power mode, not the metta mode. So this first precept is very, very important indeed; In a sense one hardly needs to go beyond that.

Sometimes the statement ahimsa paramodharma is attributed to Buddhism. Actually it is not found in any Buddhist text as far as I know; it is certainly found in the Mahabharata, and I used not to be quite happy with this statement because in India it is really misused and misquoted. But thinking about it more and more, it does seem that non-violence, if you interpret non-violence as acting in accordance with the metta mode, is the highest Dharma, is the highest principle, the highest spiritual teaching.

Devamitra: Could you give a literal translation of that quote from the Mahabharata?

S: Ahimsa paramodharma. I am not quite sure of the grammar here, whether it's para... or para..., ... ahimsa, parama - parama is supreme - dharma - is - this is ... that ahimsa is the supreme dharma.

There is one modern religious thinker who stresses this whole question of non-violence in the way that I am stressing it and gives it tremendous importance. He is a Russian religious thinker - I don't know if you have heard of him - Nikolas Berdyaev. He is quite well known, or was quite well known, was quite important. We've got quite a number of his books in the [252] Order Library at Padmaloka. He writes on things like freedom and slavery and so on. He ... a very thrilling book, Freedom and Slavery - I keep meaning to re-read it. It's got chapters on the different forms of slavery, including the slavery of sex; it is quite interesting, I think. [Bhante is asked to spell the name.] He died some years ago. He is a very readable sort of writer; he repeats himself a lot, but he has got lots of fire and enthusiasm, and very great sincerity. He is a sort of Christian thinker, though he had a Marxist phase, but he is certainly not an orthodox Christian thinker; he seems to me to be more Manichaeian in his whole outlook. He wrote an autobiography which is of special interest from his particular point of view. I forget the title of it; it's not called Autobiography or anything like that, but we have that also in the library. I read that a couple of years ago ... But he does go into this question of non-violence ... from a number of different points of view ...

If, of course, one is operating in accordance with the metta mode in relation to people, one will be thinking in terms of what is good for people, what is good for them, not what one can

get out of them, not what use one can make of them, but what is good for them.

I think one must be especially careful when coming back into the community from the outside world - the outside world where of course the metta type mode of operation does not prevail - back into the community where it should prevail. One might often find it quite difficult to switch over from the one to the other. You might be having, in connection with your work outside the community, to operate more in accordance with the power mode, but you will drop that as soon as you come through the door of the community.

Ratnaprabha: Do you think there are situations in the outside world where we think we have to use the power mode but if we have a wider vision we realize that we could operate in the love mode after all?

S: I am sure that's true. If one has a strong experience of the love mode you become more confident in it, and more willing to see whether it can resolve a certain situation, rather than immediately invoking the power mode, even though in a sense you have a right to do that.

Amoghacitta: The whole field of Buddhist ethics and morality must really revolve around this principle.

[253]

S: One could perhaps say that - that it revolves around this principle is perhaps going quite far, but certainly it does seem that one can practically look at Buddhist ethics, even spiritual life to a great extent, in terms of this - not just principle of non-violence in the narrow, negative sense, but in terms of the constantly expanding application of the operation of what I call the metta mode; application of it to different spheres of life.

Gunapala: From the little I know about other religions, it does seem that if any of them do work they work in this way - the Cathars and even Christianity in the spiritual community. This seems to be where it's taken off, where they operate in that way.

S: You mean, of course, work in the spiritual sense? It doesn't mean that they might not be wiped off the face of the earth.

Gunapala: That's right, in spiritual communities ..., yes.

S: Anyway, ... time's up for today. No doubt tomorrow you will be able to get on to ...

Day 12 Tape 13, Side 1

Vessantara: Today we've been finishing off the lecture on Perfect Action. My group has been talking a bit about adinnadana. But first off we wanted to - yesterday we were talking about the power mode and the metta mode or the love mode, and you were talking about eschewing the use of force in any way. Could you define, especially when you were talking about, say, lying as a use of force, you are simply using force in a slightly expanded way from the way in which it is perhaps usually understood, or ...

S: I did go into it a little, I think.

Vessantara: Well, could you define it again and say what you think of as force in this context?

S: Force - perhaps you'll remember I did explain. Force consists essentially in doing something to a person, or with a person, without his or her consent, against their wishes; and I gave the example of someone wanting to go to Grossetto; that was their intention, but you frustrated that. So that frustration [254] would amount to violence, because you were going against their wishes indirectly, and that was the purpose of the lie.

This raises further questions which I won't go into at the moment, but that was the definition of force in this context.

Vessantara: We started thinking about situations which seemed slightly unclear and even various other situations where somebody asks you the way to Grossetto or they ask you to go with them to Grossetto and you don't want to; you say no. We came across a story in the scriptures where the Buddha takes somebody who has just been married and asks him to go with him a little way, carrying his bowl; and he goes a certain distance and the Buddha just keeps on walking; he is getting more and more concerned because he is leaving behind the feast and so on. In a sense, is the Buddha not using force there? Is he not using a form of deceit?

S: No, because Sundarananda, as it was, was free to put the bowl down at any moment and go back. It meant his respect for the Buddha and therefore the possibility of his going for refuge was stronger even than his attachment to his newly-wedded wife.

Vessantara: And then when he gets into the forest, the Buddha just says to the monks: 'Ordain him.'

S: Well, he could have resisted. He could have run away. They made no attempt to seize him and hold him by main force, as far as I know. Presumably it is his respect for the Buddha holding him.

Amoghavajra: Sometimes it can be quite unclear, the difference between force and power. It can be quite ...

S: I think, as I have been using the terms, there is no difference. The word power can be used in a number of senses. Force, one could say, was coercion; power, one could say, was the capacity to coerce, whether or not one used it. One could make a distinction of that sort. But the essence of power in action, inasmuch as that constitutes the opposite of the metta mode, is its coerciveness; as when you physically lay hands on someone and take him where he does not wish to go.

Amoghavajra: We were talking about the use of metta. You [255] could say that there was almost a force in metta - that the Buddha obviously had some sort of strong feeling for Sundarananda and tried to ask him to come with him.

S: Well, here one gets an ambiguity and uses the word, I won't say force, but power; but power in what sense? Not power in the sense of coercion; power in the sense of fullness, power in the sense of strength. Love - metta - is not weak, but at the same time it's not coercive. So I think one would have to be very careful how one used one's words - using

expressions like 'metta can coerce'; well, not in the sense in which I have used the term metta, or in the sense in which I used the term coerce. The two are antithetical. You can't really make someone do something through love; that is really emotional blackmail. They may freely recognize that your metta constitutes a claim upon them, but they must freely recognize that.

Vessantara: We then went further into situations where you prevent somebody doing something unskilful by force; one or two of us seem to have prevented people committing suicide by various means. Would you like to comment on the principles involved there?

S: Yes. This brings us back to what we touched upon a few days ago - a lot of what I touched upon yesterday: namely, that one can operate in accordance with, or from, the metta mode only within the spiritual community, that is to say only in relation to other individuals, or only in relation to another individual, a single individual. In relation to those who are not individuals, assuming yourself to be an individual, you cannot act fully in accordance with the metta mode - at least, not act in accordance with it to the extent that that non-action in accordance with it is necessary to preserve your own safety and security. This is why, outside the spiritual community, one cannot really operate in accordance with the love mode. One has to operate in accordance with the power mode. But the point I would make here - I think I haven't made it before - is that the power mode must be subordinate to the love mode. And that is really important.

I think, in a sense, a classic example of the sort of thing that you have in mind is the way in which we relate, say, to a child. The child, let's say, is not an individual; there is therefore no question of relating to the child entirely by way of or through the metta mode. It is not possible to establish that sort of relationship, that sort of communication, with a child. So if the child wishes to put its hand into the fire, [256] you forcibly restrain it. You invoke the power mode, you are operating in accordance with the power mode. But that power mode is subordinated, so far as you are concerned, to the love mode, because you are genuinely concerned for the child's welfare and safety.

So the case of someone who is about to commit suicide is similar. You could say that it is his wish to commit suicide, and in not allowing him to commit suicide you are frustrating his wishes, and that therefore you are acting violently. In a sense, this is true, but in wishing to commit suicide is that person acting as if he is being an individual? Is it a mature decision? Or is it just an impulse that he is acting on and something that if he survives the attempt he would be sorry about?

So one can only speak in terms of frustrating somebody's wishes, or someone's will, when there is a genuine individual will there to be frustrated. It is a rather different thing when you are frustrating a passing whim or fancy which, as far as you can see, is in any case not in that person's own interests. So if you were to frustrate someone's suicide attempt you would be treating them like a child. They would be a child, very likely, and you would therefore be operating in accordance with the power mode inasmuch as you were coercing them, but that coercion, that operating in terms of that power mode, would be subordinate to one might say an overall love mode.

Now one has to be very careful here, because one can claim that one is operating in accordance with the power mode, but that that power mode is subordinated to the love mode,

only in relation to those who very definitely and clearly are not individuals and not behaving as such. If there is another mature, responsible individual, as much an individual as you are, you cannot claim, in the case of such a person, if you are coercing him in any way, that you are just using the power mode and it's all subordinate to the love mode. No, in relation to other individuals - those who are at least as much individuals as you are - you need to operate entirely in accordance with the love mode.

Ratnaprabha: You spoke of force as doing something without the person's consent. Can the person, if he is not a true individual, to what extent can he consent or not consent to what you are doing?

[257]

S: He cannot; he cannot. What you wish to do with him or to him can be in conflict with his passing mood, or whim, or fancy, but it cannot really be in conflict with his wishes in a deeper or truer sense, because there is no person, no individual there, in an integrated sense, to have any such wishes.

Ratnaprabha: Are you speaking of a 'true individual', in other words quite a lofty spiritual being, such as a Stream Entrant?

S: No, I'm not, no. I am just speaking about an individual in the ordinary human sense: someone who is relatively integrated, reasonably responsible for himself and his actions, reasonably aware.

Jinavamsa: Would you say that, say, as well as forcibly stopping someone doing something to harm themselves, you should do everything you can to communicate the consequences to them?

S: Well, in a way you are mixing two things up. If there is time, you should try to communicate the consequences first. That would be operating in accordance with the love mode; like you could say to the child, even: 'Look, don't put your hand into the fire. If you do, it's going to get burned. You are going to be hurt. You won't like that.' That is operating in accordance with the love mode; you are trying to persuade, to communicate. But if you see the child none the less putting out his hand into the fire, then you have to intervene by force. The power mode has to come into operation. Afterwards you can explain: 'This is why I did it.' But perhaps if the child wasn't convinced before, it won't be convinced afterwards, and will still try to put its hand into the fire.

But ... one tries to explain first, if circumstances permit - if there's time, as I say.

Jinavamsa: I mean even afterwards?

S: Well, even afterwards, no harm to try to explain to the child or anyone who is in that sort of position the reason for your action. Otherwise they will not perform that action so long as you are around to prevent them, but as soon as your back is turned they may perform it, if they don't understand why they shouldn't perform it. Maybe though that in the case of people who commit suicide: by being around you can prevent them for a while, but you've only got to be away for a minute or two, [258] sometimes, and they carry out their wishes.

Ratnaketu: ... a sort of practical case... at Sukhavati once - well, two occasions: somebody seeing a burglar in the shops, not our ones but further along. And on one occasion I saw this person late at night and I thought a lot about it and decided to phone the police, which I did. And on another occasion somebody else saw some people breaking in and they thought, 'We don't want to get involved,' so they just left it. And I wondered what you would think about that.

S: Well, what were their reasons for not wanting to get involved? Why did they not want to get involved?

Ratnaketu: I'm not sure. I imagine it's something like it was just pretty unfortunate ... the consequences of somebody getting caught by the police, they might end up in prison. Very bad situation, ...

S: Well, one might say why should not a burglar end up in prison? [One should ask] that question. An anti-social element, doing harm to other people - why should he not end up in prison? All right, you let the burglar off, but what about the person he is burgling? They suffer in consequence. So it isn't really quite so simple as ... It looks almost as though that person might have just been not wanting to bother, not wanting the trouble of making a statement to the police, maybe appearing as a witness, take all those things into consideration. It may have been just out of laziness. I am only hypothesising. It may have been only out of laziness that he didn't want to be involved, not out of high moral principle. It might have been some mixture of the two. He might have had at the back of his mind some vaguely socialistic idea that all property was theft, so one burglar was only stealing from another, etc. etc. There is quite a lot of loose thinking in this area, of course.

Vessantara: Perhaps you could go into that a bit. We had some discussion about what we think of the Robin Hood principle: the idea of taking from the rich and redistributing to the poor, and the principles involved in that situation.

S: If one acts upon that seriously, one puts oneself in the position of being a criminal, and outside the law, or not outside the law but in contravention of the law; which would of course lead to all sorts of complications. And you must expect sooner or later that you will probably be caught, and you will [259] be put into prison. So that might prevent you from carrying out all sorts of other good works that you had in mind.

Jinavamsa: But could you then say that it was all right as long as you didn't get caught?...

S: Well, they might say who are the rich, and who are the poor? How is one to decide from whom to take and to whom to give - even assuming that one could do it with perfect safety, perfect impunity? Supposing a man had worked hard all his life, and somebody else has not worked at all, how do you justify the taking from the one and giving to the other? Perhaps it is not so simple, not so clear. It is the Robin Hood principle. It might have been simpler and clearer in an earlier, more primitive state of society.

Vessantara: If we suppose a hypothetical case where you do have somebody who definitely has things which are surplus to their requirements, say food, and other people are, say, starving. Would it then be ethically ... ?

S: Well, why not try invoking the love mode first? Why, if you feel very strongly about it, could you not go to that person, could you not say, 'You have got surplus food; look, there are these people who are hungry, these people who are starving. Could you not help? Please help me to help them'? Could you not take that approach? Do you have at once to think in terms of forcible appropriation of his property? In a way, this is what we are doing with the Aid for India campaign. We are saying, 'You are in a fairly comfortable position and there are these ex-Untouchable people in India. They need your help. Please give.' Is that not a better approach? Do you need to ... or would it be better to go and quietly burgle them? I think that would be much more complicated. How would you get your ill-gotten gains to India, to the right people? It would be much more difficult than doing it through a legitimate charity.

Having said that, I would not say that in an extreme case, if someone was actually in danger of starvation on the spot and there was no other way of getting food to that person except by taking it from someone who was not willing to give it, I think probably in those circumstances it would be excusable. I think one has to be very careful in this sort of area, and not just rationalize one's own feelings of impatience and rush in where angels fear to tread.

[260]

I remember reading an account in the paper, a couple of years ago, about some riots which took place, I think in some Third World country, I forget where it was, but the people rioting allegedly were rioting because of food shortages. But they noticed after the riots that the only shops that had been looted were those containing TV sets and other such goods.

Suvajra: What about this socialist thinking you just mentioned? What is this based on?

S: Well, this sort of idea that all property is theft - Proudhon said it, I think - and that no one really has a right to anything, and so therefore in a sense everybody has a right to everything. And so if you take something because you need it you are not really stealing, you are just taking what you need. You need no more right than the person who actually has it ..., according to you at least; you need it more. And this extends to public institutions, public bodies, like fiddling the dole, fiddling your tax return. Well, you are not fiddling anyone individually - it's just the state, and it's nobody's, everybody's, money. You have a right to dip your hand into the communal purse in that way, so to speak. Some people think in this way.

It seems to me that very rarely does anyone actually adopt this attitude and act upon it out of sheer, pure idealism. I think it is usually just a convenient rationalization for selfishness and greed.

So was most time spent this morning discussing this section?

Vessantara: Not all. There's just one last ...

Cittapala: The question [concerns the] dole. I had noticed ... working round in the co-operatives that people had been drawing the dole and still benefiting from co-operative support. And also in connection with that it seems that the managers of the co-ops have sometimes been quite happy to go along with that situation because it eased their problems, their financial flow problems as it were. Do you think that that is an acceptable form of behaviour for co-operatives to indulge in?

S: No, I don't. I have already made this clear, and this certainly should not be done. Because it means one is making false statements, so it is a form of wrong speech - it is making [261] false statements to the Ministry of - what is it?

: Employment.

S: Department of Health and Social Security. You definitely make a false statement. I believe you even make it in writing. And I think that is quite a serious matter. And apart from the ethical considerations, you could well be detected and punished, and if it was known you were working in a Buddhist co-op that could give the co-op system itself quite a bad name.

Aryamitra: I think the question there is that if you are getting some support from the co-op, if - I was once registered as unemployed and receiving money and [they asked], 'Are you doing any other kind of work?' and I put down 'voluntary'. And they asked me what this was and I told them. And they seemed to accept that.

S: Well, I think they will accept voluntary work for which you get paid some expenses, but what I have in mind and what I assume Robin [Cittapala] had in mind was a case where you are actually drawing benefit to which you are not entitled, not legally entitled, and which you can draw under those circumstances only by making a false statement to the effect that you are not working when in fact you are working. This is what I am talking about.

Vessantara: In that case, you usually have to state that you are looking for work. That is part of the grounds on which they give it you, if you are looking for work.

S: That is a rather difficult area in a way, because supposing you feel or you know that there is no work, how can you really genuinely be looking for it, if you don't really think it exists? Some people, I think, are in this position. And also if you know that the department concerned will allow you a reasonable period on the dole, that that is acceptable, because they also know that there aren't enough jobs to go round. But certainly one must make no false statement in order to receive benefit to which you are not entitled. You are then breaking two precepts at least. Well, you are breaking three, because you are not only taking what doesn't belong to you, you are taking it in a sense by force by making a false statement. So you could say that three precepts were being broken. But certainly two, even quite literally. So it would be a pity if [262] our co-operative businesses, which are forms of Right Livelihood, could be run only by [breaking] not less than two of the precepts. So is one really establishing Right Livelihood by so doing? ...

I think people with whom I've talked about this have said - and I think what Aryamitra says ...with this - that when they've gone along to the Department of Health and Social Security and have told the person exactly what their position is and is it permissible or is it not permissible, can I draw benefit or can I not?, they have appreciated the frankness, and they have got quite often quite a good deal. It does seem that one has got nothing perhaps to lose by being frank and honest, in quite a few cases.

Vessantara: I think that's all on the second precept. There are a couple of questions on the third one.

Subhuti: Just a technical one to begin with. I've seen the Third Precept translated as

'refraining from abuse of the senses' in some Theravada texts. Is this coyness or - ?

S: I've seen it translated as 'abstaining from wicked love'! No, it's - kamesu - it's - micchachara is wrong practice, one could say; miccha is of course the same as in micchaditthi, it's 'wrong'. Achara very often means daily practice or regular practice or habitual practice; and kama does, of course, mean sense experience in the general sense, but it is definitely in this context understood to refer to sexual matters. So it could be translated as 'habitual wrongdoing in respect of sexual desires or sexual passions'.

Ratnaprabha: You said 'habitual' - is the word habitual - ?

S: Well, maybe that is putting it a little too strongly. But I am using that word just to indicate that achara has a connotation of something that you do regularly, a regular practice, a habitual practice, something that you make a practice of, almost a habit of; though that should not be too strongly insisted upon. It's just a sort of shade of a connotation.

Devamitra: There was another question from my group on the third precept. In fact, we spent a good deal of our time this morning discussing the third precept, and so ...

[263]

Dhirananda: We were talking about celibacy and how a lot of people in the Friends... quite a bit ... celibacy, and I've been reading a bit about celibacy and it seems to me that if you have a very healthy sexuality, a healthy emotional life, you find it easier to practise celibacy. Would you say that ...

S: What do you mean by 'a healthy sexual life' in this context?

Dhirananda: Healthy in the sense that it is more [un]inhibited, it is quite freely expressed, and no great hang-ups about it. Could it be that in the West because we have problems in this area people find it more difficult, celibacy?

S: Well, that is almost saying that people find it difficult to give up something that they feel they have never had. For some people the problem is more getting it rather than giving it up, so one cannot really sincerely think in terms of giving it up, even if one wishes to do so, if one feels one hasn't yet got it to give up. Perhaps you are getting at something of that sort.

But on the other hand, even that isn't quite a straightforward question, because there is this matter of what one might call - well, you mentioned healthy sexuality - well, neurotic sexuality. And there is also the influence of our environment: that sometimes people who are not especially into sex are almost made to feel that they ought to be, and if they are not there is something wrong with them. They must be blocked, etc. etc. etc.; though that is not necessarily always the case.

But I think probably on the whole what you say is correct: that if you have had some measure, let us say, some reasonable measure of healthy indulgence in sex, or indulgence in a healthy as distinct from a neurotic sexual drive, then you will pass more gracefully and happily to a state of celibacy when that seems to be required or seems to be appropriate.

But that is probably obvious or probably just common sense, one might say.

Dhirananda: Does that mean that we should be a bit careful of practising celibacy?

S: Should be careful practising it? Could you elaborate a little on that?

[264]

Dhirananda: Er - well, the sort of ... we were talking about, that people practising celibacy found that they felt quite frustrated and that their relationship with other people in the community for instance might be aggravated.

S: Well, then, perhaps one has to introduce a distinction. I don't know that we have ... expand this, but perhaps one has to introduce a distinction between healthy celibacy and - I won't say neurotic celibacy - but let us say [between] spontaneous celibacy and enforced celibacy. Do you see the point of the distinction? There is a distinction between giving up sex, at least for the time being, and being deprived of it, or feeling that one is deprived of it. So celibacy is not just a matter of technical abstention from sex - well, you are celibate in the sense that you don't actually have sex with anybody, maybe not even with yourself, regardless of your mental state and emotional attitude. I think celibacy in that sense is probably of very little value indeed, and in some cases might even be harmful, though I say that very tentatively, not wishing people to rush into rationalization ... But one is not necessarily being celibate in the full sense if one merely abstains from overt sexual action. But one may, of course, come to the conclusion that one may for a certain period even need a period of enforced abstention, so to speak, if your motivation for indulging in sexual activity is very very neurotic. You just need to stop forcibly for a while.

One hears a lot about celibacy, enforced celibacy, in the case of the Roman Catholic priesthood. A lot of men who become Roman Catholic priests, I believe, are not very happy about this celibacy requirement. They want to be priests; they perhaps feel quite genuinely that they have a sort of spiritual vocation, and they know that the Roman Catholic Church requires celibacy of its priests, so they accept celibacy as part of the deal, though they are not really very happy with it. And quite often one knows they end up quite frustrated and embittered, and very often, of course, they leave the church - well, leave the priesthood. This seems to be the principal reason for men leaving the Catholic priesthood, that they don't feel able to be celibate any longer. In the ages of faith perhaps it was easier, but faith is a bit weak these days. And also maybe they don't see why they should be, they don't personally feel that sexuality is incompatible with a spiritual vocation, even as a priest; they feel it is just a question of the discipline of the church, because they no longer agree. They know that in the early ages of the church celibacy was not required of priests; they know that. It was only made an absolute requirement in the time of, I think, Pope Hildebrand, which was quite a few hundred years on. They know this, and they know that in the Greek Orthodox Church celibacy is not required of priests.

So, to come back to what I was saying, I think one needs to make a distinction between a healthy, almost spontaneous, state of celibacy and one which is enforced for certain reasons which perhaps have nothing to do with the spiritual life. Even admitting that, on occasions, if one has become involved in sexuality in a very neurotic way, you may just need to stop for a while, almost forcibly checking yourself, because of that neurotic element in your sexuality.

Amoghacitta: Is there anything to be said in favour of an enforced celibacy within a community situation? We were thinking very much of Vajraloka.

S: When you say 'enforced celibacy' what do you mean?

Amoghacitta: I am thinking in terms of Vajraloka, where it is a requirement if you are staying there that you are celibate for the period you are staying. I wonder if that actually is a valuable thing.

S: Well, it isn't enforced in the sense that you don't have to stay there. The situation is such that the whole emphasis is upon meditation, and if one wants to get into as near as possible full-time meditation, probably for most people indulgence in sex would not be helpful or not conducive to that. If it was just a question of one's ordinary period of meditation, just one or two or even three hours a day, well, no doubt that is compatible with a certain amount of sexual activity, but if you are thinking in terms of practically full-time meditation, you really do need, at least for the time being, to leave sexuality behind you. I think that would be most people's experience.

Are there any further questions, on that or any other precepts?

Suvajra: Just, I was thinking that meditation is one particular aspect of ... spiritual practice. And if you want to be able to meditate, it might be advisable to give up sexual activity, sexual indulgence. So what other forms of spiritual practice which might be, say, perhaps your main [266] practice might be something like study or writing, are compatible with sexual activity being ... ?

Tape 13, side 2

S: - but perhaps more difficult to say, because the nature of the activity is somewhat different, say, from meditation. But as a sort of general principle, one might say that the more exclusively you channel your energies in one particular direction - assuming that it is spontaneous and you are doing it because you want to do it - the less energies will be channelled into other directions. If you are writing, if you are really committed to your writing, you don't want to get involved in anything else. You don't want to meditate; you don't want to get involved with other people; and presumably that would exclude sexual activity in most of its forms. You just want to get into your writing more and more deeply. So I think that is a law that governs any sort of intensive activity. If you really are into it, and you want to get into it and get into it more and more, that will tend to exclude other activities. But so long as you are not so very much into certain activities, they remain compatible with certain other activities of a rather different nature.

Buddhaghosa, for instance, says that study is a thorn to meditation. If you get very deeply into meditation you won't feel like studying, you won't feel like reading, you just want to meditate. And it's the same with study. If you get very much into study, really interested and all sorts of interesting topics are arising, you may not feel like meditating. And if you get into either meditation very deeply or study very deeply, you may not be so concerned with personal relationships, and therefore also with sex. You forget about it for the time being. You are just so absorbed in these other activities. But if you are doing just a little bit of this and a little bit of that, well a little bit of sexual activity no doubt will be compatible with those other activities and they will be compatible with it.

You can't get very deeply into several things at the same time, one could say, whether it's

study or meditation or going along giving lectures or working in a co-op. You can get really deeply into only one thing at a time; or, at the very most, two related things. So the more deeply you get into anything, the more certain other things, certain other activities will tend to be quite naturally excluded.

[267]

You might even find - and here I can't speak from personal experience - that if you devote all your energies to sex for a period, my guess is that you won't feel either like meditating or like studying. I don't know whether anybody has ever experienced this, but (Laughter)... that activity to that sort of extreme, other activities will tend to be more and more excluded. That seems to be a general law, general principle.

Cittapala: Since we are talking about meditation, would you say something about how it is the Middle Path, or represents the Middle Path?

S: Or part of the Middle Path inasmuch as it is included in the Eightfold Path.

Cittapala: I was reading the section last night on the Middle Path in the Survey, and you divided the Middle Path up - well, represented it on three different levels, metaphysical, psychological and ethical, and I was wondering how meditation represented the Middle Path in that respect.

S: I don't think I have ever considered meditation - meditation as such - in terms of itself being a Middle Path, though clearly it is part of the Middle Path, but no doubt one could look at it in that way. But how?

Cittapala: Well, the only thing that occurred to me was possibly one extreme would be forceful attentiveness and the other would be just be sort of - ...

S: Sort of forcible fixation of attention, this would apply to concentration simply rather than to meditation in the full sense. When you said meditation I was thinking of, say, dhyanic experience, ... But if one thought of meditation just in terms of concentration, yes: on the one hand there would be forcible fixation of attention, and on the other complete distraction. But taking meditation in the fuller sense of dhyana experience, one could say that dhyana experience was the Middle Way in the sense of being a sort of intermediate band, an intermediate stratum of experience, because it is between the stratum of, say, sense experience on the one hand, and Transcendental experience on the other; it is sort of a horizontal rather than a vertical Middle Way, if you see what I mean. Though here, if you put it diagrammatically like a sort of band of sense experience represented by the kamaloka and there is this band of meditative experience represented by the rupaloka, and [268] then there is the Transcendental. So you could say that meditative experience is half way between these two; it connects with both of these: on the one hand it connects with sense experience, on the other hand it connects with the Transcendental, or with the higher spiritual. So it partakes, you might say, of the concreteness and richness of the sensuous sphere, and the clarity and luminosity, to some extent, of the Transcendental, or at least the higher spiritual sphere. So in this way you could say ... meditative experience in the sense of dhyana experience was a sort of Middle Way, but a sort of horizontal rather than a vertical Middle Way.

Amoghacitta: It's not the Middle Way in the way you normally think of the term, is it?

S: No.

Vessantara: ... thinking in terms of a Middle Way through the development of vipassana and samatha? - say, one representing more the spiritual principle, the ideal which you are moving towards, and the other being more pleasure - ?

S: But the Middle Way would be to bring them together, a fusion of the two.

Any further points? Did you cover all the remaining five precepts this morning?

Vessantara: My group didn't do the last one.

S: Ah, the fifth one.

Subhuti: We didn't quite finish them.

Devamitra: We did actually get through the text, but we didn't discuss the fourth and fifth precepts.

Aryamitra: There was a question that when I was writing up my notes came to me, which wasn't anything to do with the study; and that was, when you were talking about why Buddhism didn't really spread very well, you mentioned ...

S: Didn't spread very well where, or when?

Aryamitra: It started off with something you wrote in Peace is a Fire about the ... of different religions. And [269] you were saying that the Buddhist countries and other Buddhists should have done much more work in spreading Buddhism, and you mentioned that in the early days you thought it spread a bit too quickly, and it took with it a lot of Indian culture, but the higher teachings were never understood. That is what I've got written down; I wondered if I wrote it down properly.

S: Yes, I didn't quite say that. What I did say was that I had sometimes thought that Buddhism went to some Buddhist countries of Asia before they were really ready for it. I am thinking of countries like perhaps Ceylon, Burma and Thailand. They didn't really have much culture before Buddhism went there, so Buddhism not only went to these countries as a social teaching, it took along with it a great deal of Indian culture. I am not objecting to that; I am not saying that it was a wrong thing that they took along Indian culture, but it was as though in those countries the people were ready for the culture, they had reached a stage where they could make use of or appropriate a great deal of the culture, but they weren't really able to appreciate the higher spiritual teachings. Although the books were there, and though there was some degree of intellectual understanding, they never really fathomed them. This is more or less what I was saying, or trying to say.

Aryamitra: I think that is the way I understood it. But does that mean that, say, in Thailand and Burma there is not really any higher teachings of Buddhism?

S: Well, again, what does one mean by the presence of Buddhism or the presence of these higher teachings? The books are there, the institutions are there. Whether there is any deeper

understanding, not to speak of Transcendental Insight, that is another matter. But judging from one's personal contacts and some of the literature that one has read emanating from these areas, there isn't really very much deeper understanding. There is a bit here and there; certain individuals stand out. For instance, in Thailand there is someone called Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, who is quite well known. He seems to be rather an exception. He is, so to speak, 'unorthodox', inverted commas. For instance, he has translated the Diamond Sutra into Thai; he has definite Mahayanistic leanings, and he seems to be someone who has taken Buddhism very seriously, taken the Dharma very seriously, and really asked himself what it means.

Aryamitra: I have put in my notes a sort of footnote that [270] this probably means the Bodhisattva Ideal, when you say higher teachings, because in the context of the whole thing, if they didn't have a Bodhisattva Ideal it wouldn't have spread further. Is that what you were trying to say?

S: No - the Bodhisattva Ideal did come into it to some extent, inasmuch as I spoke about Tibet, but it may not have been on the same occasion. In Tibet, ... the Bodhisattva Ideal was well known; it was supposed to be the very basis of Tibetan Buddhism. Marco Pallis calls it the Presiding Ideal.

But even though the Bodhisattva Ideal was well known there, constantly mentioned and written about, it didn't mean - their understanding of the Bodhisattva Ideal didn't seem strong enough for them to want to carry the Buddha's teachings to the West when they became aware of the existence of the West. In fact, they ... tried to keep Westerners out, even those who wanted to study the Dharma.

Suvajra: How come Tibet was different, then, from Ceylon, Burma and Thailand? Tibet before Buddhism entered didn't seem to have much of a culture either, did it? Yet it seems to have certainly made use of Buddhist teachings, but not to the highest.

S: That would certainly seem to be the case. Well, it is not easy to generalize about, say, national character or national characteristics, but the Tibetans do seem to have taken to Buddhism in a big way, and the whole Buddhist tradition went there. They seem to have assimilated it to a remarkable degree. One certainly couldn't say that, say, of the Buddhists of Ceylon. They did to some extent absorb Theravada Buddhism, but there was a lot that they were not able to absorb. They rejected the Mahayana and Vajrayana when they came in contact with them. They just weren't able to make anything of that.

: ... particular individuals who were responsible for initiating Buddhism into countries and their level of attainment.

S: The two are connected; I mean Tibet produced an extraordinary number of very highly gifted persons, I mean spiritually gifted; whereas Ceylon has produced hardly anybody, even though Buddhism was extant there, allegedly flourishing there, for very much longer than Tibet. Tibet has produced at least people like Tsongkhapa and Milarepa, who were absolutely [271] outstanding in the history of Buddhism generally, not to speak just of the history of Buddhism in Tibet; at least those two very great figures, and there were many more almost equally great. But who has Ceylon got to put beside them? Nobody. Buddhaghosa was not of Sinhalese origin, he was a brahmin from India who went and lived and worked in Ceylon. So he was no more Sinhalese than Atisa was Tibetan. So one can only fall back on some sort of

vague statement about the Tibetans being spiritually gifted, etc. etc.; but that doesn't really explain anything.

Aryamitra: Could it be that they were in a way a bit more barbaric, they were a bit more in touch with more pagan ... ?

S: The Sinhalese were, they had their local cults, they've got them even now, their cults of devas and so on. The Sinhalese were pretty primitive in some ways, you could say. But if you think in terms of literature, what inspiring Buddhist literature has come out of Ceylon? Can you think of a single work? But inspiring works of Tibetan Buddhism were pouring forth all the time, this last 20 years; there are so many of them, really good, really first-class. There isn't anything like that coming from Ceylon, either in Sinhalese or in Pali. There are lots of books that they have written, but nothing apparently of any high spiritual order. It seems really quite strange, as though Buddhism in any real, effective sense died in Ceylon quite early.

Ratnaprabha: Was ... Kadampa Sinhalese?

S: It was, but I wouldn't compare him either with Tsongkhapa or with Milarepa, not by a long chalk. He was a noble personality and produced a great work, but he wasn't a spiritual sort of personality that Tsongkhapa was, or Milarepa.

Bodhiruchi: I think it has quite a lot to do with the environment. Tibet is a very hard country, so it seems.

S: Well, that may have something to do with it. It might have had an effect on the Tibetan character, made them persevering and hard-working, and so on. Ceylon is a sort of semi-tropical island paradise, life is very easy. You can sit about under palm trees, the coconuts just fall into your hands, ... There are lots of sunny beaches. Perhaps that was the undoing of Buddhism in Ceylon, who knows?

[272]

Ratnaketu: I remember reading that in the early history of Buddhism in Ceylon there was a great debate between two schools of thought: one was whether it was more important to practise or more important to know - learning. And as a result of the debate, the school that said it was more important to learn won, and ...

S: Yes, it was a debate between the Ganthaduras as they are called and the Vipassanaduras; or, roughly speaking, the scholars and the meditators. And they did decide that scholarship was more important. And that does seem to have affected the whole course of the history of Buddhism in Ceylon. Buddhism in Ceylon seems to have had very little spiritual vitality, whereas in Tibet that was very, very far from being the case. Tibetan Buddhism has enormous spiritual vitality.

: All the learning in the world won't do much good without ...

S: Well, you remember the statement of my own teacher, Bhikshu Jagdish Kashyap, when he talked about Buddhism in Ceylon; the fact that they had admittedly preserved the Pali scriptures there - I have mentioned this in *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus*. He said:

'Sangharakshita, they are a lot of monkeys sitting on a treasure, the value of which they do not understand.' I remember him saying it very well.

But anyway, they preserved the treasure, that is to say the Pali texts, the Tipitaka, so we can be grateful to them for that. But they haven't really accomplished very much more than that, apart from a certain amount of art and architecture, sculpture and some quite fine ... in Ceylon.

Bodhiruchi: Bhante, is there any chance of finding the other canons? There is, I think, some ...

S: We don't know; because a lot has been discovered in Central Asia and even in parts of China by archaeological expeditions. It may be that things will turn up. In Kashmir, they have discovered portions of the Sarvastivadin Vinaya in Sanskrit which were not known before; quite extensive portions.

Bodhiruchi: Do you think anything different would be in these canons? ...

S: Well, since we don't have them, we can't say. It might [273] be different, it might not be different. We'll have to wait and see. But we know a lot of scriptures have been lost, so to speak, are no longer extant, certainly not in the original; some not even in translation.

Any further points? All right, I shall leave you to get on with the precepts tomorrow. No doubt there will be some interesting questions in connection with that. All right, then.

Day 13 Tape 14, Side 1

Subhuti: We have some questions left over from Perfect Action to start off with. First of all, discussing the bhikshu sanvarasila. Does it seem that the Vinaya tradition about the development of the bhikshu savarasila goes back to the Buddha himself?

S: Well, it depends what you mean by that tradition and what you mean by 'goes back to' the Buddha. Everything goes back to the Buddha, but how much, in what sense, to what degree, etc. etc. But maybe the question could be formulated more precisely.

Subhuti: Well, there are apparently different strata within the Pali Canon. Do those parts that show the Buddha laying down the Vinaya rules go back to the earliest strata?

S: It would seem that those - well, not all of those passages which represent the Buddha himself as laying down Vinaya rules appear to belong to the earliest strata of the canon, and therefore would appear not to go back to the Buddha himself.

Subhuti: But some of them do?

S: But some of them undoubtedly do. It has been remarked upon by several scholars, by several writers, that some of the rules relate to a quite highly developed, not to say complex, type of coenobitical monasticism which certainly did not exist during the earlier part of the Buddha's post-Enlightenment career, and very likely did not exist even at the end. So rules, regulations, pertaining to that particular type of monastic structure could not have gone back to the Buddha himself. This is not to say that things have been yet thoroughly sorted out. It is

not always easy to know whether any individual rule or provision etc. goes back to the Buddha [274] himself. The Buddha himself is represented as introducing new rules in certain passages, even changing the rules, abrogating rules, modifying the rules - or refusing to make rules.

Subhuti: Some people in our group found it quite difficult to see how the making of rules could be compatible with the spiritual life and spiritual community. Do you think that they might have any relevance to us? Do you think that at some stage in the development of the Order?

S: Well, one point which emerges quite distinctly is that, so far as I recollect, the Buddha never lays down a rule without there being an occasion for laying down a rule. That is to say, the occasion of the rule, or the occasion for the laying down of the rule, seems to have been misbehaviour on the part of his disciples - certain of his disciples. And the matter was brought to the Buddha's attention and he made it clear that bhikkhus, to use that term, should not behave in that way; and that such behaviour was incompatible with membership of the bhikshu sangha. Therefore, if you wanted to remain a member of the bhikshu sangha, you should behave in such-and-such a way; and that requirement was formulated in the form of what we would call a rule.

For instance, so far within the context of the FWBO, within the context of the Order, I should say - so far, I have quite deliberately refrained from laying down any rules for Order members, feeling that the Ten Precepts which one takes at the time of ordination should be enough in the way of rules. How long it will be possible to resist the pressure that is sometimes brought upon one to lay down a few more rules, I am not able to say. But I think it is preferable on the whole, broadly speaking, to leave it to individuals to become so deeply imbued with the principles of Buddhism, the principles of the Dharma, and to practise so faithfully the ten basic precepts which even in that case are of the nature of principles rather than rules, that the laying down of rules to cover particular cases in specific instances and situations would not be necessary.

None the less, it may be necessary. For instance, I would relate an incident that occurred quite recently: something which could perhaps have led to the laying down of a rule. It came to my notice that a particular Order member had actually assaulted physically another Order member. So when I heard about this I at once wrote a letter to the offending Order [275] member, first of all inquiring whether in fact the report I had heard was correct, and secondly stating that if it was correct an act of violence against another Order member was quite incompatible with membership of the spiritual community, membership of the Sangha - you know, membership of the Order. It was a direct violation of the love principle, the metta principle, which should govern relations between people in the spiritual community.

Anyway, the particular Order member concerned wrote back saying - well, admitting first of all that, yes, he had committed this act of violence; two, he had been severely provoked, but he realized at the same time that provocation was no excuse; and thirdly expressing his contrition, etc. etc. - even offering to resign from the Order if necessary; and, in addition, promising that if he could remain an Order member he would do his utmost not to repeat that offence, not to behave in that way. So I accepted this.

But one might have said that that was an occasion where one might have chosen to make it

fully explicit by as it were laying down a rule, making a rule, that an Order member should not physically attack another Order member. If an Order member is guilty of that offence, either he will cease to be an Order member or he will have to undergo a period of penance or whatever. But I felt that the situation was such that a formal rule need not be laid down. I think it was sufficiently obvious, or would have been sufficiently obvious, to all those who had come to hear about this incident, that such behaviour was in fact incompatible with continued membership of the Order; or, at least, it would be incompatible with continued membership if repeated.

So the rule, when formulated, really makes explicit what kind of behaviour is compatible and what kind of behaviour is not compatible with membership of the spiritual community. That is not to say that the Buddha in the Vinaya literature is not represented as laying down all sorts of trivial rules, but as a result of representations made very often by the laity. To this category belong, for instance, the prohibition of garlic for nuns, and even the rainy season retreat for bhikkhus. The suggestion was put to the Buddha that his bhikkhu followers, like the (puthujjana?) followers of other teachers, should remain in one place during the rainy season in northern India; the reason given being that if they wandered about they would trample seeds which were sprouting and so on, and public opinion [276] was probably against this. So the Buddha is represented at least as laying down certain rules, making certain rules, in order to satisfy public opinion. Whether those rules in fact can be attributed to the Buddha, that is quite another matter.

But the point I am emphasizing at the moment is that the Buddha did not as it were sit down and draw up a list of rules to be observed by his bhikkhu followers. He made a rule only when an incident occurred which made it necessary for the Buddha to clarify what kind of behaviour was compatible with membership of the bhikshu sangha and what was not, either in principle or, at least, in the eyes of the laity to make for good relations with that laity, which was after all supporting the bhikshu sangha.

Does that make it clearer? [Murmurs of assent.]

Amoghacitta: Bhante, I was going to ask if you could think of any further examples, perhaps not so obvious, within the Order, where we could perhaps one or two more precepts... -I mean more obvious ...

S: Well, I could think of hundreds of possible rules. That an Order member should not overeat; that Order members should not talk unmindfully at meal times; that Order members should not shout on retreats. There are hundreds of rules one could make if one were so minded, not to speak of 227 - one could draw up a list of 2,227!

Bodhiruchi: But to the extent that rules come in, would you see that as being a denigration, because Order members may have lost sight of the spirit of the ...?

S: Well, if Order members lose sight of the spirit of the Sangha, I think it is probably better to remind them of it by way of general exhortation within the context of spiritual friendship rather than for someone to lay down a rule and say, 'This is the rule that you have got to observe.' It is not that there isn't a definite mode of behaviour which is appropriate to an Order member, but I think it is undesirable to formulate that too rigidly or too narrowly, even, in terms of a list of rules. I know that has been the practice to a great extent in the Buddhist

East, both within the Hinayana and the Mahayana; even the Vajrayana, to a limited extent. But I wonder to what degree that is really useful, at least in the West. I mean the more laws, the more loopholes. This is one of the things pointed out by Lao Tzu in his Tao Te Ching. I think it is worth [277] remembering.

Otherwise you can have a quite elaborate code of rules and then people observe the letter of the rules but cease to observe the spirit, and that leads to a very, very undesirable state of affairs. So I would personally prefer not to have to lay down rules, so we should not have rules in the Western Buddhist Order but we should just have the Going for Refuge and the Ten Precepts, and a general awareness of the Bodhisattva spirit. I think this should carry us through.

If one were so minded, one could take a look at the functioning of the FWBO. One could take a look at the way in which Order members do at their best behave, and one could formulate this in terms of a list of requirements, even a list of rules that Order members were required to observe; one could take all those rules upon oneself at the time of ordination. But I do not think that that is in fact a desirable approach.

Bodhiruchi: Are there not four requirements that you did have of an Order member in the past? - that they have a daily meditation practice - ?

S: Ah, no, this is a requirement for Mitras. If it is expected of Mitras, how much more so is it expected of Order members? Order members are expected not even to need that sort of reminder. These are not four rules laid down for Mitras, even. They represent a clarification of what it means to be a Mitra. For instance, in the case of the Order, take this question of Order weekends, Order meetings: there is not any rule that an Order member shall attend the regular weekly meeting of the Chapter and attend likewise the Order weekend every month. There is no such rule, but if one is taking one's membership of the Order seriously, it would be surprising if one did not attend those meetings - if one possibly could.

But if one doesn't have rules, if one doesn't have a list of rules to guide one, one is thrown back all the more upon the principles and one's own application of those principles to whatever situation one may happen to be in.

There is a passage in the Pali Canon somewhere - I read it many years ago, and I think I ought to trace the precise source because this is a very important quote from the Buddha - I think this must be a genuine quote; you can hardly imagine bhikkhus who came later inventing it, because the Buddha is supposed to [278] say that 'At the beginning of my ministry the arhants were many and the rules were few, but now towards the end of my ministry the rules are many and the arhants are few.'

Ratnaprabha: Subhuti mentioned that in our study group. Does it actually mean that the number of arhants had come down by the end of the Buddha's ministry, or was it just a proportion of ... he was talking about?

S: It would seem that he was talking about the proportion. But I would like to trace that passage and consult the context and so on.

Ratnaketu: ...I've thought along those lines. I've thought that in the very beginning of the

Sangha the Buddha just said, 'Follow me.' Now it seems quite a bit more of a thing to become ordained.

S: Ah, let me make a slight correction there. It was Jesus who said 'Follow me.' The Buddha simply said, 'Come. Ehi bhikkhave - come, O monk.' Tradition recognizes this as the earliest form of what came to be called ordination. By addressing someone as 'bhikkhu - monk', the Buddha on the spot made him a monk. He said, 'Come, monk. Lead the holy life, the brahmacarya, for the destruction of suffering.' This was the earliest form of ordination; according to tradition itself this is universally recognized as the earliest form of ordination. Then the next development was that someone seems to have repeated the Refuges, and then of course those Refuges and various Precepts, and then rules were added, and so on.

Suvajra: Does it seem that the Refuges and Precepts came in during the Buddha's life?

S: It would seem so, yes.

Ratnaketu: Why then was it ... the beginning of the Sangha just to say 'Come', and nowadays it is quite - ?

S: Well, presumably the Buddha was able to see in a matter of instants the person's readiness. Presumably. Presumably that person was ready, otherwise the Buddha would not have said 'Come'. He didn't say 'Come' to everybody. He didn't say 'Come' even to all those who attended his discourses or who listened to him.

[279]

Subhuti: Our next question comes out of the consideration of the Bodhisattva Sanvarasilas.

Ratnaprabha: As we were talking about the Bodhisattva precepts, we discussed what you have said previously - it's a question asked a few days ago: how it wasn't really appropriate for there to be Bodhisattva precepts, and at the same time you said that you felt that one couldn't really think of the Bodhicitta as arising in an individual: it was more like ... there was a chance of at least some glimmer of the Bodhicitta arising within a spiritual community. And so what would you say, how can we speak of the Bodhisattva? Can we even speak of an individual Bodhisattva, or is this really only an unhelpful way of speaking?

S: Well, strictly speaking, you can't speak of an individual Bodhisattva. You can as it were have an image; you can see in your mind's eye, say, an image of a Bodhisattva - say, Manjusri as described by Subhuti - but one must recollect at the same time that this Bodhisattva is not an individual as we experience individuality, even though he appears to be; inasmuch as our experience of individuality takes place entirely within the subject-object framework. We experience ourselves as subject, not as object. The Bodhisattva has transcended that duality; he does not experience himself as subject as opposed to object. What he experiences himself as is very difficult for us to understand, but he - if that term at all is appropriate - experiences himself, if that term is appropriate too, as neither subject nor object; both subject and object, and, one might say, neither subject nor object. One could go as far as that. But none the less, we need, so to speak, something to think about, something to fix our thoughts on, something even to meditate upon, something to be inspired by. So we think of the Bodhisattva as though he was a sort of individual, as though he has an actual body, actual specific attributes, appearance, form, colour, implements, gesture and so on. But we must not think that the

Bodhisattva is an individual in the sense that we are individuals.

One might say that we have these categories of, say, group member and then individual; and then one has got Individual with a capital I. The Bodhisattva begins to be a bit like that. But even between individual with a small i and Individual with a capital I there is quite a gulf of difference. It is very difficult for an individual with a small i to understand what [280] Individual with a big I really means, really stands for, inasmuch as that subject-object duality upon which ordinarily one's experience of individuality is based has been altogether transcended or at least partially transcended, transcended to some extent.

So therefore the Bodhicitta, though it does not arise, one might say, disconnected from individuals, certainly doesn't belong to any individual. So in order to steer a middle way between saying that the Bodhicitta is the Bodhicitta of an individual and saying on the other hand that the Bodhicitta doesn't really arise at all, one thinks or one speaks in terms of the Bodhicitta arising, so to speak, in the midst of a spiritual community of committed individuals.

So this also suggests that when you can't think of there being different Bodhisattvas as though they were different people, in a sense - though again only in a sense - there is only one Bodhisattva and one Bodhicitta, and one Buddha. Though bear in mind I said only in a sense. Not that there is one as opposed to many; these are non-numerical ones.

Ratnaprabha: So what about the Bodhisattva Path? One thinks of, say, practising the paramitas, ... as an individual practising the paramitas - would it be more helpful to see this as a whole spiritual community practising the paramitas?

S: Well, first of all there is this question what one means by the practice of the paramitas. A paramita does not become a paramita until it is conjoined with Wisdom, Transcendental wisdom. So what is Transcendental Wisdom? Transcendental Wisdom ... duality is transcended. So in what sense can one really speak of individuals' practice of a paramita? The Diamond Sutra itself says this very clearly, the whole Perfection of Wisdom literature says this very clearly. The Bodhisattva is represented as saying: 'I will lead all these uncounted beings to Enlightenment; at the same time there are no beings to be led to Enlightenment.' He is expressing a non-dual experience in terms of duality.

But one must be careful to understand I am not suggesting the practice of something collectively as opposed to practising it individually, ... To put it paradoxically, an individual cannot be a Bodhisattva, an individual in the ordinary sense. If you are an individual you are not a [281] Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva has to be more than that, to go beyond the sort of duality that the term individual suggests.

Silaratna: Is this something that is like ... you actually took your Bodhisattva ordination with Dhardo Rimpoche. Did Dhardo Rimpoche explain the principle to you in the process of doing this Bodhisattva ... ?

S: No, not in the way that I have explained it, no. Though he did of course explain the meaning of each of the precepts individually. We went through them and I translated them.

Devamitra: We move on to another question. Two questions arising out of the study in my

group on Right Livelihood. The first one is that in the text (page 83) you say, referring to Right Livelihood - and I think it is also implied you are referring also to aspects of the Dharma which refers to collective existence - 'Now this is not an aspect of Buddhism which is usually very much emphasized. In fact it is rather played down.' So the question is why do you think that has been so?

S: I don't know whether one can assign a short, simple, straightforward reason. Perhaps it is just because so many Buddhists, both in the East and the few that were in the West just lost sight of what Buddhism itself generally stood for. In the East, Eastern Buddhists, apart perhaps from those in India, don't think in terms of transformation of society.

They think that they are born Buddhists, they live in a Buddhist country, that's enough. If you were to ask them they probably would say that they are transformed already, which one might seriously question and doubt.

As regards the West, one must remember the way in which Buddhism was introduced. It was introduced in a scholarly manner originally; scholars took an interest in it, books were written about it, and then people started being drawn by the ideas, a few people started studying things, reading about them. Perhaps naturally, perhaps understandably, that was the first stage. In those days people didn't even think in terms of transforming themselves, not to speak of transforming society. And also there was this whole idea, in the early days of Buddhism in Britain certainly, derived I think mainly from Theravada sources, that Buddhism was very much your own affair. It was a sort of very private thing; you didn't tell anybody about it, you just studied it, possibly practised it a bit just on your own. You didn't even mention to your friends that you [282] were a Buddhist. In many cases you just wouldn't venture to be a vegetarian in case people asked you why you were a vegetarian. And also there was this idea current, I remember, when I came back in 1964, that a Buddhist didn't really want to be different from anybody else, and those who were Buddhists, if it was found out that they were Buddhists, they hastened to assure the people who found out that they were just like everybody else, they weren't any different at all - they were just Buddhists, they just believed in Buddhism.

So, under those conditions, it was not to be expected that anyone should think very definitely in terms of Buddhism involving a transformation of society. I am afraid that note was first sounded by myself, and no one in England, certainly, in Britain or in British Buddhist circles, had ever made any such statement before, but it seemed to me more and more obvious. I find I am making this sort of statement, taking this sort of line, right at the very beginning, in the first year of the existence of the Friends.

Devamitra: We have one more question from my group.

Bodhiruchi: Bhante, in the lecture you say there are three aspects, the social, the political and the economic. From the social point of view the Buddha was very much against the caste system as it was in India at the time.

S: One could say that.

Bodhiruchi: We were trying to transpose that into the West. We have a caste system of a sort, the class system.

S: I doubt very much whether the class system can be equated with the caste system, because the caste system was strictly hereditary, and also had a strong religious sanction, which is not the case, I think, with the class system.

Bodhiruchi: But there are certain parallels, and it seems one of the functions of the FWBO is to break down class, particularly in the Order. Do you see that having any consequences outside of the FWBO?

S: Well, what does one mean to break down class distinctions? What is class, to begin with, or why does one want to break down class distinctions? If one wants to break down class distinctions, what one presumably is saying is that [283] the Buddha said in effect in connection with the caste system - what one would say would be that it was important to relate to other people just as individuals. I am not suggesting that all the people that you might be trying to relate to are individuals in the full sense, but in relating to them, in communicating with them, you should not - what shall I say? - see them in terms simply of their membership of any particular group to which they may happen in a social sense to belong. You should just look at the individual who is in front of you, and you should not treat him primarily as belonging to a particular race or belonging to a particular sort of class or a particular caste. You should just try to see the man in front of you. No doubt he will have been influenced by the fact that he was born into or brought up in a particular group of whatsoever kind. You may, in the course of your communication with him, take that into consideration. But you will not be relating to him primarily in those group terms; you will be trying, at least, to relate to him as an individual, you will be trying to relate at least to the incipient individuality that is in him.

So it is not so much that on general ideological grounds one is trying to break down class barriers, etc. etc. etc., but what one is really trying to do is to relate to other people as individuals. If you do that, on a sufficiently wide scale, yes, class barriers and every other kind of group barrier will be broken down, undoubtedly.

There is the barrier of nationality also. Certainly, within the Order, the individual should be primary, the individual should be paramount. That someone came originally from a particular social group, came from a particular country, a particular nationality, a particular caste just has no relevance whatever within the Order, except to the extent that it may perhaps help you understand someone inasmuch as he may still be under the influence of the situation from which he came.

I have been reading quite recently some I think it was reporting-in from Indian Order members. They really enjoy meeting Order members from the West, because despite the tremendous cultural differences they feel at once at home with them. They feel that they can at once relate to them. In a way - they don't actually say this - but in a way one imagines they try and relate to other Indians outside the FWBO. They can relate on a basis of common humanity, and that is very rare; or, hopefully, common individuality.

[284]

Devamitra: They are all the questions from my group.

Cittapala: At the beginning of the Right Livelihood lecture, you mention a number of famous people's daydreams, such as Plato's Republic and More's Utopia. I was wondering whether

there were any specific areas of European culture which had formed a part of your vision in terms of interpreting the Dharma for the Western Buddhist Order.

S: I cannot consciously recollect any instance. It may be so. I think Plato's Republic was the first philosophical work which I read, and I have read it several times since I read it when I was 1, and it could have influenced me; it is very difficult for me to tell, having been familiar with it at least from time to time for so long. And I remember a few years later I encountered More's Utopia as well as Campanella's City of the Sun. I was quite impressed by both of these works. Other utopias? Very, very much later, in fact only a few years ago, I read The Glass Bead Game; I was quite impressed by that. I saw a number of parallels.

Whether I have actually been influenced in my thinking by my contact with these particular works, I really can't say. Perhaps I'll have to go back to them and just reflect upon them. It may be that I have been, but I cannot recollect any specific instance in which I have been. In fact, as regards Plato's Republic, there are one or two matters in connection with which I take a very different view from Plato, especially as regards the position of artists in one's ideal society. Plato wanted to banish the artists.

But I have, especially this last few years, been quite interested in looking into anything that seemed like a sort of anticipation in the West of what we are trying to do now. Oh yes, another utopia, a sort of utopian vision I read fairly recently, only a couple of years ago, which I recommended to several people, was William Morris's News from Nowhere, which is a very appealing, very readable, attractive sort of book. That's his vision of a sort of socialist utopia, rooted very firmly in the Home Counties - but a de-industrialised Home Counties, in which people walk around in early medieval dress and things like that. None the less, apart from a few quaint features of that sort, it is very readable and even quite inspiring.

: You were just saying, Bhante, recently you have been looking for any ... Have you found any?

[285]

S: I have been looking more in the area of communities. Quite a lot of communities were set up, say, in America in the last century. It is quite interesting, it is quite instructive to study them. Most of them - well, it is very difficult to generalize - hundreds of communities were started up, very few lasted more than a year or two, even a few months. One thing that strikes - well, to get back to a quite basic point, so basic that I've almost overlooked it - in order to have a spiritual community - this is the message that emerges most clearly from reading about these various experiments - was that in order to have a spiritual community you have got to have a common spiritual vision. If you have got a lot of individualists all in together, all following their own ideas, going their own way, you can't possibly have a spiritual community.

So in the FWBO we have the possibility of having spiritual communities because we have a common vision. That, in many cases, was not present in the case of some of these very early experimental communities, some of which were quite large. There was no common vision, no common purpose, and individualism was rife.

Another reason for the break-up of many of the communities, as one might have expected, was that the man/woman, the male/female question, was not resolved, and there were many

tensions on this score, often leading to people leaving. Another thing that emerges is - ah, there is one other thing. Some of these communities developed business enterprises, and these business enterprises were quite successful, but they ended up absorbing all the energies of the people involved, and the spiritual communities became, sometimes officially and legally, business corporations; one or two of which, I think, continue still. And the whole spiritual community side of ...

Tape 14, Side 2

- ... no common way of life, no common spiritual practice, and no real emphasis on individual growth and development and on helping one another to grow and evolve; and no emphasis on the community as a situation with a structure which helps the individual to evolve. This is broadly the picture. I notice that in reading about the various communities and so on.

Bodhiruchi: Have any survived?

S: I don't think any have survived down to the present. The most successful survived 20, 30 - even 40 years in one or [286] two cases; but most lasted only two or three years or four or five months, six months. But there were many communities in America in the last century; some of them were quite well known, some of them were quite big. People were thinking in those terms. But they didn't seem to know how to go about it, and what the requirements were for community living. Some of the Romantic poets thought in these terms - Shelley thought in these terms, we know; Coleridge, we know, Southey, we know, thought in these terms. They dreamed of an ideal situation, a sort of spiritual community. Lawrence thought in those terms, or in something like those terms.

: Did Blake have ideas of ... ?

S: Blake seems not to have had. Well, Blake seems not to have had any sort of concrete blueprint. He certainly had the vision of what he called the New Jerusalem, which would be a regenerated society, but he didn't propose any actual concrete steps to move in that way. Perhaps like others he was disillusioned by the experience of the French Revolution - the French Revolution having resulted in a swing to the Right eventually, and a dictatorship under Napoleon, and a revived Empire, with all the usual trappings of Church and State. That could not have been very encouraging for the people of that time. So they tended to retreat into their private vision rather than to take steps to bring about the new society in the present. But Blake certainly had a spiritual vision of the New Jerusalem; he certainly had a vision of a regenerated society. But he did not suggest any practical steps whereby that could be achieved - well, practical in the ordinary, everyday sense.

Cittapala: I remember reading about kibbutzim. They seem to enshrine certain principles and seem to be reasonably successful.

S: Yes, that is true. I think one or two of our Friends have had some experience of living in (?) them. I believe Vajradaka did, and I think one or two others.

: Lalitavajra.

: Nagabodhi.

S: Any further points? Have we gone round all the groups now? Well, we are left with a little time.

[287]

Bodhiruchi: Can I ask you a question further to that question on class? It seems to me that the FWBO is becoming more working class. Is that fair comment?

S: I don't know. But if it was to be, in the sense that a greater proportion of people in the FWBO were of working class origins, that would be a quite healthy sign inasmuch as working-class people do constitute a majority of the population of Britain. So it would mean that the FWBO was becoming more representative, was representing more of a cross-section of society as a whole. You may remember that some years ago Mr Christmas Humphreys in an interview said that Buddhists in Britain were drawn mainly from the upper middle classes, and I wrote a letter to the paper where the interview was published to point out that that was not altogether correct. I don't think he would make that statement now.

But whether there are nowadays in the FWBO more people of working-class origin, I don't know; I haven't conducted any statistical survey, I don't actually have any impressions to that effect; which is not to say that I am disagreeing with the statement. It may be so.

Gunapala: It seems to be a very English thing, the class system. I had never ever heard of it until I met Vajradaka. When Vajradaka was in New Zealand Vajradaka mentioned this thing about the class system when he went out there, and I couldn't understand it. And it wasn't until I came to England that I started to get to see it operating that I did get ...

S: Well, as an innocent antipodean observer, what would you say that the class system was? What have you seen? Because people who are born and brought up in England are so used to it they probably can't see it. So what do you see, or what have you seen?

Gunapala: Phew! I still can't understand it clearly, because it's something that just isn't part of my conditioning.

S: Well, you should be able to see it all the more clearly, because it's new and strange.

Gunapala: I can see that people have a lot of conflicts with each other from different class structures; they seem ...

S: Different class structures, or different classes?

[288]

Gunapala: Different classes, you know, like the middle class and the working class. It's quite complicated, it seems a quite complicated and confused structure as it were, the sort of upper class ...

S: But have you learned to identify people as coming from particular classes?

Gunapala: Ah - no, that is quite difficult for me ... I don't know.

S: Because I certainly learned in India to identify people as coming from different castes. I

was able to do that after a few years in India. I wondered whether you were able ...

Gunapala: Not so much. I'm just starting to, from some people's voice, but they have to be very strong accents before I can notice any difference between the different accents. Most of the time I can't tell whether someone comes from a working class or a middle class or upper class by the way they speak.

S: Because the situation has been recently confused by all sorts of working-class people going to university, even changing their accent, and speaking differently from their own parents and brothers and sisters who haven't been to university. That does rather complicate the issue. But the practised ear can detect the underlying working-class intonation, even though they may have acquired this upper-class accent at university.

Ratnaketu: I remember once when I hadn't been here very long Subhuti and I and Mike Keogh went to see an opera, and on the way there Subhuti decided to show us the sights of London. It was late at night, and we went to Lincoln's Inn Fields, and we were in the bit - I think we weren't supposed to be there but we were in ... and this chap saw us and he says - he had ...the ...est... - middle-class, I suppose - ... upper-class ... He said 'Oi, what are you doing there?' Subhuti just said, 'Oh, we're just having a look.' And as soon as he heard Subhuti's accent, he just - there was no problem.

S: Old school tie accent.

Ratnaketu: I couldn't believe it.

S: That's true, and that does happen often.

[289]

Gunapala: I can think of a similar experience but the other way round, as I spoke, with a very - she must have been ... I don't know, but upper middle class or something - lived in the country, and we were on retreat.

S: This was in England?

Gunapala: Yes, in England. And I was walking across her property, and she wanted to know what we were doing here. And I spoke, I just said we were going across to ... the main road. And as soon as she heard my accent her face screwed up! Where do you come from expression! She sort of withdrew very quickly. And someone who was very English spoke and made it all up to her.

S: But what is this difference that people feel through the difference of accent? What is it?

: Superiority in ... ?

Aryamitra: Difference of group. I know in Glasgow I can get things done better because of my accent than some Glaswegians on the phone; especially on the phone. But only because of my English accent.

Gunapala: It seems a bit strange to me, I haven't really worked it all out.

S: There really are no class differences in New Zealand?

Gunapala: Very little; I've never come across any. I mean the Prime Minister of the country - what is he, I think a bricklayer or something - he'd left school ...

S: Well, Mrs Thatcher is a grocer's daughter! What about Jim Callaghan, he wasn't out of the top drawer.

Silaratna: ... on the - I think there is a similar racial spectrum in New Zealand, because I used to notice that among certain people at school there was a spectrum between the Maoris and the Europeans. A certain amount of that does go on. I think a lot of New Zealanders don't want to live with... They see themselves as being very egalitarian and this sort of business.

S: It's a bit like the Americans, they don't like to admit [290] any difference, but there are some subtle differences; maybe not amounting to a full-blown class system, but there are little differences which are felt. And of course in India you do have the caste system, which is something much more extreme and entrenched even than the English class system is; resulting in a very extreme form of inhumanity, as regards treatment of the ex-Untouchables or anyone lower in the caste hierarchy.

Cittapala: The question I was asked quite often when I was going round knocking on doors for Aid for India was did we really think that by the ex-Untouchables becoming Buddhists caste views would really be changed or would there be any chance of it having much effect?

S: Well, when one says their views change, whose views - ?

Cittapala: Well, they were thinking primarily of the Hindus or the other castes. People were obviously wondering whether it would actually make much difference.

S: Yes and no. One isn't concerned primarily with the views of those who don't become Buddhists. When people in India - say, ex-Untouchables - become Buddhists they are mainly concerned with their view of themselves. This is what is important to them; because under the caste system it had been constantly dinned into their ears that they were inferior, that they were unworthy, that they were the lowest of the low, that they were disgusting, that they were dirty, that they were immoral, that they were wicked, etc. etc. This was all dinned into their ears. This is what they were because they were Untouchables. And so they believed this: this was the official state of affairs. This was how they saw themselves, much as in the West it's dinned into our ears that we are all sinners, and we perhaps have that view of ourselves. In India, in the case of the lower-caste people and especially in the case of the lowest people of all, the Untouchables, they did see themselves as the higher castes saw; which meant that they saw themselves in entirely negative terms. But when they become Buddhists they see themselves in a different light. By becoming Buddhists they take themselves outside the caste system, outside Hinduism, and they start seeing themselves just as human beings, and they start feeling that they have worth. They start respecting themselves. And this brings about a tremendous change in their whole life.

So the Hindus may not change their views, but even if they [291] don't that isn't important. What is important is that the ex-Untouchables who become Buddhists, they change their views about themselves quite drastically, quite radically; and because of that their whole

attitude towards caste Hindus changes. They are no longer subservient and grovelling; they ... treated as individuals. Whether the Hindu likes it or not they are not going to be treated in the way that they were before. Of course, in small villages, yes, this still goes on; even though they become Buddhists they are a minority, they are uneducated, they are poor. So they are still treated badly by the caste Hindus. But none the less the tide has turned, and the whole conversion movement has been a terrible shock to orthodox Hindus; it makes them really think quite seriously. And some Hindu organizations have been started up now to do away with the caste system before they lose all the ex-Untouchables from Hinduism.

Bodhiruchi: So there hasn't been a backlash?

S: There has been a backlash, intermittently, in particular areas and particular villages, and quite a lot of people have been killed, women have been raped, houses have been burned down, etc. etc. There has been quite a bit of that, but only intermittently. But when people are asking this sort of question which one is bound to encounter, they just have no idea of what the situation is like out there, and also no idea of what conversion to Buddhism means for an ex-Untouchable and the effects which it has; one really needs to know the situation to be able to appreciate it.

Cittapala: What about prejudice in terms of, say, economic and perhaps social implications such as - ?

S: Well, you see, when caste Hindus have prejudice against the ex-Untouchables, they will use every weapon that comes to hand, both social and economic. Many of the ex-Untouchables were working as day labourers, and after conversion many of the people who used to employ them, caste Hindus, refused to employ them any more, so a lot of pressure was brought to bear in that way. But on the other hand, the ex-Untouchables, like scheduled-caste people generally in India, do enjoy certain governmental concessions and privileges. There is positive discrimination in that way. So as a result of that they have been coming up quite rapidly, even economically and educationally in recent years; there has been quite a change over the last 20 years. They have got as high a percentage, I [292] think, of 'educated', inverted commas, people in their community as in any other community. They are coming up quite rapidly. And some of the caste Hindus resent that and there has been a bit of a backlash on that score. It is quite impossible for people in Britain, perhaps, to appreciate the depth of feeling on the part of a caste Hindu when he sees an Untouchable getting, as he sees it, beyond himself or above himself, above his station in life - when he actually answers back a caste Hindu, when he actually wears new clothes instead of cast-off clothes, etc. The caste Hindu can't bear to see this. He absolutely burns within himself at the action of the Untouchables in behaving in this way, behaving as though they were decent caste Hindu people.

Cittapala: Is this mainly just a social thing which has been inculcated through parents teaching their children, that sort of attitude, is it - ?

S: It pervades the whole atmosphere, you can't get away from it. There is a strong religious sanction. You are born as an Untouchable because of your past karma; they believe this very firmly.

Devamitra: Were the effects of the caste system felt that strongly, do you think, at the time of

the Buddha, or is it impossible to tell?

S: It seems, as far as we can make out from the surviving literature, especially from the Pali texts, the caste system was not so strongly, or at least so rigidly, enforced in the Buddha's day. It seems to have been a bit - well, it was still in process of formation.

Devamitra: So he was actually speaking out against a much lesser evil than the one it has eventually become?

S: I would say so, on the whole, I would say so.

Devamitra: But he was still speaking out very strongly against it?

S: Yes.

Silaratna: Is there any particular reaction - ... the caste Hindus react against the Untouchables - has it come from any one particular part ... - the Vaisyas or the Shudras or the brahmins?

S: It varies from area to area. Sometimes, for political [293] reasons, all sort of odd things happen. For instance, in Maharashtra, the principal offenders so far as the ex- Untouchable Buddhists are concerned are not the brahmins, they are the next caste down, the Mahrattas. And politically there is a sort of alliance between ex-Untouchable Buddhists and brahmins, strange to say; because they are both minorities, you see, though in different ways. The Mahratta ... the majority in this case.

Bodhiruchi: Did you say just a few moments ago that there are societies being set up by the Hindus to break up the caste system?

S: Yes, I was invited to give a lecture by one of them. There is an organization called the Vishva Hindu Parishad, the Universal Hindu Society; and the organizers told me that as a result of 20 years of work they had brought together all the heads of Hindu sects and institutions and so on, and they had agreed to work together to eliminate the caste system. This is really quite extraordinary. Of course, many of our Buddhist friends doubt their sincerity, but at least they are taking some action, one can't deny that. But of course there is another angle to this, there is another dimension: Hindus are also very afraid of the Muslims, and they are very afraid of any weakening of the Hindu community vis-a-vis the Muslims. And they feel that sooner or later they are going to have to take a stand against the Muslims, that is the Muslims in India - who are the biggest minority. And they therefore feel that they must develop more solidarity for that reason with any section of Hindu society that is showing signs of breaking away, for example the ex-Untouchables.

While I was in India, a few ex-Untouchables became converted to Islam, and this sent shock waves all throughout Hinduism. They really did not like this; they had visions of the Muslim communities doubling in a few years and threatening the Hindu majority, and another Pakistan breaking away. They are very sensitive to this situation.

Shantiprabha: Are the Muslims then completely outside the caste system?

S: Yes, virtually ... And, of course, many of them were originally converted from

Untouchables, centuries ago. It is interesting that, in India, ex-Untouchable Buddhists get on very well with Muslims and Christians. They mix socially and are very friendly; there is never any trouble with Muslims or Christians. The trouble there is with Hindus; and Muslims, [294] Christians and Buddhists are all minorities, so they tend to make common cause. They tend to live in the same localities. It is well known that in times of riots Buddhist families will shelter Muslim women from the Hindu mob and so on. So there is quite a friendly feeling actually between Muslims and Buddhists, and even Christians and Buddhists, because they also inter-dine: a Buddhist will go and eat at the house of a Muslim, and a Muslim is free to go and eat in the house of an Untouchable; no one bothers. So they have that sort of social connection, which Muslims do not have, of course, with the Hindus, as the Untouchables themselves don't. So we have no problem with regard to Muslims or Christians in India as regards ... If there is any problem it is with the Hindus.

Devamitra: Presumably, then, there could be problems if a Muslim wanted to convert to Buddhism?

S: There could be. I myself have converted a few Muslims to Buddhism in the old days; there were no repercussions. I converted a couple of Christians in a poor Christian family - or, at least, I was present at the conversion ceremony, this last visit - again, no repercussions. But normally, of course, Muslims are very, very sensitive on this score. In Islamic countries the penalty for apostasy is death.

Amoghacitta: I had the impression that other religions like Christianity and Muslim adopted the caste system of any sort in India(?)

S: This is true in south India. I think it isn't true in the north, but it certainly is true in south India. I don't know whether that is a thing of the past; I don't know whether that is finished now. But certainly some years ago there were separate churches for converts from different castes.

Bodhiruchi: Have you any idea when you will go out there again, Bhante, or is that ... ?

S: No. Other people may have, but - ...

There are two more minutes; do you want to use that?

Bodhiruchi: Can you say what the percentage of ex-Untouchable Buddhists is as against ex-Untouchable Christians and ex-Untouchable Muslims?

[295]

S: I don't know. I can give you rough figures. In India there are between, I think, 80 and 100 million people belonging to the so-called Scheduled Castes, many of whom are of course Untouchable, but also, because people are very low in the caste hierarchy, all are potential Buddhists if we could get enough workers to go round to them converting them. That is quite a large number, isn't it? The number of Untouchables or ex-Untouchables who have actually converted to Buddhism is at least 4 million; 4 million is the official figure; the unofficial figure may be much larger. Most of them are in Maharashtra, where of course we are mainly working.

I am not quite sure how many Christians there are. I think - though of course I may be quoting out-of-date figures, because numbers are increasing all the time - I think there are about 12 million Christians in India. Muslims - when I was there formerly the Muslim minority was about 40 million. That must have gone up at least to 60 or 75 million now. The Muslim majority in India. You can get the correct figures, if you are interested, from the India Yearbook.

Bodhiruchi: I was just interested in comparative figures.

S: The present population of India, as far as I remember, is approaching 800 million - no, not so many as that - it is over 600 million now. I think it more than doubled, it about doubled, between the period that I was there. I mean ... Nothing to do with anything I did!

Suvajra: ... the law ... with the Hindus themselves, especially the upper castes? Are we doing anything for them?

S: We aren't; though I gave some lectures to these people when I was there, and I think Lokamitra was speaking ... Ah yes, I will say something about this. A lecture I gave for the Aurangabad branch of the Vishva Hindu Parishad - that meeting was attended by about 500 caste Hindus, and I spoke very strongly to them - I won't go into details of what I said, but I sort of laid things on step by step, but very seriously; and I think I really got them thinking. But they heard me quite attentively, and they seemed quite pleased with the lecture afterwards. And they want to publish it in English for wider distribution; Lokamitra is arranging that with them. I visited that region. They will publish it in English, it will also come out in Marathi, ..., so it should be quite [296] widely distributed. But the subject was 'Buddhism and the Secular State.' My main point was India is a secular state, but Hinduism as such, orthodox Hinduism, is incompatible with the secular state whereas Buddhism is not incompatible with the secular state. So if you want to really have a secular state in India it means the gradual abolition of Hinduism (Laughter). You cannot have orthodox Hinduism and a secular state. This was - I tried to impale them on the horns of this dilemma. And I also suggested the complete abolition of the caste system by universal intermarriage between castes.

A few younger people, including some young women who were present, caste Hindus, were very much in favour of this. Oh yes, I certainly had quite a bit of sympathy from at least a section of the audience. There was practically entirely - they were almost entirely a caste Hindu audience apart from a few friends who accompanied me, a few Buddhist friends. But they took very seriously what I said; I was quite pleased with them.

Some of our Buddhist friends thought I was absolutely wasting my time. They had no faith whatever in any change of heart on the part of the orthodox Hindus; they really thought I was wasting my time. But I don't agree. I believe in keeping my lines of communication open in India with people of all communities and all castes. I have always done that; I think it's quite reasonable. I have advised Lokamitra to do likewise.

But I will close with just a little incident, to give you some idea of the situation. On that occasion - well, I was to give this lecture to this Hindu organization the following day. The day before, they were very keen that I should visit their office in the heart of Aurangabad. Anyway, to cut a long story short, Lokamitra took me, but we went on our own; that is to say

with none of our Buddhist friends. And Lokamitra apparently forgot to tell people where we were going, and also we had - after this visit to this Hindu organization's office in the heart of Aurangabad, in part of the old city - we had a Buddhist function somewhere else which we were supposed to go to. So what actually happened was that we were detained - well, first of all we found it difficult to find this office, and all sorts of things went wrong and ... It took about an hour to find the place instead of about five minutes. Anyway, we got there and again we were detained; they insisted on my giving a little talk, etc.; all right, we did that. So we were late arriving at the venue of the Buddhist function. And one of the Indian Order members was very, very upset and very, very [297] worried. He knew that - they all knew that we had gone to this Hindu office but they didn't know where it was or any of the details. They were very worried. And when we turned up one of the Indian Order members gave Lokamitra a real scolding. He said, 'Why did you take Bhante to this place, without any of us and without telling us where you were going? Anything could have happened. They might have poisoned Bhante.' This was the depth of their suspicion. He really was afraid that this caste Hindu organization was going to lure me there and put some poison in my coffee to finish me off, in view of all the work I was doing for the spread of Buddhism. They really are very afraid of these people, based on their past experience. So Lokamitra got a good scolding for taking me there like that.

You can judge the situation from that. They had a real fear that I might have been poisoned by them. I personally had no grounds for that at all, but I understand their apprehension. These things do happen. Lokamitra tried to put up a bit of a defence, but they said, 'No, these things do happen' - and this is true, I know they do happen. So that will give you some idea of ... and why our Buddhist friends don't trust Hindus - no, this generation will not trust Hindus. Perhaps even the next generation will not, because of what has happened in the past and the way in which they have suffered at the hands of the Hindus. They can't believe that the Hindus have really changed. I think very, very big changes have got to take place in India before any ex-Untouchable Buddhist has any kind of faith in any kind of Hindu.

I was reading just the other day the report of a reporting-in in India to an Order retreat, and one of our Order members was reporting in that there is a brahmin in his office, and he said: 'I knew about brahminism in theory before, but now I know about it in practice' - referring to the way in which this person was speaking to him, his attitude. And then he said: 'There is nothing in Hinduism.' That is what he said: 'There is nothing in Hinduism.' He meant nothing of any value: 'There is nothing in Hinduism.' That is their view. They are far more extreme in their attitude to Hinduism than any of us are in our attitude to Christianity. It can't compare. Our attitude towards Christianity is mild and appreciative in comparison with their attitude towards orthodox Hinduism. They just have no time for it whatever, no regard for it whatever. To them it is an unmitigated evil, with no redeeming features whatever. That is how they see it, and that is how they have experienced it. They don't want any part of a sublime Hindu [298] philosophy when the practical result has been that the followers of the sublime Hindu philosophy have just booted you wherever they came across you. So that is their way of looking at things. It is not easy for us to appreciate that, if we haven't actually seen quite a bit of that situation. So when you are doing Aid for India work and nice ... ladies ask you these sort of questions, well, it is not easy to answer; it is very difficult for you to put across in a few words what this situation is like, even if you know it yourself.

Anyway, enough for this morning.

Day 14 Tape 15, Side 1

: This is on Perfect Livelihood.

S: We've finished with Perfect Action?

: Yes.

S: There are no questions left over from the Fifth Precept?

: I don't think we had any on the Fifth Precept. That was yesterday we had ...

Prasannasiddhi: In your Right Livelihood lecture, you mention that the Buddha spoke ... Right Livelihood - you mention that Right Livelihood was one aspect of the collective existence of a social group, the other aspects being social and economic. And then you stated, well, why didn't the Buddha speak in terms of perfect citizenship? And I was wondering why the Buddha didn't speak in terms - or perhaps whether or not; it almost seems as if this was quite an important thing because it could have quite an impact on the way you viewed the spiritual life, that you speak in terms of right citizenship instead of right livelihood; to place a much greater emphasis on more social aspects of one's existence.

S: I think I have touched on this somewhere or other, maybe in some other study group. If one is to speak, or if one is to expect the Buddha to speak, in terms of, say, right citizenship, it implies a city; it implies a polis, to use the Greek word. In other words, it implies a definite type of political structure of which you are a part and in which you can participate. But that seems not to have existed, broadly [299] speaking, with some exceptions which I will mention, in the Buddha's day. The Greeks, for instance, could think in terms or speak in terms of citizenship, they could speak in terms of politics, because there was a polis in whose activities they could participate, in which in fact they were expected to participate if they were citizens - that is to say if they were men of adult age and native born, in most cases. But nothing like that, broadly speaking, seems to have existed in ancient India, again with possible exceptions which I shall mention.

I think I have explained before that in ancient India in the Buddha's day there were two great factors, so to speak, as regards the political scene. There was on the one hand a sort of rivalry, a sort of conflict, between the monarchical and the republican form of government; and on the other hand there was a rivalry, a conflict, between the two leading monarchies, one of which eventually swallowed up the other. These were the two major factors in the political situation during the Buddha's lifetime and immediately afterwards. In other words, during the Buddha's lifetime, the whole trend, politically speaking, in India was more and more in the direction of a centralized monarchical, absolutist state.

At the same time, there was the caste system. The caste system existed in the time of the Buddha, though not in the rigid form in which it existed later, as we saw the other day. I think it isn't altogether appreciated the extent to which the castes were also in many cases sort of guilds, which managed their own affairs. So you didn't have a sort of commonalty of free citizens all mingling together freely and engaging in common political action. You had a congeries of castes, all managing their own affairs, as to some extent within limits they still do in India, and in a sense, you might say - again within limits - governing themselves. And

over all you had the king, collecting taxes, keeping up his court, keeping up his army, perhaps fighting with neighbouring kings.

So there was no city, there was no democratic state in the sense in which we understand the term today or in which even the Greeks understood the term. So there was nothing in which you could participate. You had as it were no political rights. That was the system during the Buddha's day in the monarchical states, which were the biggest and most powerful political groups. But then you did have the republics. These republics existed on the fringes of the large monarchical states and were in process of being swallowed up; some of them were swallowed [300] up during the Buddha's lifetime, especially towards the end of it. And the Buddha himself came from one of these republican states, the Sakya republic, which of course was swallowed up by Kosala towards the end of the Buddha's own life; towards the end of the Buddha's own life the Vajji confederacy was about to be swallowed up by Magadha, which in turn eventually swallowed up Kosala.

But one had, during the Buddha's lifetime, these little republics existing rather precariously on the fringes of these large monarchical states. We don't know very much about them; what we know about them derives mainly from the Pali scriptures. not from Sanskrit - Hindu - sources. But it would seem that there was no king; they were not monarchical states, they were republican in the sense that all the adult males in the republic exercised political power, it would seem, jointly; and the major positions included the position of what we would call president. The major positions were filled by election; they were not hereditary.

It would seem that perhaps this sort of republican state was sort of what we call oligarchic; they were not fully democratic, it would seem that not everybody had a vote, but a substantial section of the adult male population, especially the more patrician ones among them, exercised political power jointly. They were called ganatantras as opposed to rajatantras, republics or peoples' states.

Now, as I said, these republics were in process of being swallowed up during the Buddha's lifetime. In these republics, yes, one could be so to speak a citizen, but it would seem that where the Buddha largely operated - in Magadha, in Kosala - there was no question, there was no possibility, there was no opportunity, of one being a citizen, because the kind of state within which one could be a citizen just did not exist.

But there is a further point. The Buddha founded a sangha. The Buddha didn't just have individual disciples; he founded a sangha. And it is generally acknowledged that certain features of that sangha were modelled upon certain features of the republican states; in other words, the constitution, so to speak, of the sangha, from a political point of view or in political terms, was republican rather than monarchical. For instance, every bhikkhu had a vote. Now I am speaking more in terms of the fully-fledged Vinaya, the fully-fledged coenobitical Vinaya which may have continued to evolve even after the [301] Buddha's death. But it is significant that if there is a meeting of the bhikkhus to decide a matter, the meeting is not quorate - in fact, there is no question of a quorum - but the meeting is not valid, and the proceedings are not valid, unless all bhikkhus belonging to that particular chapter and resident within a particular area are actually present and casting their vote; or unless they delegate someone to cast their vote for them. In other words, every bhikkhu has a sort of inherent right to participate in the proceedings of his chapter of the sangha. And decisions are arrived at jointly. There is no sort of (monarchical state). And this principle extends itself down to

details.

So the point has been made by some scholars that, from a sociological point of view, what the Buddha was doing when he founded the sangha, leaving aside the purely spiritual point of view, was resuscitating or reviving within the monarchical states themselves some kind of republican institution. It was a spiritual republicanism. And the bhikkhus, so to speak, were citizens, spiritual citizens, of that spiritual republic which was in a sense modelled upon the secular republics.

But certainly in India, not only in the time of the Buddha but throughout its history, citizenship has been out of the question inasmuch as the political set-up has usually been one of absolute monarchy; just as, say, in the Islamic states, there is no question of citizenship in the Western sense, because the set-up is usually one of absolute monarchy.

So therefore one does not find the Buddha speaking in terms of Perfect Citizenship, [but] speaking in terms of perfect means of livelihood, because everybody has to earn their living, even though everybody did not have the opportunity of participating in the political life of the state. There was no political life of the state as we understand that today, or as the Greeks understood it. So there is no question of perfect citizenship because you were not a citizen.

Subhuti: Does his acceptance of that situation imply a - or did he accept that situation, did he agree with it or merely accept it?

S: It would seem that on the whole he acquiesced in it, and the Buddhists developed a sort of ideal of their own, in a way adapted to this situation. They developed the ideal of the cakravartinraja or dhammaraja, the righteous king, who [302] encouraged people in the practice of the ten kusala-dhammas. There are a number of suttas devoted to this topic. But that is not exactly Perfect Citizenship. It means there is only one perfect citizen, and that is the king. But the fact that the Buddha modelled the sangha, so far as we can see, along republican lines rather than on monarchical lines, refusing himself to lead it or function like a king, suggests that his personal preference, so to speak, was for the republican rather than for the monarchical model or set-up.

In this respect it is quite interesting to compare India with China. In ancient China there was much more of a concept of - I won't say citizenship but of what they thought of as serving one's prince; the Confucianists had definitely the idea that the complete man should participate in political activity. He saw it more in terms of advising one's prince or influencing one's prince, or administering the state on behalf of one's prince; but the Chinese tradition gave more recognition to that as it were political dimension of human life. But in ancient India, and in India generally throughout its history it would seem that two things militated against the development of anything like what we would regard as citizenship or political life: on the one hand, the political set-up itself, which was usually one of absolute monarchy, and on the other hand the caste system, which prevented the formation of a common political community. The political community was subdivided into castes. You lived your life within your caste; there wasn't a sort of wider as it were political framework within which you lived, as there was in the case of the Greeks and Romans.

Prasannasiddhi: It seemed as if, from what I've heard, as if the Greeks actually held up the ideal of citizenship as an actual ideal and they felt that it was something that was of

importance, within their societies.

S: But it would seem that you cannot regard citizenship as of importance and the exercise of the duties or functions of a citizen as part of one's life as a complete man, let us say, unless there is a city, as I said; unless there is the relevant kind of political structure. I mentioned the other day, talking about India, that I gave a talk to a Hindu organization on 'Buddhism and the Secular State', and I pointed out that orthodox Hinduism was incompatible with the secular state; and this was one of the reasons - because orthodox Hinduism means the caste system. And if the people in a state are subdivided into [303] castes, and all these castes are in a sense states within a state, administering their own affairs, if there is no sort of common political community, then also there cannot really be a state in the modern sense, there cannot be a secular state.

The development of India, politically speaking, seems to be rather peculiar; maybe due to the caste system, because other countries had absolute monarchies - the early ... monarchies for one. And one of the functions of the king, according to orthodox Hindu ideas, was to uphold the caste system and to enforce caste laws. I can give an example, a modern example is the kingdom of Nepal. When I went to Nepal for the first time, before the democratic revolution, it was a regime of absolute monarchy, under which the caste system was rigidly enforced and no political activity was permitted. You weren't allowed to speak against the caste system, even. And the state itself, Nepal, was defined as the kingdom of the four varnas and 32 jatis, the four varnas and the 32 castes; the four varnas being those of brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya and sudra. It was so defined, and it is significant that it was at the same time an absolute monarchy and at the same time no political activity was permitted; you could not be a citizen. You had to remain within your caste, and any sort of 'public', inverted commas, activity that you might have was strictly within your caste; you could settle matters of marriage and who you could dine with and all that sort of thing, the burial of deceased or cremation of deceased caste members, all those sort of things you could deal with; but nothing more. You had no voice in the administration or the running of the country as a whole. You simply paid your taxes.

So, in a state of that sort, there can be no question of citizenship. On the one hand, you have no power, and you have no sphere within which to exercise power anyway. When I arrived in ..., the town in Nepal just over the frontier, I was shown a closed building - I have mentioned this in my Thousand-Petalled Lotus - where some young men who had tried to open a library - but they had done this on their own initiative, so they were thrown into prison, because you had no right to do that sort of thing within Nepal in those days. To open a public library was a subversive act.

So that was the sort of system, almost, in the Buddha's day - absolute monarchy, caste system, and no scope for individual and collective political activity; no citizenship; therefore no citizens, and no perfect citizenship.

[304]

Shantiprabha: How exactly did the individual castes function in those days?

S: How did they function? What do you mean by function, exactly?

Shantiprabha: I was wondering whether the individual had any control over his own caste or

whether there was one person who dictated how things happened in that caste.

S: No, the usual pattern is, even now, that there is a sort of caste council, and that council consists usually of the older, the senior members of that caste, and they decide everything. And if you don't obey the dictates of the caste council, you can be outcast, you can be thrown out of the caste, and that is a very serious matter in orthodox Hindu India. For instance, you might contract a marriage with a woman of a slightly different caste, and the caste council would decide whether that was permissible; whether you could remain within that caste. Or it might be reported that you had eaten with someone of a lower caste; well, that matter would be discussed and it would be decided whether you could remain within that caste.

But if you didn't obey the caste council, well, they just - a social boycott was imposed, that is, within the caste itself; you would be boycotted. No one would eat with you, no one would give his daughter in marriage to your son, no one would attend your funeral or ... cremation; no one, perhaps, would speak to you, you would be sent to Coventry.

So this is the system still in India. Each caste or sub-caste has its council, and they control the internal affairs of the caste and its relations with other castes.

Silabhadra: Would being an outcaste be the same as being an Untouchable?

S: In a sense, yes. The Untouchables are untouchable because they are outcastes. They don't simply occupy a low position in the caste system, as the shudras do; they are outside the caste system altogether.

Silaratna: What is the position with regard to the sadhus, Bhante, because wasn't the idea of the sadhu that he had actually gone beyond caste?

[305]

S: Yes.

Silaratna: But the caste members, people still in the caste, they still look upon the sadhus as being outcaste, or do they still look on them as being in caste?

S: The strictly orthodox view, one might say in the best sense, is that the sadhu is beyond caste; the sadhu is not expected to observe caste restrictions. This is in a sense the orthodox view, but there is another kind of orthodoxy, a conventional orthodoxy, and I found myself - I have reported a few cases in *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus* - that some sadhus did observe the caste system and took food or accepted food - cooked food, that is - only from the higher castes. And some even continued, if they had been brahmins or kshatriyas, to wear the sacred thread, which is against, actually, the strictly orthodox tradition of Hinduism itself; because you are supposed, when you become a sanyassin, that is to say an official sadhu, to burn the sacred thread. So it's almost as though some sadhus nowadays try to have the best of both worlds: they try to retain their caste status and they also want to enjoy respect as sadhus who have given up the world. I also found that there were brahmins very often who refused to pay respect to sadhus who were not originally from the brahmin caste. Especially in south India, this was quite common.

Devamitra: Could I bring us back to the question of the compatibility of Buddhism, say, with

the secular life or the secular state? You say that Hinduism is incompatible with secular life ...

S: No, I said incompatible with the secular state, that is to say the secular state meaning a state in which there was no official religion. I meant it in that technical sense. You see, India is a secular state: there is no establishment of religion in India as there is, say, in England, or even in the United States to some extent, despite the Constitution. So my argument in the course of that lecture was that if you faithfully followed up the implications of India being a secular state, it would not be possible to continue to practise orthodox Hinduism, especially the caste system. I wasn't concerned with secularism in the broader sense, but with the secular state in the technical, constitutional sense.

Prasannasiddhi: Relating back to the original question that I asked: so it seems that the Buddha established the Noble [306] Eightfold Path in response to the conditions which existed at the time?

S: Yes, he formulated at least.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, so considering that we are in societies in which citizenship is a possibility, we can involve ourselves in the running of our city and in the affairs of our city. Would it not perhaps be possible that this limb of the Path, Right Livelihood, could be amended to be something more in terms of right citizenship, and therefore implicate these other issues which are involved?

S: One could reformulate in that way, with the proviso that the citizenship in respect of the state of which you actually were a citizen was or could be itself by definition ethical. In other words, you couldn't be a perfect citizen of a state unless the conception of citizenship in that state was essentially ethical. You couldn't, for instance, be a perfect burglar, because to be a burglar is itself unethical. But supposing citizenship involves by definition that you have to bear arms: then you couldn't be a perfect citizen in that sense, from a Buddhist point of view. So whether you could redefine Right Livelihood in terms of perfect citizenship would depend to some extent at least on what citizenship would involve within your particular political set-up.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, but as a principle - the principle of citizenship - you could speak of a principle of Right Citizenship, right involving - If your society was not one where that could be lived up to, that is another issue.

S: But that would mean that you were formulating perfect citizenship more as an ideal - which is all right, but then that might involve you in trying to bring about changes in the whole of your country, so that it was possible to practise perfect citizenship, being a citizen of that country.

So in the case of Right Livelihood, it is possible to demarcate a sphere; that is to say, even though all sorts of other people are carrying on all sorts of other economic activities, it is no doubt possible for you to mark out a sphere of your own, a sphere of economic activity of your own, within which you can be completely ethical. But you cannot do that in respect of citizenship, because the state - at least in its own eyes - has the monopoly of citizenship. You cannot within the [307] state carve out an area within which you will be a citizen on your terms. So there is some difference here, or at least the question is more complex and more

difficult.

Cittapala: In terms of - when you said you could be completely ethical, surely because one's economic dependence upon - I mean the ramifications are so sort of diverse within any society - surely you can't really talk in terms of a completely ethical life ...

S: I think you probably could. I think you could, as I said, carve out an area within which you could be completely ethical. I think that is a possibility, provided you keep it small-scale. Suppose you've got a gardening business; there is no reason why that should not be completely ethical. You see? So - citizenship is as it were indivisible, the citizenship of ..., and the state has a sort of monopoly of that citizenship in the sense that it is the state that defines what that citizenship consists in, what it involves and so on; but there is no authority determining in the same sort of way the nation's economic activity. There may be very powerful influences at work.

Subhuti: But wouldn't the function of a limb of the Path called Perfect Citizenship be to define what your involvement in the city could be, actually? It wouldn't say that you must be involved in the polis, but that whatever your involvement in the polis is, it must be ethical and on such-and-such lines ...

S: Yes; yes, it could certainly be that.

Subhuti: - in just the same way as with Right Livelihood.

S: Yes. The principle being that, to the extent that you do participate, your participation must be in accordance with the principles of the Dharma. Of course, one could say that as regards citizenship you don't have a choice; you are in a sense forced to participate by the state. For instance, you might say supposing you live under, say, a parliamentary democracy; you have a vote. Even supposing there is no law compelling you to exercise that vote, in effect you do exercise that vote. You exercise your political power by not voting as well as by voting, because your not voting may contribute to the success or failure of a particular candidate; so you cannot escape, so to speak, from that particular system or from exercising power within that system, regardless of your personal wishes. Whereas perhaps you [308] could refuse to participate in economic activity to some extent, that being as it were more divisible.

So though I don't say that Right Livelihood could not be substituted by Right Citizenship or Perfect Citizenship, at the same time the question of citizenship is a more difficult and complex one than that even of livelihood. And, of course, it would differ from country to country, inasmuch as political set-ups differ very widely. Perfect citizenship should represent your participation in the 'political', inverted commas, affairs of your community, your state, in accordance with the principles which you acknowledge as a follower of the Dharma. That might be more difficult in some countries than in others.

Khemananda: In the lecture, Bhante, you give another reason why we've got Right Livelihood: you suggest that the economic aspect of our existence is more important or more basic than the political and social, so that if you tackle the economic that necessarily has repercussions on the political and social levels.

S: Well, in a sense this is the Marxist view. But there is no reason why the political

implications of economic activity should not be made explicit.

Prasannasiddhi: It did strike me, when reading this, that there does seem a certain tendency, when people think of the spiritual life, to think in terms of something that is personal, doing little things for themselves, and they don't really relate the spiritual to the world, they don't really have that concern for the world that they find themselves in.

S: Well, spiritual activities, so to speak, take place in the gaps between worldly activities.

Prasannasiddhi: Well, thinking in terms of you are a part of the world, there shouldn't really be this distinction between them - the world and the spiritual.

S: Well, there is a distinction in terms of values, but there need not be, perhaps, in terms of spheres of operation, because whether you like it or not you are in the world, and you act upon the world and very often the world acts upon you. So inasmuch as the world acts upon you it is in your interest that the way in which the world acts upon you is helpful rather than [309] harmful; so you have an interest in the particular way in which 'worldly', inverted commas, affairs are organized or run. So you have an interest in the creation of an ideal state, an ideal community; otherwise, if you are living in an un-ideal ..., it is ... in an unfortunate way.

But again, you cannot really think in terms just of nation states; you've got to think in terms of the whole world, because - supposing even one particular state is organized as an ideal state, well, suppose it's attacked by the others, who don't like ideal states? Suppose the fact that there is an ideal state has left it in a position of defencelessness, it might soon be overrun. So it would seem that the logic of this kind of thinking would lead one in the direction of the formation of an ideal world state, or non-state; but it would have to be global.

Gunapala: I've thought a lot about this area of New Zealand becoming Buddhist, because as we convert New Zealand to become Buddhist it's going to affect the whole economic state of the country. It relies on the slaughter of animals for its economic base, and so as New Zealand converts, as individuals convert to Buddhism that's going to destroy the whole economic base of New Zealand.

S: I made this point on my very first visit to New Zealand, because I saw in the newspapers so many advertisements for men to work in slaughterhouses. And some people who came along to the Centre had worked in slaughterhouses.

Ratnaketu: It's a huge area, isn't it? Could one talk in terms of perfect citizenship of the positive group? I was thinking about people who are Friends - Mitras in our Centre consider themselves part of a positive group - you could have perfect, you know, right ...

S: What you are suggesting is that 'citizen' is used as a synonym for 'positive group member'. Well, ideally, the polis, the political community, the state, is a positive group; at present it is not, on the whole. But ideally that is what it is.

Subhuti: No further questions.

Ratnaprabha: Maybe you have already answered this to a large extent. It's about perhaps

perfect citizenship if you like, and a new society. You have often talked in terms of the ideal of a new society, of us creating a new society. I was wondering [310] if the Buddha himself ever talked in similar terms, using similar terminology.

S: Yes and no. I have referred to the fact that the Buddha did found the sangha. You could say the sangha was the new society, and that the Buddha saw the society of the future in terms of the sangha, because presumably he wanted the sangha to grow. But the sangha was the Buddha's new society, existing in the midst of the old society, and gradually as it were taking it over or at least influencing it very powerfully, which it did for a while, for some centuries - in India, that is.

Ratnaprabha: But he didn't have a particular blueprint then for society as a whole, not just the sangha but - ?

S: Well, in a sense he could not have, under the conditions that then existed.

Subhuti: It seems strange in a way that since he did question the caste system he never questioned those conditions - the conditions of ... Perhaps he saw no reason to.

S: Well, there was one point that perhaps is relevant here, and that is that the bhikkhus, let us say, who formed the bhikkhu sangha, were dependent for their livelihood on alms; and it is not easy, I think, to continue to depend on the existing society for your support and at the same time to attack that existing society. And this is one reason why I emphasized, at the beginning of the FWBO, that we should be financially self-supporting. That is one of the relevances of the co-ops - that we are not dependent upon the support of rich people, because, as the proverb says, he who pays the piper calls the tune.

Tape 15, Side 2

Silaratna: That brings up the question of - I wondered - taking benefits as it's really going against that principle of the movement being self-sufficient economically and ... with everybody going on to the benefit, we are becoming dependant on the state for livelihood.

S: Ah, but one must consider two things. First of all, why does one not want to be dependent, say, on rich individuals? [311] Well, they may try to exercise influence over the Movement inasmuch as they support it financially. But this is hardly likely in the case of the particular people who pay you out your dole money: that they will try to influence you in what you do or influence the FWBO in what it is doing. Because the money is paid out in small sums to individuals in many different places. So that practical difficulty need not arise. The second point is that one is moving in the direction of self-sufficiency: one is trying to become more and more self-sufficient, but it may be that in the meantime we are not totally self-sufficient in all respects; but we can certainly aim at so being.

Harshaprabha: Are there any areas in which you feel we could be more self-sufficient in?

S: Well, just financially. Being spiritually self-sufficient and ideologically self-sufficient goes without saying.

This brings me to another thing. Quite recently, especially at Order reportings-in, I have

noticed that quite a few people have expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in England generally. I can't help thinking this is very one-sided, because it has been possible to establish the FWBO in England, which it might not have been possible to do in quite a number of other countries that one could mention. So, at the very least, in England you have freedom of action in that respect, and it is possible for a nucleus of the new society to exist in the midst of the old, and in some states that just would not be tolerated. So I think, in so far as there is more to ..., we should not lose sight of the fact that, in many ways, England is a very favourable place for our activities.

Ratnaketu: It's one of the things that I've noticed about England that how much freedom there is ..., compared to other democratic so-called countries.

S: Apparently, judging by reports I have received, it is going to be much more difficult to set up the FWBO in the United States than it has been here. Not to speak of communist states, not to speak of Muslim states, not to speak of states where there are right-wing dictatorships. So I think it is not wise to knock conditions in England too generally. No doubt there are certain disadvantages attached to living in England - I am not just thinking of the climate or the weather - but at least it is possible for us to function there, and it has been possible for [312] us to start the Movement there, and it is possible for the Movement to expand there. We have not yet encountered any real opposition at all.

Amoghavajra : What are the difficulties that you experienced in the US?

S: Well, it's difficult to be very specific; we are concerned mainly with one area at present. But it would seem that what, for want of a better term, one might call right-wing influences are very much stronger in the States than they are in Britain; they are much more aggressive. But religion - Christianity - is a much stronger, better organized Christianity. The churches are have a much stronger hold in the States than in England. Manjuvajra was amazed how many people he met actually believed in Christianity and went to church; about half the American population, practically, goes to church on Sunday. Suburban Christianity is very strong indeed, and everything that goes with that.

It would seem that those countries in which it is easiest to set up the FWBO are those which are parliamentary democracies. We don't have any serious difficulty in India, though we are up against the caste system there, and there are certain individuals of higher castes are in positions of influence and able to frustrate our work; but it is no more than that. We are able to function. We are able to function in New Zealand; there is no difficulty there. We are able to function in Finland. We are able to function in Italy, I think. We are even now able to function in Spain, which we couldn't have done even a few years ago. I remember being unable to get Buddhist magazines into Spain: they were confiscated. A friend of mine had Buddhist books confiscated at the border in the 1950s.

But I do think - this is one of the things I have emphasized from the very beginning of the Friends - that we cannot ignore the social dimension. The spiritual life is to be lived individually, by individuals, but at the same time the individual is constantly affected by the environment and the social set-up, the political set-up even, in the midst of which he lives. So it is in the interests of his own spiritual development that he concerns himself with the particular kind of social and political set-up in the midst of which he is living. He cannot but do that. Obviously he should proceed with caution, not pit himself against the parliament ...

and any institutions there are, before he is really strong enough to do so.

[313]

Gunapala: What would the answer be when you know that you are converting say New Zealanders to Buddhism it's going to destroy the whole economic country?

S: Well, that will be the responsibility of those New Zealand Buddhists to sort out. I am sure they will find a way.

Gunapala: Surely the government's going to ... It's just the conflict that it's going to cause with the government...

S: When you say government, which government? If you convert enough people to Buddhism in New Zealand, presumably there will be a different government. And you might be Prime Minister.

: ...

S: Or at least Minister for Economic Affairs.

Vessantara: Ken had a question on a slightly different topic.

Khemavira: Yes, Bhante. this point arose from part of the text dealing with wrong livelihood and you say the Buddha expressed in different places a rather strong disapproval of various forms of livelihood, including astrology and divination. You then go on to say that in Buddhist countries many monks still practise astrology and divination. We wondered why this was, because presumably the monastic robe would physically discourage them from practising those two things. We wondered how they managed to find their way around.

S: Yes, the Buddha had prohibited, or the Vinaya prohibits, bhikkhus from practising astrology and divination and so on as a means of livelihood. I think perhaps it's on the words 'as a means of livelihood' that the emphasis has to be placed. But certainly there are many bhikkhus in Buddhist countries who do these things.

Khemavira: You do say that they do make money in this way?

S: I am afraid they do.

Khemavira But not as livelihood ... ?

[314]

S: I imagine that there are quite a few who almost support themselves in this way, but that would be against their own Vinaya ... Also one must remember that in India astrology represents a sort of worldly concern. People are concerned with finding out whether they are going to be rich and all that sort of thing. Bhikkhus aren't supposed really to concern themselves with that.

In the same way, strictly speaking, bhikkhus are not supposed to practise medicine as a means of livelihood, but they may have medical knowledge, give medical advice as it were freely -

but, of course, the proviso being they are already supported by the public... why do they need to engage in these occupations and raise extra money, so to speak? They are being already supported, their necessities are being provided.

Suvajra: A question following that which doesn't have too much relevance to Right Livelihood. I have observed that within occult circles and mystic circles, astrological circles, there was a large preponderance of women ..., and we discussed why should women find these subjects to go into? Have you noticed the same thing, and if you have, have you any ideas why?

S: I think one could perhaps generalize a little more widely from that, and say that religions, in the more group sense, tend to be supported by women rather than men. For instance, think of the Catholic church; you probably see more women in church than men, more women going to Mass than men. There are certainly more nuns than there are priests, more nuns than there are monks, aren't there?

: Is this true of Buddhism?

S: No, in Buddhism it was exactly the opposite. I think one can't really answer or deal with the question unless it is formulated much more precisely. For instance, some people - in the case of the FWBO, in the case of the Order at least, there are more men than women, and they even suggest in some cases that this is as a result of active discrimination against women.

But, all right, in the Catholic church you find that the support is mainly women. Does that mean that the Catholic church discriminates in favour of women? Clearly it doesn't. Priests are all men, anyway. So I think one must be very careful when one is dealing with quite large groups of people, in relation to quite large questions. What is one actually asking?

[315]

Suvajra: Why more women than men, in those sort of group activities?

S: Well, first one has to establish the fact that there are more women than men involved in those activities. Also perhaps one has to have a look at social conditions; maybe women have got more time. I was told when I was in Helsinki that cultural activities were supported mainly by women; but I was also told that women, especially those who were housewives, had more time to go along to such things, which were very often held in the afternoon. So I don't know whether the question is precise enough to admit of a very precise reply.

Suvajra: I can't make it more precise just now.

S: I am not even sure whether more women than men are involved in, say, astrology. I don't know. Occult groups. Which sort of groups are you meaning by occult groups?

Suvajra: I mean astrological societies - the one I had actual contact with - and paranormal societies. It just seemed a larger number of young women ...

S: What about flying saucer societies: I got the impression that there were more young men there, not women. I think one would have to go through all these different societies to provide one with a list, some details about their membership, how many men, how many women, and

so on, before one could think about ... women.

Ratnaprabha: What about the imbalance in the Order between women and men? Do you feel that that is a matter for concern, or is it just a natural process that will tend to be reversed?

S: Well, one might say why should it be a matter for concern? It is a matter for concern only on certain assumptions. If you assume that it would be the right and proper, natural and expected thing for there to be as many women as men in the Order, it would be a matter for concern that there aren't; but that assumes that, for instance, women are as ready to commit themselves to the spiritual life as men are - at least to the spiritual life as presented in Buddhism. That would be your assumption; that assumption could, I suppose, be questioned.

Ratnaprabha: Do you think the difference could be accounted for just on the basis of men being readier than women to take up [316] the spiritual life, or are there any other matters involved?

S: Well, this whole question of readiness is quite a complex one. What does one mean by readiness? In the case of women, this whole question of motherhood, which is a quite serious one for them - many of them think of motherhood and the spiritual life as being incompatible, so they have to give much more serious consideration to this question than men have to give to the question of fatherhood and the spiritual life: fatherhood apparently being less of an urge for men than motherhood is for women. But I would not like to generalize too much even at this stage, because the FWBO and the Order have been going only for some 15 or 16 years; we are confined largely to south-east England. I don't think we can yet generalize just from that quite limited extension of the Movement.

Ratnaprabha: If when some of us become ordained and are working in public Centres - presumably there might be a certain personal conflict as regards dealing with women who come along to a Centre where there are very few or no women Order members there, and there may be women coming along to the Centre who require a certain amount of attention. Personally, I would be inclined, I think, to ignore men in preference to women, perhaps more for personal reasons than for ...

S: Ignore them in preference to? (Laughter) ? Never mind...

Ratnaprabha: In other words, the danger of distraction, getting involved, if one spends too much time with the women.

S: Well, this question arises in a more general way with regard to every person who comes along. A lot of people come along to Centres, people of different kinds. Ideally, you would like to be able to help and to deal with everybody, but some people may come along that you, for one reason or another, may not feel equipped or qualified to handle. Supposing someone is severely disturbed mentally, whether a man or woman, you may not feel equipped to handle that, and you may in a sense avoid contact with that person, feeling your own inadequacy. And then again, as a male Order member you may feel not really equipped, not really in a position, to help women who come along. You feel that they need the help of other women, spiritually more mature women, so you might direct them to any women Order members that you knew of.

[317]

In the same way, someone who is much older than you might come along, and you might feel that they just need contact with an older Order member; you are too young to be able to relate to them, at least perhaps in their eyes. So this is part of a larger question, a larger issue. Ideally, yes, you would like to be able to deal with everybody and help everybody, but you may have your human limitations which you would no doubt be well advised to respect, otherwise you could do more harm than good.

Any more questions?

Cittapala: I had one question, not actually to do with Right Livelihood necessarily. I was just wondering whether there is any point in trying to correlate the seven limbs of Enlightenment with the Transcendental Path of the Noble Eightfold Path.

S: The seven bodhyangas? Well, one could try; one could try. I have no objection to people who are interested in working out these sort of sets of correlations; they are quite interesting. There may be a correlation, there may be a connection; there may not be. One will just have to see. But definitely the bodhyangas do seem to represent a series, in a way that the Eightfold Path apparently does not.

Cittapala: The bodhyangas - do they actually come into operation, to so speak, after the Point of No Return has been - ?

S: No; they would all seem - with the exception of the last one - to be on this side of that point. They would seem to correspond with the early part of the series of positive nidanas. They are usually regarded as ..., but one could also regard them as simultaneous, in much the same way as the angas of the Eightfold Path are regarded. They are not quite steps of a path.

Shantiprabha: Do you have any idea when that particular teaching first made its appearance?

S: Which one?

Shantiprabha: The seven bodhyangas.

S: It would seem to be a quite early and ancient teaching. I think one is quite safe in assuming it does go back to the Buddha himself; it is a quite early formulation.

[318]

Shantiprabha: I was just making the connection with a session we had several days ago, when you were talking basically in terms, I think, of the Buddha's original teaching of just going upstream; when you said that most of the path of the bodhyangas seemed to be this side of Stream Entry, I was wondering whether it was more of the type in that sense.

S: Well, one might say that in a sense it is almost undifferentiated, because they are angas of bodhi, bodhi meaning Enlightenment. It is as though, when you have attained Enlightenment, you will be equipped with all these different limbs; you will manifest all these different qualities. So these qualities are to be cultivated, and they are enumerated in a certain order, so perhaps they are to be cultivated in that order; to that extent, or in that sense, they constitute a path.

The teaching of the seven bodhyangas in effect says that one who is Enlightened will be possessed of mindfulness; one who is Enlightened will be possessed of investigation of dharmas; one who is Enlightened will be possessed of rapture and joy and so on; ending with equanimity.

Or one could also look at it in a slightly different way - that bodhi, Enlightenment, represents the fullness of all these seven qualities; bodhi is as it were made up of them, they are not just limbs but sort of aspects of [Enlightenment].

Ratnaketu: Bhante, as we have got a few more minutes left, I've got one small question which relates to the Shrine Entry, regarding the saying Namō buddhaya, namō dharmaya, namō saṅghaya, namō nama. And I don't feel that, if asked about that, I could give a satisfactory explanation of what is going on, especially with namō nama. I just don't know ...

S: What do you mean by a satisfactory explanation? The word means 'salutation': namō is Pali, nama is Sanskrit, in fact.

Ratnaketu: So I presume ... salutation to the Buddha, salutation to the Dharma, salutation to the Saṅgha, and what's the third one saying?

S: Namō nama.

Ratnaketu: Yes, but what does that mean?

[319]

S: Again salutation and again salutation. Salutation in Pali, salutation in Sanskrit.

Ratnaketu: Why is it like that?

S: Well, as it were it represents the exuberance of your devotion. You are not satisfied with saluting each one individually, but it's, you could say, a sort of collective salutation.

Ratnaketu: And that's a traditional - ?

S: I think I learned this in Nepal.

Gunapala: So the last one is with body, speech and mind, OM AH HUM?

S: Oh, the OM AH HUM, yes, is with body, speech and mind.

Ratnaketu: It's very often with regards the HUM, I've noticed that syllable is pronounced quite firmly, more firmly than the others. Is there any particular reason for that?

S: Well, Lama Govinda has given the explanation in his Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism. He points out that the HUM is sort of associated with energy, with power in the positive sense, if you like, and represents the transforming effect of that energy, of that power. So in that sense it has a more powerful sound - HUM-m-m. Wrathful deities are sometimes represented as chanting HUM, HUM... has got Padme HUM ... the lotus-like nature of the sound HUM.

Anyway, no further points? All right then, enough of Perfect Livelihood or perfect citizenship, or whatever, for this morning.

Day 15 Tape 16, Side 1

Jinavamsa: You were talking about the acting ...

S: The acting profession: dramaturgy.

Jinavamsa: The fact that it generally wasn't Right Livelihood. And you mentioned that it would not necessarily apply to the Greek tragedies, because they were ethically based, cathartic. And we'll presume that it wouldn't apply perhaps to things like [320] Shakespeare and certain plays and certain theatre that might be considered Right Livelihood. So, in ...

S: On what grounds have you considered this?

Jinavamsa: Well, in that it wouldn't have a bad effect on the audience, because it was ethical and cathartic.

S: You are saying that what I said about the Greek tragedies, or what I said might possibly apply to the Greek tragedies, might apply to Shakespeare also?

Jinavamsa: Yes. That's not the question! What I wondered was, even though it might not have a bad effect on the audience, what about the actors, even in such plays? Say like in *The Tempest*, someone has to play Caliban. So what would be the effect on him?

S: Well, we are in the position of being able to call upon expert opinion on the subject. I have never played Caliban, but I do remember playing Shylock in a school production of *The Merchant of Venice* (Laughter). Perhaps we could call for that expert opinion - even though the expert opinion is not acquainted with the role of Caliban. The expert opinion was probably confined to the role of young heroes and young...

Devamitra: I think obviously the part that you are playing has quite a strong effect on you, because you really do immerse yourself in that role. And if the character that you are playing is a negative one then that negatively affects you as you play it. I know that - to give you a really extreme example - the last part that I played in the professional theatre was probably the most negative that I ever did. It wasn't Shakespeare, admittedly, but it did certainly indicate the sort of approach that a lot of actors have with their work. It was certainly my approach. I was playing George Jackson, the black American revolutionary, and in this particular play he was just depicted as a thoroughly hateful character, and I had to play this hate. At the same time, I was doing metta bhavana, and I just got into - well, quite an odd state of mind. I think probably - well, I suppose it could be a sort of schizophrenic state. But it certainly felt quite a strong split between one thing I was trying to do, i.e. develop metta, and on the other hand playing this hateful character.

With regard to Shakespeare, you do have some really negative characters. Look at Iago, for instance; a really archetypal villain, very scheming. If you approach acting from the point of view from which it generally is approached in modern theatre, that is you [321] actually try to become the character, obviously it must affect your mental state; to some extent you do

become that.

But there are different approaches to acting. Broadly speaking, there is the Brechtian approach and there is the Stanislavsky approach. To summarize it crudely, the Stanislavsky approach involves 'becoming' the part, but Brecht insisted that this was not a good approach; that the approach was to - an actor essentially was a story-teller, and really the actor should alienate himself from the character, he should not actually become the character, but should simply as it were tell the story in some way. I have never actually worked in that way, but it sounds at least a more healthy basis from the point of view of the actual actor.

Jinavamsa: Would that then - if you didn't put yourself into the part would it have the same effect on the audience? Would it bring the same cathartic effect for the audience - the actors ... ?

Devamitra: Well, I have only - I've been to see Brechtian productions, and I've always personally found them a bit flat.

S: But, going back to the ancient Greeks, the ancient Greeks did not, so far as I know, the ancient Greek actors or the actors in ancient Greece, did not put themselves into their parts in the Stanislavskyan way, because they declaimed their lines from behind a mask. The mask as it were did that part of their work for them. So that would suggest that the cathartic process can be effected without the actor necessarily identifying himself with his part.

But anyway, I think Campbell's [Jinavamsa's] question is sufficiently answered: that, in considering the ethical nature or otherwise of the acting profession, one has to take into account not simply the effect on the audience but the effect on the actor himself, the effect on the producer, the effect on the director, the effect upon everyone. I must say I have rather wondered about this, after hearing from Devamitra some accounts of how he was directed on certain occasions, and seems to have been rather put through it. And I could not help wondering - this was, of course, in his pre-Buddhistic days - just how healthy, how positive an effect that sort of process could have on the individual. It might help to make him a good actor, but what did it do to him, possibly, as a human being? One could not help wondering that. Because I must admit I had no conception that directors could be so drastic with their actors. So no doubt this whole aspect of things does have to be taken into consideration. As I said, not just the effect of the play when produced upon the audience, but the effect of the actors themselves who are acting in it and who have been [322] prepared for their parts in the way that some of them seem to be prepared in modern times.

Would anybody else like to offer an expert opinion? I must confess myself happily out of my depth here and quite content to chair the expert opinions.

Another point does occur to me. Without being in anything an expert, just as a result of my general reading, I seem to have gathered that there are, very broadly speaking, two possible attitudes towards the drama - perhaps more so in terms of production. One is the naturalistic, as one might call it, and the other is the ritualistic. The naturalistic assumes that in one way or another you want to present things on the stage as though they were actually happening; and, of course, as part of that approach, one believes perhaps that the actors on the stage should actually be going through what they seem to be going through; they shouldn't just act it, they should be it. And it also implies, on another level, naturalistic scenery, behaviour, etc. etc.

The more ritualistic type of production is more like that of the ancient Greeks, where one is conscious of the origins of drama in primitive ritual; and where one is not concerned so much with one's personal experience of what one is presenting. It is not one's personal experience: you are presenting something which is not your personal experience, you are just a support for something, the symbol even of something which transcends you. I don't know whether that's very clear? Hence, in Greek drama, the masks, the buskins, and so on.

Jinavamsa: So if people in the Friends wanted to get involved in theatre, say, as a livelihood, they'd have to really take a ritualistic approach?

S: No, I am not going so far as to say that; not at this stage. But I am saying that if people in the Friends did get involved in the production of dramas, they should consider the effect, first of all, of any given production on the audience, and also the effect of producing it, the effect of presenting it, the effect of acting in it, on themselves. All these factors would need to be taken into consideration. And taking them into consideration, they might find - I don't really know enough about these things to be able to say definitely - but they might find that this or that approach is more appropriate, bearing in mind those particular considerations. One would need to question, perhaps, a lot of professional actors and find out what effect was produced on them by different approaches to the drama. Perhaps a little research as to the effect on the audience of certain dramas, certain films.

[323]

It is quite noticeable that certain films, as well as dramas, leave the audience in a definite sort of mood. I remember that when I went to see *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, I think it was the first version, it was very noticeable that the audience at the end of the film were in a very good-humoured, positive, happy frame of mind; it was quite noticeable, in comparison with the state of mind in which audiences very often do come out after seeing films.

Vessantara: I thought that was largely an effect of the tremendous light in those later stages of the film, the light and colour.

S: Could be. One does know other films where people come out depressed, drained, haggard.

Silaratna: I was just going to ask whether you know anything of the Noh theatre in Japan - it has vague connections with Zen ...

S: Yes, it certainly does have. Yes, I do know something about it, I have read some Noh plays, I have read books about the Noh theatre. That would seem to be something very different from the theatre in the West, whether ancient Greek or Elizabethan or modern. But certainly it is a sort of product or creation of Zen. Zen seems to be there somewhere in it. And it is, I believe, a highly stylized, not to say ritualized, type of theatre. Perhaps it is worth investigating. Yeats, of course, was very influenced by the Noh theatre when he wrote some of his later, very short, verse plays.

Suvajra: Can you say a bit more about the ritualistic origins of drama?

S: I think not really, it is a quite technical subject; except to say that it is generally agreed that the origins of the Greek drama, especially Greek tragedy, are to be found in a festival or festivals in honour of the god Dionysius. And, in fact, in ancient Greece in classical times, in

the centre of the semicircular stage, if one can call it that, there was an altar to Dionysius, and sacrifices, I believe, were offered either at the beginning or at the end of dramatic performances or both. And sometimes the altar itself played a part in the action of the particular play... on the subject which one could consult if one was interested.

Jinavamsa: Presumably you could mix the two approaches? Some ...s could be taken naturalistically and ... [aircraft [324] noise]

S: ...

Devamitra: It might not work theatrically, the juxtaposition of two different styles like that. It would ...

S: What about when you had, say, a wooden or even a cardboard dragon, with actual live actors or singers?

Devamitra: ... I've never been in that sort of production!

S: Have you ever been in a production where they had a real live dragon, then?

Devamitra: I've never been in a production where they had a dragon.

S: So I think, from what I remember of seeing productions of Wagner (but this is opera, not drama), sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

Cittapala: There is a great tradition of British pantomime, which does seem to incorporate a certain amount of both. I certainly don't think that the actors are pretending to be the dame or the horse or even the dragon.

S: But anyway, part of the convention [is] that you know that they are not what they seem to be. You know that the dame is a man, and you know that the principal boy is a girl. Anyway, let's not get too technical.

I think the main point is clear: that if, as a practising Buddhist, one is involved in the theatre, one has to consider the effect of what one is doing on the mind - one's own mind as an actor, producer, director, the minds of other people, and upon the audience.

Harshaprabha: ... it's not something one would take on lightly.

S: One shouldn't take anything on lightly. One shouldn't go to the cinema lightly; one shouldn't cook food lightly; one shouldn't go into the shrine room lightly. One shouldn't even go for a walk lightly. One shouldn't enter into a conversation lightly. I don't mean, of course, that one should be heavy. I mean simply that one should be serious - cheerfully serious.

Subhuti: We've got some questions. First of all, you mentioned an Australian bhikkhu having some facts on [325] slaughterhousemen. How reliable are they? Should one quote them? ...

S: Well, I did have once upon a time a copy of the book or booklet that he wrote. This was in the 1950s. I can't even remember the name of the bhikkhu - he is dead, many years ago. The

book was called Blueprint for Happiness. It was reprinted a few years ago; it might be possible to get hold of copies. But rather than rely upon that, I am sure one can find statistics from other sources. I am sure if you were to get on to the Vegetarian Society they would be able to supply you with statistics.

But yes, this does illustrate a general point: always check one's sources. Because one might be challenged. I certainly accepted what he said as reliable; the whole booklet gave the impression of authenticity and sincerity, so I did accept what he said. But, as I said, that was a quarter of a century ago, so things could have changed. They have probably got much worse. So check, by all means, with the Vegetarian Society and any other body that might have information.

Again, as a general rule, always check one's sources. If you possibly can avoid it, never quote facts or figures at second-hand or third-hand; always go to the original sources and determine them. Otherwise you make this sort of statement in a lecture, and then someone says: 'Where did you get that information from?' And you say, 'Well, Bhante mentioned it in a lecture.' 'Well, where did Bhante get it from?' 'Some Australian bhikkhu told him so.' That isn't good enough for the public, and quite rightly. You should be able to cite yearbooks and official reports and things of that sort; articles in learned journals, with ...

Subhuti: Now two interrelated, rather general questions. To what extent is high-level industrialization compatible with Right Livelihood?

S: Compatible with Right Livelihood? Is it possible to generalize? What does one mean by industrialization? Is one thinking of the fact that one makes use of motor cars, or pocket calculators?

Again, I think we have to be very careful about our facts. For instance, we are accustomed to speaking in, say, tones of horror about life in a factory, but how many of us have actually worked in a factory? Do we really know what it is like to work in a factory? How many people have worked in a factory, hands up?

[326]

What sort of factory, producing what, where, under what conditions? Because some people say it is only like that in Britain, that ... in the Victorian days. Some of our continental Friends say that working in a factory in their country is not like that, our Finnish friends say this. So we have to be a little careful here. I am told that some factories are spacious, pleasant, airy, colourful, friendly places where people love to work; this is what one does hear from some sources. So one needs to be sure of one's facts. And what about the East, what about India? A job in a factory is the difference between heaven and hell; heaven being having the job in the factory, and a source of income for yourself and your family. What is the alternative? Starvation, perhaps, in the big city, living in the street, living in the gutter; that's the alternative for many people.

So we have to be very careful about these generalizations. It's all right for cultured, comfortably-off people in the south-east of England to hold up their hands in horror at the idea of working in a factory, but it is not like that for a lot of people in the world.

So one thing needs to be weighed against another, again. It is very difficult to generalize - at

least, one shouldn't generalize except after a lot of careful thought.

Again, with regard to this whole question of industrialization, there are undoubted - what shall I say? - undoubted harms as a result of industrialization, but there are also undoubted benefits for many people. So again one has to weigh the one against the other. One has to ask oneself: are some of the harms inevitable, or can we have a clean industrialization ... ? Does industrialization necessarily involve pollution of the environment? Does it necessarily involve alienation for the worker in the factory? Could we not devise a better way of working in the factory? One has to ask these sort of questions.

Then, of course, there is this whole question of production of consumer goods. Some of these, no doubt, are luxury items; some of them, perhaps many, that we could well do without. So could we not perhaps advocate a sort of modified industrialization?

Would this not be possible, preserving the beneficial features of industrialization, eliminating the harmful ones, and reducing the number of luxury consumer items which are produced? Is this not possible? Would it be an economic possibility? I can't even tell you that. Perhaps even the economists can't tell you that.

So this would suggest that the whole thing needs to be gone [327] into much more thoroughly and systematically, on the basis of or as the result of real knowledge, not just a few miscellaneous impressions and a few odd facts and figures. Perhaps some people need to make a special study in this area.

Is it possible to eliminate, or is it possible to limit, industrialization so that it works for the benefit of humanity and not the opposite? That is the real question. Or is it intrinsically so harmful that it represents really a retrograde step in the development of humanity, a step which we have to retrace? This is what we have to ask ourselves, knowing what the implications of the answers are. Do we really know, do we really realize, can we really imagine, what it was like for the ordinary person to live before industrialization, before the industrialization of the economy? Have we got that clearly in view, to begin with? Or do we think things would be pretty much as they are now except that we would not have those nasty factories?

We'd have our cars, of course, and we'd have our telephones, but we wouldn't have any factories. Is this how we really think? Do the majority of people want to go back to the land and work on the land, from early morning until late at night - do they? We have to ask ourselves questions like that. Do we? Would we like to go back to the land?

Gunapala: Most people don't generalize. Most young people in New Zealand move to the city, and because the city is ...

S: They want to get away from that lovely countryside.

Gunapala: Yes; and because ..., they move overseas to places like England - London and other big cities.

S: I remember an Order member in New Zealand taking me to see his natal village. Oh, it was a beautiful place; just a little quiet, peaceful village, amid wonderful scenery. And he told me

he couldn't get away from it quick enough as a young man. Yes, he went to Auckland when he was 16. And then he came to London; that was long before he came into contact with the FWBO. And he lived for several years, quite happily, it seems, in the Notting Hill Gate area.

: Quite incongruous, isn't it?

Prasannasiddhi: Perhaps those are two extremes. On the one hand, the situation ... is too quiet and too peaceful, and on the other hand places like London where it's too noisy, too overcrowded, too -

[328]

S: Well, he is at present in Christchurch. Perhaps that represents a middle way. Perhaps a place like Norwich is a middle way. Some people say that Norwich is very dull and ...

I have been talking about this issue of industrialization with Friends in Finland when I was over there some years ago, especially with Order members and most often with Vajrabodhi. He is convinced the Finns have managed things much better, and that in Finland, he says, factories are not allowed to pollute the environment. There are stringent laws to prevent this. And he didn't take me to see a factory, but looking at them from the outside, screened by trees and quite pleasant architecture, they seem on the face of it quite attractive places. What it was like to work inside, I don't know, but he assured me that conditions were not like they were in Victorian Olde England. So perhaps that needs looking into.

But again, the same principle as in the case of the drama: if, at the end of one's investigations, one feels that on the whole industrialization has been a retrograde step in human terms, then, whatever the consequences, one has to preach against it. But one has to preach against it, if one does, on the basis of knowledge, on the basis of understanding; not out of some vague medieval romanticism. The Ages of Faith, we must remember, before the Industrial Revolution, were also ages of dirt and disease.

But, yes, I think we do need to take a very hard look at the alleged benefits of technology. Sometimes I think of these things in terms of medicine, because medicine is a branch of technology now. Have we really been benefited by the introduction of all these new drugs? Have they really improved our health? We have to ask ourselves this. Perhaps our health has been improved, over the generations, more through the supply of clean drinking water and more fresh air and more space and more exercise. Perhaps these things have improved our health more, rather than all the drugs which nowadays are prescribed - some of which we know have very powerful side effects. So perhaps we need to look at the technology of medicine, look at several other areas in the same way. What about the technology of farming, what about all the additives that are put in our food? What about all the insecticides that are sprayed on crops, and which get into our food, into our stomachs, into our systems? What about that?

So we have to perhaps look into all these things quite thoroughly and try to decide, if the question is not too complex to [329] admit of a final decision, whether technology has been, or whether the Industrial Revolution has been, on the whole a benefit to humanity or not; whether it perhaps is in need of serious modification in the interests of humanity or whether it is not in need of total abolition.

Mahatma Gandhi was one of those who wanted virtually to abolish technology. He didn't want any heavy industries in India. Of course, as soon as he was dead they introduced them; or even before he was dead. He just wanted cottage industries. His was a completely different vision of India. Post-Independence India has developed on totally different lines from what Mahatma Gandhi envisaged. Pandit Nehru himself didn't agree with Mahatma Gandhi's ideas.

Ratnaprabha: Do you think it's worth spending time on studying these sort of issues and coming to reasonable conclusions? ... a few interested people.

S: I think it would be good if a few interested people went into these things and investigated them, because one person obviously can't investigate everything, especially when the investigation needs to be thorough, and the field is large, the context. But those who are interested should certainly investigate these areas, and maybe read from time to time papers or give lectures, for the benefit of the Order, or the Movement at large or the public, and making known their conclusions, and giving some idea of the evidence on which they base those conclusions. That would be very useful; then certain real information could be fed into the Movement as a whole and perhaps into the minds of the public. I think this would be a very useful exercise, and one should certainly contact other bodies, other groups, that are especially concerned with things of this sort. There is no point in you doing work which has already been done by somebody else. You can just ascertain their findings.

Devamitra: It seems quite difficult - certainly in my limited experience in this respect - to know exactly what information to trust though. Because, on the one hand, for instance, I have spoken to someone who is a nuclear physicist, who is absolutely convinced of the benefits of nuclear power and that it is quite safe to use, etc. etc. But if you talk to people from Friends of the Earth you get a completely different view, and emotions come into play on both sides, and it is really difficult to see.

S: Well, one thing, again, needs to be weighed against another. That is why emotions need to be weighed against one another.

[330]

One has to try to put over an overall view and come to a balanced conclusion. One has sometimes to weigh a certain benefit against a possible disaster; or perhaps a certain disaster against a possible benefit.

: I think that's it.

S: From your group, or from all?

: I think it's from all of us.

Bodhiruchi: A final question ...

S: A related question?

Bodhiruchi: Oh yes. The lecture that you gave on Perfect Livelihood was some 13 or 14 years ago, and the advice that you gave towards the end of the lecture was very much geared towards people who were working in existing jobs. Could you think of any upgrade or update

of what you said there, in the light of your experience of the Right Livelihoods in the Friends in the last seven(?) years?

S: No update in principle at all; in fact, whatever I said on that particular aspect in this lecture is still applicable to people interested in Buddhism, or even considering themselves Buddhists who are outside the FWBO. But within the FWBO, of course, now we have the co-ops, which do represent one particular application of the principle of Right, if not Perfect, Livelihood. So I think if I was giving a talk on Right Livelihood or Perfect Livelihood now, if I was giving it to an audience of ordinary members of the public, I would go a little further and draw attention to the fact - after exhorting them in the way that I have exhorted people here - that within the FWBO we have started up co-ops of various kinds, co-operative businesses of various kinds, which do represent a much more ideal situation than anything one can find outside in the world. I would certainly take note in the lecture of that more recent development and let people know about it.

But none the less, for those who didn't want to get involved full-time in the FWBO, what I said about changing your job if necessary or working fewer hours would still be quite applicable. Even if one doesn't envisage any particular kind of spiritual ideal, it is still applicable inasmuch as it would be better if one spent [331] more time, say, on cultural activities. So I don't think any substantial updating is really needed; just perhaps to indicate how much further within the FWBO we have gone since this particular lecture was originally given.

I think for the ordinary person, the ordinary member of the public, the man in the street, the question is: what are you going to do with your leisure? People have got leisure now, more leisure perhaps than they have had before, literally; or more people have got more leisure than they have ever had before. So the more general question is: what use are you going to make of your leisure? With what activities are you going to fill your leisure? So many people, certainly in Britain, certainly in the UK, waste the greater part of their leisure, so far as one can make out. It is pitiable to see intelligent human beings streaming into bingo halls in the evenings. That really is pitiful. Is that what one's human life is all about?

Sometimes I think - if we try to reach out to a wider audience, a larger public - we should deal perhaps with questions of this sort. Forget about Buddhism, forget about the Four Noble Truths and even the Eightfold Path, and say, look, here you are with more money than your ancestors ever had; with more leisure than they ever had. What use are you making of it? Do you really think that you are making use of your leisure in a way that is worthy of a human being?

If not, why not? What use are you making of it, what use should you make of it? Raise all these sort of very general, very fundamental, questions; and then perhaps bring in things like meditation and Buddhism. Do you see what I am getting at?

Aryamitra: Yes. Do you think it's worth even putting some publicity in, say, unemployment offices?

S: That can certainly be considered. 'Why continue kicking your heels around the unemployment office? Do something useful, do something positive. Do something about it as a human being, regardless of whether you get a job or not.' I think we really need to connect

with these sort of situations, with these sort of issues.

Prasannasiddhi: Regarding industrialization again, you more or less stated that what it needs is looking into. Do you feel personally that you, as your own personal opinion, would you say that you don't really know either way whether it is good or not [until] it has been looked into, or do you actually have any personal feelings?

[332]

S: I think it needs looking into. I don't think I am in a position myself to adjudicate on the rightness or wrongness of the Industrial Revolution. My view to some extent has been influenced by my experience in India, where there is a very different situation; where I can see that a measure of industrialization has resulted in benefits. What about irrigation? Does one regard irrigation as an aspect of industrialization?

One of the things I saw when I was in ..., which is the central part of Maharashtra, since I was in that area or in Maharashtra at all, say 20 years ago, there has been a lot of irrigation projects got under way. Many large dams have been built, and that has resulted in an increase of food production in that whole area, an increase of standards of living for a lot of people. Does one include that under industrialization?

Tape 16, Side 2

S: ... to be a benefit? I think the major issue is that people would agree that industrialization has brought about certain benefits; they will also agree that industrialization results in certain evils. So I think they would have to make up their minds how great were the benefits, or how little; how great were the evils, or how little; whether certain evils could be eliminated; whether certain new benefits could be introduced; and whether, on balance, if you could not completely eliminate the evils, industrialization was a good thing for human beings or not. That would seem to be the real issue.

Of course, as regards practical politics, there is the general question: what do the majority of people think? Probably the majority of people are quite happy with the results of industrialization, quite happy with all these consumer goods and so on, and facilities of transport. And even if you came to the conclusion that industrialization had not been a good thing, I think it would be a very difficult matter to convince people otherwise, and to convince them that industrialization was not a good thing. It would involve, I think, instilling into them a very firm, a very deep spiritual understanding.

Ratnaketu: It seems to me that it's not that industrialization is wrong; it's more that industrialization is like anything - it's like agriculture; it's like culture; it's the mental states of people who use this [333] knowledge, these skills. And it seems that when you've got high technology and you've still got the average human or sub(?)human consciousness behind it, which is motivated by greed and hatred and delusion and other neurotic drives, the results encourage greed, hatred, delusion and other neurotic drives. It would be far easier to try and change people's mental states than it would be to try and persuade them to get rid of industrialization. It would be easier to ...

S: There is some truth in that, but one mustn't fail to recognize that, irrespective of people's mental states, industrialization has to some extent brought about positive objective benefits,

like, say, increased food supply.

Ratnaketu: I wasn't arguing that, or that it would be better if industrialization would go away, but that - even if just a basic ethical consciousness was induced into general ... people you would then have the good aspects without the bad.

S: You would, it is true, but what one is also trying to ascertain is what are the effects of industrialization on the mind? One doesn't know that completely yet: some are good and some are bad. Because it isn't a question simply of ignoring the social structure or just concentrating on the mind of the individual, but the mind of the individual is influenced by the social and political structure, so one needs to investigate and see what effects that social and political structure - in this case industrialization - is having upon people. One needs to approach from both sides, as it were.

One can certainly make a start, an unambiguous start, and take a stand against the production of luxury items: things which we clearly don't need.

Ratnaketu: How do you do that? How do you take a stand?

S: Well, first of all, not use them oneself; discourage people who are in contact with the Movement from using them. A very ordinary, very simple example: I always discourage the lady members from using cosmetics. I consider cosmetics a luxury item, and some of them are very expensive luxury items. Men don't usually use cosmetics.

Cittapala: It seems to be a predominant attitude in the outside world to tackle world problems and issues such as industrialization from the viewpoint of making the system [334] better, introducing a better system, organizing a better system, and the viewpoint from which the FWBO has been coming from, I take it, has been more one of altering the individual's mental state. And this and the environment are bound together, the two weren't divisible, in a sense, you have to attack it from both ends.

S: It's not just a question of altering the individual's mental state. It's a question of the growth and development of the individual, and one must see that the growth and the development of the individual depend not just on that individual's own individual effort, but the circumstances and conditions under which that individual lives, so you have to give some direct attention to them as well, especially when you are dealing with large masses of people. Positive institutions are very helpful to the majority of people.

Cittapala: Up until now, at least my understanding of the new society has been almost one within the old society, in the sense of almost self-contained and being able to create ideal conditions. But this discussion seems to be heading in the direction of how you reorientate the old society to affect the people in it, so that they then begin to develop positive mental states.

S: The two are not contradictory. Because supposing you are going out into the wider world, you are trying to convince people; you are trying to convince them that individual development is the most important thing for a human being. Well, there are two questions that arise here. First of all, it would be helpful if you could point out to them on a small scale some model of the new society which you were trying to bring about on a larger scale; it would be helpful if you could point to the tiny FWBO movement. Also, if you are going to

function out there among them, you need is a strong, positive base to operate from and even perhaps to fall back on to.

So, yes, on the one hand we have a sort of nucleus of the new society in the midst of the old, but we also want that nucleus to expand and expand until it coincides with society as a whole. And in the meantime we are using it as a sort of base from which we sally forth into the old society to win converts and spread our ideas, and plant little outposts of a nucleus of a new society. So I don't see the two things as exclusive.

Anything more? Or does that dispose of industrialization ... ? ... having set certain people seriously thinking about [335] a systematic investigation of the subject.

Ratnaprabha: There was a small question on the understanding of the text of the lecture. It was to do with - one has to go through the negative to the positive. You talk in general about the Buddha's discouragement of wrong livelihood.

I didn't quite understand that phrase, 'one has to go through the negative to the positive'.

S: 'The Buddha very definitely discouraged it and said it was a wrong way of livelihood. You will also be interested to hear, I think, that the Buddha - I hope I am not giving the impression that the Buddha was a rather negative sort of person, but one has to go through the negative to the positive - the Buddha also disapproved of actors.' [NB: quote from the original unedited transcript.] I think I meant this to be taken methodologically, that is to say someone comes to the Buddha and asks him his opinion about actors, so the Buddha gives it, and it's a negative opinion. You could have a positive opinion about actors; the Buddha could have said that acting is good because actors might develop positive mental states and communicate those positive mental states to other people in the audience, but that was not the situation by which the Buddha was confronted. He was confronted by a negative situation, so he had to go through the negative in order to get at the positive; or we have to go through the negative to get to the positive.

Just as Buddhism starts off methodologically speaking, with dukkha; you go through the negative, so to speak, to get at the positive, which is the cessation of dukkha. You go through the negative to the positive because it is the negative that actually confronts us here and now, that impinges upon us. So I think what I was meaning there, to put it more clearly, was that if we are confronted by a negative instance, then we have to go through that negative instance to arrive at the positive instance.

Theoretically, you can start with the Unconditioned and work your way down to the conditioned, but practically you have to start with the conditioned and work your way through, or up, to the Unconditioned. Or perhaps I can put what I said in a slightly different way: from the negative instance a positive instance may be inferred. You don't have logically to proceed [336] from the negative instance to the positive; you may have psychologically [Jet noise]...

Is that all?

Cittapala: Can I just return to what you were saying a while ago about the majority of people were probably very happy with the results of industrialization? Do you see any particular

method by which one can help or hope to prick this bubble. which does seem to link up with what you were saying earlier on a few sessions ago about people being quite content to use useless speech in various different ways, and that is representative of the fact that they found that state quite happy. Do you think there is any way that we can set about trying to prod people into seeing that their lives are not quite as happy as they could be?

S: I think we can only do it by challenging them: by asking them, 'Are you really happy? Do you feel satisfied with your life? Do you feel that you are leading a fulfilled life? Are you happy with what you have achieved as a human being? Are you, for instance, really happy with your job? Are you really happy with your marriage? Are you really happy with the place where you live?' Some may say yes; others may start wondering about it. You have to find some opening, some chink in their armour as it were. Or say: 'Now you are 40 years old, what you have achieved now - is that what you really hoped to achieve when you were 20? Have you fulfilled your ambition? Do you feel that your life has been and is worth living? Could you die happy, feeling that you have fulfilled yourself, that your life has had some meaning and purpose in it?' Perhaps one has to challenge in that way, prod in that way.

Cittapala: Do you see any particular forum in which one could do that? Because my impression is that most people we come into contact with in the Centres have come to that conclusion anyway - that they aren't particularly happy on this count.

S: Well, if one is thinking in terms of forum, it would have to be where people assemble. I have thrown out a few hints in the past, none of which have been followed up. Well, one or two have: schools - catch them early. [Say] 'Look what's happened to your mum and dad; do you want to grow up like that?' (Laughter)... already started seeing it for themselves.

[337]

Or I did suggest, some years ago - this wasn't followed up - that you try to get, say, invitations to give lectures in working men's clubs; especially in the Midlands and the north the working men's clubs are still very popular and very influential, but I don't think anybody has ever given a lecture in a working men's club.

: ... just men?

S: Ah well, you get men together - well, there is a ladies' night; you'd have to avoid that. There is a move, not to say a movement, in some quarters to get working men's clubs thrown open to everybody, women too, ...men can't be allowed to foregather on their own - the last thing they should be allowed to do, it seems. But anyway, if you could get into some of these working men's clubs, before their doors are thrown open to all and sundry, perhaps you could prod, perhaps you could challenge. But you would probably have to be prepared for some pretty plain speaking... 'sitting on your backside meditating' - you would probably get a really ...questions, very blunt questions, some pretty crude questions; you would have to be prepared for that. But that is the sort of forum, I think, that one should be sticking out one's young neck in. Well, factories; go round factories, see if you can get talking to people. We are not nearly adventurous enough. I sometimes wish I were 20 or 30 years younger so that I could do some of these things. You could stand outside factory gates, stand out there with leaflets, hand them out as they come out, and have - maybe that night, up the road in the hall - a lecture. If they've nothing on that night, they don't particularly want to go to the pub again, they might come along, you might get some of them; you might be able to talk to them.

You have to be much more adventurous and outward-going, not just put a discreet ad in some respectable journal and just be ready with your class or your lecture on your own ground, your own Centre. That isn't really enough - though it is very good, we should not discontinue it - but it is not enough.

What about all these trades union people? I did suggest once that we try to infiltrate there, but I don't think anything has happened at all. They always have conferences; surely ... lay on something, a lecture at least or something, in one of these seaside towns where these trades union people disport themselves - getting away from their wives for a week, or whatever, having a good time drinking lots of beer, talking [338] about politics, passing resolutions, pulling strings, manipulating, horse trading. Well, lay on something for them, put up lots of motions, hand out bills; and maybe you'll get a whole lot, or maybe you can tackle them individually in pubs and bars and cafes and places like that. They might think you're a delegate... you'd be surprised if you start talking to them. Of course, if you've got a middle-class accent you'd have to disguise that. And you mustn't look too young, because they are mostly stolid, early middle-aged, steady sort of chaps; you mustn't look too bright or too well educated. Though there's a few well-educated people nowadays amongst the trades unionists, in administrative posts who haven't come up from the shop floor, and that's a growing breed apparently - they might think you were one of these smart young new-type trades unionists, with a bulging briefcase and - you know.

Cittapala: Didn't you say in the lecture that - I can't remember the exact lines - that people over 40 were ... ? It was something to do with they've really got a bit past it ... to change their ...

S: I think, though there are exceptions, on the whole I think one can generalize and say that the older people get the more difficult it is for them to change. So I think, if one possibly can, concentrate one's efforts at the lower end, so to speak, of the age spectrum.

Ratnaketu: I think the older people do have quite an effect on their children, and even if they can't changed their lives themselves they still encourage or get their children to meditate.

S: Yes, that's true. If you spread a more sympathetic understanding of Buddhism or of the FWBO, that is a point gained. I have also suggested we could try to speak to people in unorthodox religious groups. There are even quite a few Christians who nowadays are interested in Buddhism and would welcome a talk from someone. We should make more real effort to contact them. There are lots of spiritualist churches where lots of people go - up to a million people go to spiritualist churches - and they are often quite open to a talk on Buddhism. I have given talks in spiritualist churches myself, and I found quite a warm, friendly reception. This was years ago.

Amoghacitta: Quakers as well seem to be quite receptive to Buddhism.

[339]

S: The Quakers are; they are a very small minority, but, yes, they are usually quite interested to hear about Buddhism and meditation.

So it just means that we need to be more adventurous, more outward-going. But one must be very careful to remain in contact with one's basis. If one is firmly implanted, not to say

entrenched, in the spiritual community, then one can well go forth in this sort of way. But I think it would be very difficult just living and working on one's own, say in an industrial town up north. I don't think that would be very easy. You might soon get discouraged, lose heart.

Suvajra: They'd have to be based in Manchester.

S: You would need to be based somewhere where there was a very strong men's community; preferably, at least, a strong men's community - not a strong-men's community. Not that strong men are necessarily precluded, ...

: Working men's clubs I'm not so sure about.

S: Pardon?

: Well, your descriptions of working men's clubs - that might be a good idea to be a strong man.

S: Well, that would be an upaya kausalya, a skilful means. It would not be advisable for anyone who looked, or might look in their eyes, a bit, let us say, effeminate. (Laughter) anyone who had a lisping accent or anything like that. You wouldn't want them to take Buddhism for some kind of drag act. (Laughter)...drag acts in working men's clubs; (Laughter) ... a perverted sort of bunch anyway; we want to present a rather different view.

Devamitra: They've got a really horrific reputation in show-business circles, ... perform ...

S: I think we'd better not start there! We don't want to discourage our aspiring ...s. Let them find out what it's like.

But anyway, you take my general point, I think, that if we are to have a wider or more extensive impact on people we have to go out much more extensively than we do. I think we've got the people to do it now; at least, we have more [340] people to do it. Anyway, perhaps on that stirring note we can close.

Day 16 Tape 17, Side 1

Vessantara: We've been studying the first part of the lecture on Perfect Effort but Subhuti's group had another question on Perfect Livelihood.

Ratnaprabha: This is a question about democracy and consensus in the spiritual community. Subhuti explained how at Order and Council meetings and suchlike it was normal for consensus to be reached, for unity to be reached on issues, and that that was provisional democracy. But you told us in the last Question and Answer session how the Buddha modelled his Sangha, from an administrative point of view, along republican lines as it were, with democracy being the means of taking decisions. Did this mean - ?

S: What do you mean by democracy being the means of taking decisions? Do you mean by majority votes?

Ratnaprabha: Voting on things. So I am just wondering about this apparent difference

between the Buddha's Sangha and the way that the Order works here: the Buddha's Sangha using voting and the Order here tending to use consensus. Does this imply any difference between them, and is one method preferable to the other?

S: No, it amounts to the same thing. There is no majority vote in the case of - not exactly the bhikshu sangha, but the local Chapter, the abhasa, it was called. Everybody voted, in the sense of giving his opinion on a particular matter, but decisions had to be unanimous. If there was a serious difference of opinion, then the chapter split, and some of the monks went away and set themselves up elsewhere. It was not necessarily that one side is right and the other side is wrong; they just disagree, so they cannot function as a community.

To the best of my recollection, there were no instances where a majority vote was used. There were various procedures for settling disagreements: for instance, one particular method was that if a particular bhikkhu or a particular abhasa could not settle a particular matter by discussion, there were certain matters that could be referred to a sub-committee. All the bhikkhus then unanimously agreed that certain bhikkhus should be appointed as a sub-committee and that they would all abide by [341] the decision arrived at by that sub-committee. But that, of course, doesn't amount to majority vote or majority rule.

So therefore it is partly on that account that I have said that, within the context of the Order certainly, and the FWBO ideally, decisions should be reached by consensus. You must talk and talk until you reach agreement. If on fundamental issues you cannot reach agreement, it means you cannot work together, so you should work independently.

I have also suggested, I think, in the past that there could be a provision that, supposing on matters not of the greatest importance, a large majority of Order members, say on a Council, agree on a particular course but certain people don't agree, then the minority, so to speak, can allow the majority to go ahead. Not that they change their view, but the matter is not of first importance; so they agree to accept the decision of the majority, even though they are not completely happy with it. But they agree, of course, to go along with it; or they agree that the majority should go ahead with it.

But on all major issues there must be unanimity. We haven't any formal definition of what is major: perhaps that would be obvious. If it is suggested you have your jumble sale on Friday and a few people think Saturday would be better, that is not a major difference of principle, even though some people might feel very strongly about it. Sometimes people feel much more strongly about minor matters than they feel about major matters, because they feel the minor matters are more within their competence. So sometimes a minority view agrees to give way, so that the majority can go ahead, get on with whatever needs to be got on with, inasmuch as something needs to be done and a decision cannot be delayed indefinitely. But on all matters of major importance, the Chapter or a Council must reach agreement, must reach a consensus opinion as a result of or through discussion; and that may need to be prolonged.

Vessantara: Moving on to Perfect Effort: in the text you talk in terms of effort relating to evolution, and that led us to a number of basic questions about your presentation of the Dharma in terms of the higher evolution. Firstly, whether presenting the Dharma in terms of higher evolution is your own innovation. Secondly, if so, how you came to develop it in that way. And thirdly, it seems, again in these things it is hard to produce firm evidence, but it

seems as if presenting the Dharma in terms of higher evolution is less common in the [342] Friends now than it was, say, eight or nine years ago, and why this should be and whether you in fact use that terminology less, and if so, why?

S: Within the context of Buddhism, that is to say within the context of modern writing about Buddhism, to the best of my knowledge there is nobody else who presents the Dharma in terms of the higher evolution. To the best of my knowledge, I am the only writer or speaker on Buddhism who does that or who has done that.

None the less, outside the field of Buddhism there are people who have thought to some extent in these terms: for instance, Bucke, the author of *Cosmic Consciousness*. He certainly thinks in these terms; he certainly thinks along these lines. I was for some time under the impression that I first started thinking, and first spoke, in terms of Buddhism as the higher evolution of man after my return to England in 1964, but I subsequently discovered a report of a lecture which I had given in Kalimpong in 1950 where I not only used that terminology but set forth those ideas quite clearly. So that was in 1950. I certainly had not read Bucke at that time. I just don't know where I got the idea from, unless I sort of plucked it out of the air. I remember quite clearly why I spoke in these terms: I was then, of course, in Kalimpong and I used to accept whatever invitations were extended to me to give lectures, whether in Kalimpong itself or outside. There was a little group of people used to meet in Kalimpong every week or two under the auspices of what they called their Cultural Institute. The Cultural Institute was simply a room in a local hotel where they used to meet. But they were quite interesting people; they were mostly Bengalis; they were mostly English-educated, in fact quite well educated people, mostly - minor Government officials and so on. And they were, of course, not Buddhists but Hindus. So they often invited me to speak to them on Buddhism or about Buddhism. They rather liked my lectures.

So I think one of the earlier lectures I gave them was this lecture in the course of which I spoke of Buddhism in terms of the higher evolution of man, because I thought 'They are not Buddhists; I can't give them a straightforward exposition of the Dharma. They are Western-educated, so they have got some scientific knowledge. So it might help them to understand Buddhism if I put it in more contemporary terms.' Hence I spoke in that particular way.

[343]

But I did not speak in those terms again. Thereafter I spoke entirely in traditional terms; that may be on account of the nature of my current thinking about Buddhism, as interpreted, for instance, in the Survey. Or it may have been that the people to whom I usually spoke, people to whom I usually lectured, preferred the more traditional approach. But be that as it may, I did not again speak in those terms until the late 1960s, both before and after the foundation of the Friends; and by that time I had forgotten that I had spoken in those terms in 1950.

I think what might have sparked me off, or what might have caused me to think more along those lines was a book by Middleton Murry which I certainly read in the late 1960s, and it is a book I have sometimes referred to, in fact I have often referred to his writings. This particular book was called *God*, believe it or not. I think the subtitle was *A Study in Metabiological Evolution*. What I usually call the Higher Evolution he spoke of in terms of 'the metabiological evolution', in other words the evolution beyond biological evolution. And I think it was probably the reading of that book which caused me to think again along those

lines, and to revive - though I did not know I was reviving - some of my early ideas about the Higher Evolution of man, or the Dharma in terms of the Higher Evolution of man.

I cannot say that I am especially aware that within the FWBO people are speaking less in terms of the higher evolution of man than they were, say, eight or nine years ago. It may be that they are, but I have no definite information on the subject, not even any definite impression. The fact is that I myself have not spoken much in those terms since. This is largely because I feel I really need to write up or rewrite the two series of lectures I gave using this terminology, and go into various questions of priority, development of consciousness, psychology, more thoroughly than I could do in the lectures themselves. It may be that, because I have not myself followed up those lectures with further investigations - a lot more investigation is required - that that particular mode of presentation has not caught on, if in fact it hasn't caught on. I don't know if anyone has any comment on whether this sort of approach is utilized at Centres?

Devamitra: I think it's true, I don't think it is used very much, certainly in my experience. And I personally have felt disinclined to use that approach, basically because I don't think that I know enough about evolution; I don't feel that I [344] would be competent enough to deal with questions from someone who really did know about evolution, and so I have been very cautious.

S: The whole question of evolution is very complex. There are many differing views, there are many differing interpretations, even among biologists themselves; several schools of thought. One certainly would need to do quite a lot of reading. I have got myself between 40 and 50 books on evolution which I have read, which I have gone through, some of them quite carefully. I think if I was to even write up or write out my Higher Evolution lectures properly, I would need probably to do quite a bit more reading to bring myself up to date, because even in the course of the last 20 years there have been so many if not new discoveries certainly new theories, and one would really need to know what one was talking about.

For instance, this whole question of vitalism, which I touched upon very briefly, would need to be gone into much more thoroughly than I have gone into it. So perhaps it is just that in those two courses of lectures I just sketched very roughly a possible approach to, a possible way of looking at or interpreting or presenting Buddhism; but it is only a rough sketch, and no one, it seems, has been sufficiently well versed in those matters, especially biology, to be able to follow in my footsteps; and I haven't, I think, had time really to follow in my own footsteps. So many of those early series of lectures remain unedited; a lot of work could be done on so many of them. I was hoping that perhaps other people would pick this up. So far this has not happened.

Of course, one of the things that I was trying to do when I spoke of Buddhism or spoke of the Dharma, spoke of the spiritual life, in terms of the higher evolution of man, was to sort of achieve a synthesis of knowledge, to bring together, one might say, to use the crudest possible terms, science and religion, so that one did not have two vast unrelated areas of knowledge. And it seemed that these two areas could be linked, if not joined, if not united, if not synthesised, with the help of this concept of evolution. Actually, the whole topic of evolution is being very briskly debated at present; mainly because the creationists have staged a comeback. There are creationists - that is to say, people who believe that God created the universe out of nothing - in the United States especially, who maintain that science supports

creationism and does not support evolutionism. So they have produced quite a lot of books and articles and [345] pamphlets in the last ten years or so, and 'orthodox', inverted commas, evolutionists have, of course, very often replied. Especially in the United States has this debate been going on. It hasn't really caught on in the UK; people don't seem so stirred by this question of creationism versus evolutionism. But I do know something about it, because little reports of various publications and the more outrageous sayings of the creationists appear from time to time in the pages of The Freethinker, to which I am a subscriber.

Vessantara: When you talk about expanding some areas during the time you haven't had time to go into in the lectures, which lectures are you referring to?

S: I was really thinking of all of them, because I do condense so much, I do generalize so much. Everything would need to be expanded and gone into more thoroughly: the nature of consciousness; the whole question of cultural evolution which I have sketched in.

I had rather hoped that various areas which I opened up in a pioneer-like fashion would be further explored by other people in their own way, by way of their own research, their independent study. This, I think, has not happened in any field yet within the FWBO. But I hope it will happen. Perhaps people are too busy working in the co-ops.

Vessantara: Which do you think would be the most important ... to go into?

S: Ah, I think I couldn't answer that question without notice. I have to think very carefully. I must remind myself which fields I have done a bit of pioneering in; I tend to forget sometimes. Buddhism and Art, for instance - I just opened up things there with just a few ideas. The nature of early Buddhism.

Shantiprabha: Has anybody outside the Movement evinced an interest in your work, taken your pioneering work further ...?

S: Not really, though one American bhikkhu has taken up this idea, which is not mine - I have only drawn attention to something in the Buddhist tradition itself - of the positive nidanas, and he has written a quite good booklet, which I was hoping I could review in the Newsletter; more from a Theravada point of view - he is not too happy that I bring in the Mahayana here. But anyway, he certainly has taken up this particular [346] point, this aspect of the Dharma, and he refers to my treatment of it in the 'Stages of the Path' chapter in The Three Jewels. His name is Bhikkhu Bodhi. He has produced some quite good scholarly work on Pali texts, good translations.

Otherwise, within the field of Buddhism, there is no real thinking going on at all, one could say. There are some quite good scholarly books produced about Buddhism, but no one seems to be doing any real thinking on fundamental Buddhist issues - no fresh thinking, no original thinking. Well, no thinking at all, it seems. Perhaps it is too early.

Vessantara: Why too early? Do you think people in the West haven't yet got sufficient depth of practice or understanding to ... ?

S: They haven't absorbed Buddhism itself sufficiently. They are still in the listening stage, the hearing stage - or should be.

Gunapala: What about the Tibetan groups that have set themselves up in America? There are quite a few groups ...

S: No thought whatever, as far as one can see. A bit of muddled thinking, but I wasn't quite thinking of that.

Gunapala: Some of them did have quite large communities, but I realize that I don't know much about these things ...

S: No, they don't seem to have large communities. They have got a few small mixed communities that we perhaps would not regard as communities at all. They seem not to have communities in the way that we have them; they seem not to have men's communities. No doubt there are some monastic-type communities in India, mainly in Nepal, set up by the Tibetans. No doubt, if one is interested one could visit one of those, but in the West they seem not to have set up spiritual communities in the sense that we understand that term. Well, when some of the gurus themselves are married and with children, it is rather difficult for them to set up men's communities.

Bodhiruchi: I heard you quoted - this, unfortunately, was a bit third- or fourth-hand - that you said there are some thinkers in the Order, that there ...

S: Thinkers in the Order!?! (Laughter) Well, yes - yes.

[347]

: You know, original thinkers.

S: Er - yes, that's right, I had - I don't know whether I used the expression 'original thinkers', but I think I did say that there were some people who had given lectures or written articles which showed some original thought. I don't know whether I would have dignified them, on the strength of one or two lectures and articles, with the title of 'original thinker'. But, yes, some articles and lectures have shown original thought; I don't want to provoke anyone's blushes, but I am thinking of Vessantara, I am thinking of Mahamati, I am thinking of Chintamani. All of them have, either in writing or via lectures delivered orally, delivered themselves of some original ideas. In the case of Vessantara, there was his article on the 'thin dividing line', and there were one or two other things he has done since.

So yes, I was pleased to see these little tender shoots of original creative thinking. I hope they will continue to sprout - more widely, in fact. There are one or two others, but I just happened to mention those three names because I happened to recall them.

Shantiprabha: Do you think any original thinking is more likely to come out of the communities, say, like Padmaloka, rather than just individuals living in communities?

S: I think it is possible for original thinking to come out of communities to the extent that there is intensive discussion within communities. Usually, of course, original thinking is the product of the solitary thinker, but not necessarily so, because sometimes you really are sparked off by other people; sometimes you are challenged by other people, you have to think more deeply, you have to question your own assumptions, and in that way original ideas can be produced, original thinking may take place. So I think that, to the extent that there is study

and discussion within a community, to that extent there is certainly a possibility for the production of original thinking, original ideas; creative thinking, creative ideas.

Bodhiruchi: In a sense it is the lifeblood of the Movement.

S: You are speaking of the communities or the ... of new ideas?

[348]

Bodhiruchi: Creative thought.

S: But not just creative thought - creative everything. Creative thought, creative emotion, creative meditation, creative individual life, creative community life. Not just creative thinking, though creative thinking is very important. It consists in the first place in making the traditional ideas one's own, at least understanding them thoroughly oneself, understanding them perhaps in one's own terms, being able to put them into one's own terms, being able to express them in a fresh and new and original creative way for the benefit of other people. Maybe adding something to them; thinking out something that has not been thought out before, not been developed before, even though the seed of it is there in tradition. People are not nearly creative enough. Most people could be at least ten times more creative than they actually are - I am talking about most people in the FWBO.

Devamitra: Why do you think there is such a paucity of creative thinking in the Movement - apart from your own thinking?

S: Well, of course, there is one point: you do need time for creative thinking. You need to brood upon things, to muse upon things, sometimes for hours on end. And not many people have that sort of leisure, that sort of opportunity. You have got to have something to think about, something to brood on, something you are interested in, something you want to follow up, something you want to go into more deeply; and it has to be something that really interests you, that really grips you, that is almost of existential importance for you.

Ratnaketu: We don't have a specialized situation ... we've got communities specially, we've got Centres, we've got co-ops, we've got meditation, but we don't really have one for study.

S: That's true. Someone did have the idea that Blaenddol could develop in that way. Who knows? Let us see: it might. But it does seem that as the Movement progresses, as it develops, as it expands and broadens, all the things that in the beginning were kept together within one and the same situation will separate out, and will set themselves up, so to speak, in their own right. You won't have just an amalgam of meditation and study and work; you'll perhaps have separate places for study, separate places for work, separate [349] places for meditation. Well, we've already got these to some extent. And certain people will specialize more and more, and place the fruits of their discovery, the fruits of their thinking, at the service of the whole Movement. Just as I mentioned the other day, I think it was yesterday, that some people might like to go into this whole question of the nature of the impact of the Industrial Revolution and modern technology on the life of the individual, so that they might be able to present us with certain facts, certain findings, which would be of interest or use to us - because we don't all have the time to go into these things. Perhaps we don't all have the aptitude, we don't all have the interest. But we would be interested in conclusions that one had, even in the information extracted, by people who were specially interested in that

particular issue.

Of course, there is a danger: if one pursues one's studies, one's investigations along academic lines, there is always the danger that you get lost in the groves of academe, and you are not seen again. You just disappear in the direction of maybe a Ph.D and a university appointment. If you want to study certain subjects in a way seriously, you would have to study them at university, and that would carry various drawbacks, because you would be involved in the university atmosphere; you would be studying those subjects in a particular way, in not perhaps a way that was very related to the sort of interest in them that we have in the FWBO. If you wanted perhaps, for instance, to study comparative religion, you could probably do it quite well, but you might find yourself studying comparative religion with somebody who didn't believe in religion; that would be quite possible. And that would not be very inspiring. It might give you a rather slanted view - an objective view, that is to say. You would learn to be much more objective about religion and about Buddhism.

So we need to develop our own institutions, eventually.

Harshaprabha: So at some time there will be a Buddhist university.

S: Well, there are Buddhist universities in the world, in the traditionally Buddhist world, but they are not really sufficient, they are not really adequate. We need something quite different - yes, a Buddhist university of our own. We might in fact, in a few years' time, maybe 40 or 50 years' time, realize that at Il Convento was sown the seed for the great Buddhist University of Yorkshire, or wherever it might be; or of Ottoronga for that matter.

[350]

Anyway, we did stray a little from the original question. Are there any further questions?

Vessantara: ... had a question on Perfect Effort.

Amoghavajra: We started on Perfect Effort this morning, and in the definition you give of the transformation of volitional nature it seems very like the definition of Perfect Emotion, which is the transformation of emotional and volitional nature. So we were talking about this, and we came to the conclusion that Perfect Effort could almost be within Perfect Emotion.

S: Well, it is of course generally recognized in psychology that there is a very close connection between emotion and volition; volition meaning will. But, none the less, they are not the same thing. I think I have mentioned that volition or will has been defined as the sum total of energy available to the conscious subject, whereas emotion, though it is also a drive, though it is also an impulsion - the literal meaning of the word suggests that - it is predominantly affective; that is to say it is to be understood in terms of feeling. So even though there is a close connection between volition on the one hand and emotion on the other, and though perhaps they are more closely connected than either is with cognition, none the less they are quite distinct. Will, one might say, is more a matter of energy - the sum total of energy available to the conscious subject, whereas emotion is much more a question of feeling. Well, it is a matter of feeling.

This also raises the question of - I don't know whether one can use this expression - passive feeling and active feeling; or rather, it would be best to say passive emotion and active

emotion. Active emotion is surely an integral part of any volition. You can perhaps have feeling, you can have emotion, without volition; but it is very doubtful, I think, whether one can have volition without emotion. When you will something, when you will to do something, when you will to achieve something - or not to do something, not to achieve something - there is surely always an emotional quality, an emotional element, in that willing. But it is also possible just to experience something emotionally, to enjoy something - or suffer, perhaps, from something - without any particular volition arising.

Bodhiruchi: Bhante, in a previous Question and Answer [351] session at Padmaloka we went into the question of instincts in relation to volition, and I think we came to the conclusion - correct me if I'm wrong - that there are sort of instinctual volitions.

S: Well, that would be a contradiction in terms if one takes volition to mean, as I mentioned, the sum total of energy available, the conscious sum; because instinct represents a sort of unconscious programme; it may even be genetically determined. So an instinct is something that you have and that operates you, that makes you go, that makes you tick, without your being conscious of it, or without you necessarily having any consciousness at all in the sense of individual self-consciousness. An ant is motivated by instinct, we say; so is a bee. They are programmed; and man has certain instincts by which he is programmed, or he is programmed in such a way that he has certain instincts which operate as it were automatically, sometimes without his realizing it.

But, as I also mentioned in the course of the session at Padmaloka, this whole idea of instinct is being increasingly questioned by psychologists, by biologists. What does it mean to say that someone has an instinct, or that a certain form of life has an instinct? - that it does certain things without consciously determining to do them; it is born, as it were, destined to do them? For instance, the weaver bird builds a most elaborate nest, so we say that it is genetically programmed in such a way that it builds a nest of this type. But to say it is due to a nest-building instinct doesn't really help too much; you are just multiplying words; you are not explaining, you are only describing it in a different kind of way.

But the fundamental point about instincts is that they are predictable modes of behaviour which are not determined by individual volition; that the beings so determined may not even have reached the point of having an individual volition, of having an individual consciousness. There used to be a discussion, I think, in psychology ... how many instincts there were. That sort of discussion is now regarded, apparently, as quite fruitless.

Amoghavajra: Would you say - going back to Perfect Emotion and Perfect Effort - that Perfect Emotion is a bit more passive, and that Perfect Effort was ...

S: Well, emotion, as I said, includes a passive element [352] inasmuch as one can, I think, speak in terms of active emotion and passive emotion. But you can hardly speak about passive effort. Effort seems to be, by very definition, necessarily active.

Bodhiruchi: If, as you say, there are links between Perfect Effort and Perfect Emotion, ...

S: Well, no, I said between volition and emotion... effort without(?) volition, but the two are not quite the same thing.

Bodhiruchi: I was going to ask, then, why were they different stages on the Eightfold Path?

S: Because there is an important distinction between them. One is predominantly a matter of volition - a matter of energy, therefore - and the other is predominantly a matter of feeling, which ... emotion. So between energy, or volition, on the one hand, and between feeling or emotion on the other, though they are connected, though they both represent a sort of movement forward and up, there is none the less an important distinction, so they are enumerated separately. Just as action and Right Livelihood, or Right Action and Right Livelihood these are closely connected; livelihood also involves action, but there is a sufficient distinction between the two for them to be enumerated separately.

Tape 17, Side 2

Ratnaprabha: ... question. But we were also wondering about the position of the two angas on the Path. As Perfect Emotion comes second on the Path, it would seem there has been a link-up; this one comes sixth, and it would seem that Perfect Effort in a way is needed on that second limb of the Path in order to develop Perfect Emotion.

S: I think I make the point that effort is needed the whole way through, don't I? I say, in the course of the lecture, that simply because Perfect Effort is enumerated as a specific anga, one is not to assume that for the development of Perfect Vision and Perfect Emotion and so on effort is not required. Effort runs all the way through, but is given a special prominence in this particular anga.

Ratnaprabha: Is there any particular reason why it wasn't, say, put second, right immediately after Perfect Vision, as [353] being the foundation for the other limbs?

S: One could say that, if one thinks in terms first of all of Perfect Vision, and if one thinks of that as having transformed, or begun to transform, one's intellectual life, then if one regards the intellectual and emotional as being the two great divisions or so to speak aspects of the psyche, then after intellectual transformation there must come about the emotional transformation, and that will lead to everything else. So therefore Perfect Emotion would come second.

In fact, of course, in a way one could say that all the angas after the first represent a transformation of the emotions as distinct from a transformation of the intellect. I think I make that point, don't I? Transformation of the emotions, transformation of the energies, conscious and unconscious.

But I do believe, among modern or more recent psychologists, there is a growing dissatisfaction with what used to be called faculty psychology, that is to say thinking of the human psyche as endowed with various faculties: a faculty of intellect, a faculty of emotion, a faculty of cognition, and so on. It seems to be increasingly appreciated that, though these distinctions can be made, they don't really correspond to any separate, independent mode of functioning. They are all present, usually, at one and the same time. You think, you feel, you act, all together.

Gunapala: What happens when you block out, block off from an emotional feeling to do an action, it seems like you can ...

S: When you block off an emotion - ?

Gunapala: Say you have an emotional feeling, and that emotional feeling is stopping you from, say, doing an action, so you block off from the emotional feeling to carry the action out; it seems like you can divide the two up in that way.

S: Well, yes and no. But it is more that all three are ranged on each side - that is to say, will, emotion, and knowledge.

: All arranged - ? ...

S: Because - how can I put it? When you say 'block off a feeling', it's not that the blocking-off process is totally [354] devoid of feeling. There is some feeling there too. So it's as though feeling is pitted against feeling. There is some energy there, too. Energy is pitted against energy. There is some knowledge there too. You could think you could justify the blocking off in a particular way. So some intellect is there also. So it is one sort of emotion-will-intellect complex in conflict with another emotion-intellect-will complex; not reason blocking off emotion. I don't think it really happens like that at all. It's not that your reason is divided from your emotion; you are divided from yourself, which is quite another matter. It is much more serious, much worse, much more drastic, in a way: the split goes right through you, perhaps.

So it isn't that you have a feeling to do something, without any thought or idea about the matter, and that you also have an idea or a thought without any feeling that you should not do that thing, then that emotionless thought comes into conflict with that thoughtless emotion - no. All of you is on both sides of the divide, as it were, with some of your intellect, some of your emotion, some of your will, on this side, and also some of your intellect, some of your emotion, some of your will on the other side. But one has to outweigh the other, for the time being ...

Gunapala: It does seem very mixed. It seems like unconscious and conscious is mixed in with the two as well, and it seems like there's a lot of emotional drives in the unconscious side of the ...

S: But at the same time there must be some pretty powerful emotions, and pretty powerful energy in the conscious mind to be able to hold down the emotion and energy in the unconscious mind, even if only for a short time. A mere abstract thought, a cold-blooded idea, could never do it. So you really are divided against yourself. It is not simply your emotion against your reason, or your reason against your emotion: it is you against you.

Ratnaprabha: So lack of integration is really almost a form of schizophrenia. It's not just that those different faculties are separate from each other, but that one has different personalities operating almost simultaneously - is that right?

S: I'm not quite sure what you mean by that. What is schizophrenia, anyway?

[355]

Ratnaprabha: Oh. I don't know what it is! (Laughter)

Prasannasiddhi: Schizophrenia seems like when you - for a while you act in a certain fashion - usually the common thing is a good person and a bad person - for a number of hours you act in a purely 'good' way, and then suddenly there is a switch-over where your more 'evil', inverted commas, side comes out, and you lose your awareness of the good side of yourself, and the evil side takes the forefront.

S: So if one takes schizophrenia as looking back (?), if one takes it as representing a sort of Jekyll-and-Hyde situation, then clearly Jekyll has got his thoughts, his feelings, and his will, and Hyde also has his thoughts, his feelings and his will. So it is like, yes, two separate personalities.

So one could say that non-integration, or lack of integration, is not just something that happens within the psyche; it is almost of the psyche. It is not that within one's personality there is conflict; it is more than that, there are two or more personalities in conflict, in extreme cases. There is a sort of factitious unity kept up because these different personalities are associated with one physical body. At one time one personality uses that body, at another time another personality uses that body. Sometimes it seems to be almost as extreme as that. Though quite often it isn't as clear-cut as that. The different personalities are not always so neatly divided one from another; they overlap to some extent, they merge sometimes. They separate, they form alliances, if there are a large number of them.

Ratnaprabha: Do you think then it would be helpful, when thinking about lack of integration, not to think in this rather psychological way of these faculties of the mind, but perhaps to think of, for example, possession by demons, where there a number of conflicting demons that are trying to get hold of ...

S: Well, not only demons; there are angels too. The fact that an Angel I suppose by its very nature is integrated, so there is something angelic, let us say, rather than an angel. It might be helpful, but on the other hand that sort of thinking might apply only to extreme cases. Does one really feel that one is like that? Does one feel ever that one is just different personalities in, so to speak, the same body? Does one ever [356] feel as extremely as that? Or do you just feel that a particular part or aspect of you has got a little out of hand and not quite integrated with the rest? Or do you actually feel that you are several personalities? Because, if you do, you will just have to make sure that all these different personalities Go for Refuge. Otherwise there may be trouble later on; one personality may come and say: 'I didn't go for Refuge, I said nothing about ... (Laughter) I said nothing about ... (Laughter). I never signed any of those things.'

Devamitra: A good way of expanding the Order.

S: It wouldn't multiply the number of bodies.

S: I would hope that there isn't that pathological degree of non-integration in anybody present. Well, let me qualify that: because one has spoken of horizontal integration and vertical integration, hasn't one? You must remember that. So what I am saying now about non-integration is more non-integration in the horizontal sense rather than in the vertical sense. And clearly a horizontal integration has to precede a vertical integration. So what does one mean by a vertical integration? One means, so to speak - to use rather un-Buddhistic language - an integration of the so-called lower with the so-called higher self; and the highest

self of all is none other than Buddhahood itself. So until you become Enlightened you are in fact dis-integrated, vertically speaking.

Gunapala: What would the integration of the conscious mind and the unconscious mind be? Would they be on a horizontal - ?

S: No, that is more on the vertical line. If one thinks of conscious and unconscious, as one usually does - consciousness being higher than the unconscious, conscious being up there and unconscious down there - if one thinks in those sort of terms, which seems to correspond to some kind of reality, then the integration of conscious and unconscious is a form of vertical integration. Whereas horizontal integration is more a bringing together, a unifying, of all one's interests on the same level. You find out that certain things are incompatible with certain other things; you can't bring them all together at the same time.

So there is an integration, let's say for the sake of clarity, of the conscious mind on its own level - that is, horizontal integration; then there is vertical integration in the sense of [357] integration of the conscious mind with the unconscious mind; and then there is vertical integration in the sense of the integration of that integrated consciousness with higher levels of consciousness, even levels of Insight. So until that is achieved, until that is accomplished, you are dis-integrated; you have not been integrated fully. Inasmuch as those higher levels do represent possibilities for you, they are you, potentially; so to the extent to which you have not actually realized them, you don't consciously appropriate them, means you are dis-integrated, you are alienated from them. So, looking at it in this way, you will be fully integrated only when you are Enlightened.

Gunapala: Does it fit in very neatly with Right Effort, with Perfect Effort, this idea of integration?

S: Well, does it?

Gunapala: I'm trying to work out the connection between them, between integration and ...

S: Well, the effort, one might say, is directed towards integration. You are trying to bring more and more dissociated or lost or unrecognized portions of oneself into one's mandala, so that one's mandala is constantly expanding. There is an effort to integrate: first of all an effort to integrate on the horizontal, then an effort to integrate on the vertical, both the lower segment or lower section of the vertical and the higher - effort is required all the time. So you could say effort to unify consciousness, effort to unify conscious and unconscious, effort to unify conscious - that is to say, the already unified conscious with the superconscious. One might think in those terms.

Gunapala: It's all quite individual, though, isn't it, the whole process of the development of the individual ...

S: Not necessarily. You could go even further, and you could say there is an integration of yourself with other people: because if one thinks in terms of integrating with higher levels of consciousness, integrating with Insight, integrating with the Transcendental, on that level the subject-object duality breaks down; so you are integrating not just within yourself, not even what is lower with what is higher; you are integrating with other people, you can say,

integrating with the rest of the cosmos, which you no longer see as different from yourself in [358] the way that you did before. You could even introduce Indra's net here, you see, because now every little jewel is reflecting every other little jewel, and all the other little jewels are reflecting that one jewel. Each is reflecting all, and all are reflecting each. So they are all integrated with one another. Say, in the spiritual community, you are as it were all integrated with one another, you all reflect one another; you are all in a sense aspects of one another, aspects of some super-Individual, capital I. You don't lose your own freedom of action, your individuality; at the same time your free individualities are subsumed into what we cannot call something collective but which we can only call the spiritual community, and the spirit that informs that integrated community is, you could say, something like the Bodhicitta.

Gunapala: I would have thought using the same analogy before and the integration of the conscious and then the conscious and the unconscious and then the Transcendental, the same applies on the spiritual community level, the members of the spiritual community integrated with their conscious side; more or less.

S: Well, members of a spiritual community would not be able to integrate with one another in the way that I have described unless they individually had attained some measure of Insight. Insight with a capital I. So in a way one could think of a spiritual community as a new kind of organism, like a sort of spiritual beehive with the Bodhicitta as the queen bee. But that's not a very good analogy, because in a beehive there are two kinds of bees, apart from the queen: there are the worker bees and the drones, and there should be no drones in the spiritual community. Some people might say there can be no workers in the spiritual community. In the spiritual community you all have to be queens - or kings - sorry. Or at least princes.

But what integration really means is a progression from a one or two or three-dimensional type of experience to a type of experience which is in fact multi-dimensional, and which eventually coincides with the totality of experiences of everything and everybody in the whole cosmos.

Were there any other questions?

Vessantara: That was all.

S: Well, since we have ended up mentioning the cosmos, I don't suppose there is any further we can go than that, [359] especially as it is actually two minutes to one.

Day 17 Tape 18, Side 1

Ratnaketu: This came out of an example you used to talk about anger, hatred, as one of the hindrances, and you used the example of Jesus getting angry and using the whip to get rid of the money vendors. And I began to wonder what is the real difference between that and, for instance, the wrath of Padmasambhava - especially as some Christians say that this is symbolic, Jesus doing this.

S: I am not so sure about the symbolic actions on the part of Jesus, but what does one mean by saying that an action like that would be symbolic? I am not going to go now into the question of to what extent the Gospels are historical: that is a very big question. But

Christians traditionally have taken that episode in the life of Christ as being completely historical - that it did happen literally, whatever other meaning it might have - that he did literally drive the money-changers from the temple with his whip. Some of them in modern times have said that he could not have really done it by means of violence, because what could one man do against so many? But the episode is frequently depicted in art, and there he is lashing them, driving them out, and they are terrified.

So Christians take this literally, and they have used this episode to support the idea that righteous indignation is justified. Righteous indignation is indignation, or anger, on behalf of the good, on behalf of God. So, for instance, in the middle ages, if a pious Christian, a pious churchman, found that certain people, certain heretics, were believing, teaching, practising, something different from what the Church believed and taught and practised, he would become consumed, so to speak, with righteous indignation, indignation on behalf of the good, on behalf of God; and would consider himself justified in using violence against those heretics. And this is a tradition that continues in Christianity right down to the present day - that something that is bad or that you consider as bad makes you all hot under the collar; it makes you feel that you want to go out and hit somebody, to attack them because of their wrong ideas. And this is something we certainly don't find in Buddhism.

So in view of the fact that Buddhism has a non-violent history, when we get episodes in the life of an admittedly legendary character like Padmasambhava, we are quite justified [360] in suspecting there may be some sort of symbolical significance. But that is quite a different matter from the interpretation of this incident in the life of Christ as having a symbolical significance, because that is certainly not the way it has been interpreted by orthodox Christians down through the ages.

Ratnaketu: But how can something, even admittedly if it's symbolic - if you have a symbol of somebody killing somebody else it is still symbolic ...

S: Yes, symbolism of killing, I would say, was very dangerous. Even if it was strictly symbolical it is still very dangerous, because there is always the possibility of some literal-minded person transferring the symbolism from that particular level to the level of ordinary life. In the course of the Life of Padmasambhava he is represented as dallying with various dakinis - well, no doubt there is a symbolical significance, but the danger is that one transplants that to another level of significance altogether, and makes Padmasambhava's actions a sort of excuse for what oneself might be getting up to.

This brings me to something I have touched upon before - that I think we have to start getting suspicious when there are too many things that we have to explain away, that we cannot take quite straightforwardly, that we have to give some abstruse explanation of before they can become acceptable. For instance, modern Christians are left with this episode with the chasing, the whipping of the money-changers from the temple: they are not quite happy about it, especially if they are perhaps pacifist Christians. It does seem to be an act of violence. So they have to explain it away. They might say that he just had a little cord in his hand, he couldn't possibly have done any harm with it, it was symbolical; that it was the realization that they had done something wrong that caused the moneylenders to go helter-skelter out of the temple, Christ didn't actually evict them by force. They are reduced to indulging in all these sort of explanations.

We don't have, I think, anything of that sort to explain away in the case of the Buddha's life. Again, there is a point that Asanga [Vimalakirti Nirdeśa, Thurman trans., Epilogue] says - that teachings which do not require interpretation are preferable to teachings which do require interpretation. I have touched upon this, I think, in the lectures on the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa sūtra. As the Buddha says in the Dhammapada, hatred [361] never ceases by hatred; it ceases only by non-hatred, or by love. That is a perfectly plain, straightforward statement that requires no interpretation and no explaining away whatever. So I think Buddhism contains more of such statements than Christianity does; I think Buddhism has less that needs explaining away.

In the life of Christ there is the episode of the Gadarene swine: that needs a lot of explaining away. There is Christ's last words on the Cross - 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' That seems to need quite a lot of explaining away. But when the Buddha said, 'Strive on with mindfulness', there is nothing that requires explaining away there at all: it is perfectly straightforward.

Ratnaketu: What about instances in the life of the Buddha? I know of one where the Buddha is engaging in debate with a wanderer, and the Buddha asks a question which the wanderer doesn't answer; and on the third time he still doesn't answer, Vajrapani hears - it's in the Pali Canon - and threatens him with a thunderbolt and says he'll split his head in several bits. What about that? Is that caused by the Buddha, or is it something from that wanderer's own mind, due to confrontation with the Buddha, or - ?

S: Well, the Pali text doesn't say. The Pali text, reading it at its face value, Vajrapani - the god, not the Bodhisattva Vajrapani - was in the area, so to speak; he overheard the conversation and was so enraged by this wanderer's obtuseness or obstinacy that he threatened him in this particular way. It is not to say that the Buddha condoned that; but what does it represent? This sort of episode occurs quite often - the threat to split the head. What does it represent?

Ratnaketu: Could you say it was like the higher self or mind of that person being questioned threatening - ?

S: I suppose you could. Does Vajrapani in India represent that? Does he usually represent that? There is no suggestion of it in the text itself; it is quite plain and straightforward.

Bodhiruchi: The importance of answering the Buddha when he asks you.

[362]

Ratnaketu: Or else.

S: Perhaps it is just a general way of saying it's an existential situation. He has got to come to the point. The Buddha has him, so to speak, in a corner: he has got to answer, he can't wriggle, he can't evade any more, he has come to a crisis point. It is an existential situation. If he doesn't face it, his head will split. Do you see what I mean? It seems to - that image, that figure - seems to body forth something of that sort.

Ratnaprabha: You say that teachings which require interpretation should be as it were taken after teachings which can be taken at their face value.

S: Yes, because if you've got the two kinds or two sets of teachings - those which require interpretation and those that don't require interpretation - in accordance with what principles are you to interpret those teachings which require interpretation? You can only interpret the unclear in the light of the clear; so first of all you need to acquaint yourself with, and thoroughly assimilate, those teachings which do not require interpretation; and then, in the light perhaps of those teachings, you can interpret the teachings that do require interpretation.

Ratnaprabha: Does this apply to those teachings which are not intellectually clear at face value, but which one is tempted not to interpret - the ones which use very powerful images, for example, and that seem to really hit home, but yet if one was asked to explain them one might have a certain amount of difficulty about explaining exactly what their effects were and how they were affecting one - apart from saying that it seemed to be a strong, positive, energizing effect?

S: I am not quite sure what the question is, actually, or what the question amounts to.

Ratnaprabha: I am thinking, for example, of strong images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas and the symbolism contained within them, symbolism of colours or of forms. These things have a very powerful effect on us, but we may not find them perfectly intellectually clear exactly what they mean on the surface. Should these be regarded as less important teachings, as it were, than those which are intellectually clear on the surface?

[363]

S: Well, what is the teaching in this case, or is there a teaching in the sense in which Asanga was speaking of? My impression is, as far as I remember, that Asanga was speaking of so to speak intellectual teachings, teachings which were expressed in discursive form, some of which might be clearer than others or more in need of interpretation than others. I don't think the use of images comes quite into the same category.

Anyway, is that all? Are you going to let me off as lightly as that this morning? Perhaps you are.

Cittapala: I've got one small one. I'm not sure whether ... You were saying the other day that in Vessantara's talk that you practised the Mindfulness of Breathing was your main meditation practice for ten years. I was wondering when you started the metta bhavana, and for how long ...

S: To be quite honest, I can't remember, but it was several years later, doing it systematically. I can't remember, to be quite frank. I think it might have been when I took up the visualization practice; I think it might have been - which would be about the late 1950s. But I am not quite sure.

Cittapala: How did you come across the metta bhavana?

S: I was familiar with it in theory from the Pali texts for many years before I actually started practising it. I think, from my Theravada contacts and my Theravada reading, I was at that time under the impression that the metta bhavana was not anything of any great importance; whereas the practice of mindfulness was very much stressed by those Theravadins whom I did meet or sources which I did read. For instance, there was a whole book written on the

mindfulness practice in the broad sense, that is The Heart of Buddhist Meditation. There was no similar book, hardly an article, written about the practice of the metta bhavana. So, in a sense, it sort of escaped my notice, I might say, which is a great pity; which tells one quite a lot about current attitudes among many modern Buddhists. But certainly I think there was nothing to cause me to think that it was of any great importance until, I think, I came into contact with the visualization practices, and found that the practice of the visualization was to be preceded by the practice of the four brahma viharas, and then I started, I think, thinking about it more seriously.

[364]

But certainly I can remember a point when I seemed to be taking the metta bhavana more seriously, practising it myself and also teaching others. But I can't remember exactly how it began or when it began.

Cittapala: Considering that you practised the mindfulness for such a long time before taking up the visualization practice, do you think there is anything in that experience which might have some interpretive meaning for us? Because you seem to be taking the visualization practice ...

S: Not necessarily, because in my case it was to a great extent due to lack of opportunity or even lack of proper guidance that I didn't take up those practices earlier on. I took them up when I was able to do so.

But none the less, perhaps one could say that one should not rush ahead; that one should proceed step by step so far as meditation is concerned, and before taking up the visualization lay a good foundation of mindfulness and metta bhavana. That is why, in our own Movement, we don't give visualization practices to people who are not ordained, because we consider that the necessary basis of sincerity and commitment and determination does not exist. People ask me quite often, pressing for visualization practices, before they are ordained, and occasionally I do give in, in special cases. But that seems to be connected more with a sort of acquisitive attitude, of not wanting to be left out, rather than with any genuine spiritual aspiration or understanding of what those visualization practices are all about.

Cittapala: But does this mean that in the early days you were not actually aware of visualization practices as being a possible course of action open to you, or was it just that - ?

S: I think, as far as I remember, I did have some sort of vague idea about visualization practices, but it was quite vague, and at that time I had no real knowledge of the Vajrayana. Don't forget that at that time, in the early to middle 1950s, I was not in touch with any Tibetan lama; and also none of the books that are available nowadays on the Vajrayana had been published - with one or two exceptions: the Evans-Wentz books were available - there was nothing very clear there about visualization - how one visualized and what the significance of it was, what its place in the Vajrayana was or its place in Buddhism generally. There were a lot of things I [365] had to find out for myself, quite slowly and in a sense painfully.

Cittapala: How was it that you didn't come into contact with lamas? I thought Kalimpong was quite close to Tibet, and that it was actually on the route ...

S: Well, that is true, but they didn't start coming out of Tibet until they had to. DharDO

Rimpoche was there; he was the first with whom I came into contact; but others didn't really start coming out until 1959, when there was the upheaval in Lhasa and the Chinese took a firm grip on the whole country. Hardly anybody came out before that. So it was only from 1959 that I had very much contact with Tibetan lamas; it was only then that they started coming out in numbers. A few came out before then.

Maybe you have all got so used to Tibetan lamas being around - all over the place, in fact - that it is difficult for you to appreciate that state of affairs, because they were all confined to Tibet. There weren't any around, there wasn't one of them in the West, with the possible exception of Geshe Wangyal, who was not known at all; at least he had paid visits to the West. His first visit was in the 1930s, in fact.

Cittapala: When did you come into contact with Lama Govinda?

S: I came into contact with Lama Govinda in 1951.

Cittapala: Didn't he have visualization practices given to him by Tomo Geshe?

S: He had some experience of them, yes, he had some knowledge of them, but when we talked we didn't certainly get on to that area; I don't remember why. And I did not regard him as a lama, especially as he wasn't living as a monk and had a wife - in fact, she was very much in evidence. It was often difficult to discuss anything very serious with him because she was around all the time and kept butting in, If you ask him a question she'd answer. It didn't make for easy communication. Even in those early days, it gave me food for thought about this institution of married lamas.

: ... an ideal wife.

Cittapala: So to what extent do you take what he writes in his various books, particularly concerned with Bodhisattvas [366] and the Five Buddhas and so on - to what extent does one take that as the basis of experience of his ... ?

S: He's very good when it comes to exposition of broad philosophical principles; he is very good in that respect. I think he is strongest there. But actually I came to know, I think I have said, his contact with Tibetan tradition was quite limited. He spent very little time actually in Tibet, and worked in western Tibet, just himself and his wife, copying the frescoes in Tsaparang. Sometimes the blurbs on the back of his books give the impression he spent maybe 20 years in Tibet, but he didn't, it wasn't more than three months. But publishers are a bit unscrupulous, I am afraid. Local Tibetans didn't regard him as a lama; they were quite puzzled by him.

Cittapala: So how did he get the title of being a lama?

S: Well, that is a long story. He didn't get it, he took it. What happened was this - there was a lot of discussion about this in the 1950s - it's ancient history, but since you have asked the question. He went originally to Ceylon and he studied Buddhism there; he studied Pali. This was in the 1930s, the early 1930s. And he did some art work there. And then he took the title of Anagarika Govinda, to which he added Brahmachari - he was Brahmachari Anagarika Govinda. He didn't want to become a monk in the full sense. He knew, or he had met,

Anagarika Dharmapala. So he became an anagarika - a sort of homeless person, fully dedicated to the Dharma - and to emphasize the fact that he was homeless, so to speak in ..., he also took the title of Brahmachari. So he was known in those days as Brahmachari A. Govinda. His books and articles appeared under that signature for many years.

Then he went up to Darjeeling. He was invited to address a Buddhist conference there. And there he came into contact, for the first time, with Tibetan Buddhism; he had no contact with it before, certainly no personal contact. And he became greatly interested in it, and he stayed on. Some years later - all this time he was Brahmachari A. Govinda, and became known to the Mahabodhi Society as Brahmachari A. Govinda and gave lectures at their Sarnath centre, and so on. Then he was invited to give some lectures at Shantiniketan, which was the rural university founded by Rabindranath Tagore; and there he met a lady who was studying art, whose name was Rati Kandinawala, a Parsee lady married to a well-known Parsee lawyer. To cut a long story short, they ran away together - according to some of her friends [367] who knew her, she ran away with him. And - I know relations of Li, as she afterwards became, I know Parsee relations of hers, I have heard something of the story from them; I also know people at Shantiniketan who were there at the time and I have heard part of the story from them; I haven't heard any of the story either from Lama Govinda himself or from Li Gotami.

But anyway, they were eventually married in 1947. But meanwhile he was still known as Brahmachari Anagarika Govinda. So ... he had to drop the Brahmachari; that is pretty obvious. Some people thought he ought to have dropped the Anagarika. But anyway, he still wanted to - he didn't want to give the impression he had abandoned the religious life, so he started calling himself Lama Anagarika Govinda, and his books and articles started appearing under the title of Lama Anagarika Govinda.

Now all this came out in the 1950s, when I took over the editorship of the Maha Bodhi Journal, in this way. I got Govinda to contribute articles, and some of his articles were signed - well, they all were signed - Lama Anagarika Govinda. Now the general secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society had been a disciple of Dharmapala and also knew Govinda quite well, and he objected to the 'Anagarika'. So he cut out the 'Anagarika', so some of Lama Govinda's contributions appeared as 'By Lama Govinda'. Lama Govinda was very annoyed at this, and insisted that his full title or name was Lama Anagarika Govinda. Devapriya Valisinha wasn't at all happy about that, but anyway in the end I made peace between them and I forget what was decided, but I think the article came out as 'Lama A. Govinda'. I heard much of this story from Valisinha in those days. So he substituted Lama for Brahmachari after he got married, and some Tibetans were not happy about that, I afterwards discovered. But anyway, that is the story of how he became Lama Anagarika Govinda.

Cittapala: Perhaps one more small question in connection with that. It does say in his book *The Way of the White Clouds* that you actually came into contact with what he calls the reincarnation of his original guru.

S: That is true.

Cittapala: I was wondering ...

S: Yes. This was - oh, when was that? It must have been 1960-61-62. I not only came in contact with him, I became quite [368] good friends with him. He was quite young. By birth

he was Sikkimese, so that meant he was an Indian-protected person; so using this as a sort of pretext, Buddhists in the Darjeeling area got the Government of India to approach the Government of China to release Tomo Geshe Rimpoche - he was in prison - saying that he was an Indian-protected person and not a Tibetan national. So that was accepted by the Chinese, and eventually he was released from prison and he came to Sikkim, and went to Darjeeling and then came to Kalimpong, where he settled. And there I got to know him. In fact, I got to know him quite well; we knew each other quite well for about two years, before he came to England. And he used to come to me several times a week for English lessons, and we became very friendly indeed; we got on very well indeed. And I wrote quite a lot to Govinda - he talked to me quite freely about his experiences in Lhasa under the Chinese, and I wrote a long account of what he had told me to Govinda - because he was then working on his Way of the White Clouds - saying he might want to use some of that material in his book, writing about his guru; but he decided he wouldn't; it wasn't used.

But, yes, I had quite a lot of contact with the young Tomo Geshe Rimpoche. I did find him a quite extraordinary person, no doubt about that that is, the alleged reincarnation of the old Tome Geshe Rimpoche.

Cittapala: Do you know what has happened to him now?

S: He stayed in Kalimpong for some time. Then he went to Delhi; he took up an appointment in the Dalai Lama's office, and he ... Devaraja met him there. I don't know whether anybody else has met him. I haven't had any personal contact with him, even by letter, for a long time; but we do know of each other's activities. He wasn't in Delhi when I was there last; I didn't ...

He was a quite strange person in a way. To begin with, he was very very small, very small. And of course it was not surprising, he was Sikkimese by birth, born into a Sikkimese Kasi(?) family, and the Sikkimese, especially the Lepchas, can be very small. So he is very small, and very quietly spoken; he never raises his voice. But I noticed that even though he never raised his voice and spoke very quietly, almost in a whisper, people really took notice of what he said; he seemed very much in control of his entourage, his servants and so on. He was about 23 when I got to know him. He looked very [369] young; sometimes you would think from his build he was about 14. But at the same time he looked very much like an old man; all his manners and the way he behaved were as though he was quite aged, at least 60. And I always got a quite peculiar impression of him, quite mysterious and quite strange. I didn't have that impression, I think, with any other Tibetan lama or tulku (reincarnation) that I happened to meet. He was very, very sensitive, very sensitive indeed. Very quiet; used to like to stay quietly, he saw very few people, became friendly with very few people. I don't think he became friendly with any non-Tibetan apart from myself. Even among Tibetans he kept himself very much to himself. It was certainly quite difficult to get to see him.

Like Dhardo Rimpoche, he was very fond of little animals; he had lots of little cats and dogs. But quite strange. But he showed a marked interest in me, in the sense of a marked desire to be friends, which very few Tibetans did. There was only one other Tibetan ... Kalimpong who showed a definite wish to get to know me better: Tomo Geshe was one. So we were on very good terms indeed. I was teaching him English quite regularly for a year or more; until I left Kalimpong. And Tomo Geshe Rimpoche and Dhardo Rimpoche were very close indeed. They saw each other frequently. And after a while, in the last couple of years I was in Kalimpong, the three of us formed a sort of trio; we did a lot of things together, organized a

lot of things.

But Tomo Geshe Rimpoche - the new one, the young one - was very different from Dhardo Rimpoche, a completely different sort of character. But they got on quite well; they seemed to have a good understanding between them.

Cittapala: It seems to strike quite a different impression from Western expectations of somebody who would be spiritually advanced... assumption that Tomo Geshe Rimpoche was the reincarnation of the old, accomplished, Tomo Geshe, it seems strange that he is in Delhi ...

S: It does; it does. But apart from that, and apart from - well, that he is actually the reincarnation of Tomo Geshe Rimpoche - there seem to be some grounds for believing so - apart from that, I personally found him a very interesting, very intriguing, very mysterious sort of person. He might have changed now, because that was all 20 years ago, so he is now about 45. He was often quite ill, partly as a result of the conditions under which he had been imprisoned in Lhasa. He had [370] been in prison for some months, in solitary confinement, in complete darkness, for several months. And then, when he was released from confinement, he was forced to do laundry work, washing clothes for the Chinese soldiers. He told me all about this, and I wrote all this to Govinda.

I was under the impression - perhaps rather naively - that Govinda would come rushing to Kalimpong to see Tomo Geshe Rimpoche, but he never did.

Cittapala: He certainly gives that impression in his book - the idea that when he did see that brief flash of him ... he was carried away, and that he would ... to get back to him.

Silaratna: Has Dhardo Rimpoche expressed any wish to come to England and see what is happening over here with the Movement?

S: No. His heart seems to be definitely with his school in Kalimpong.

Shantiprabha: Are any of the children in Dhardo's school in fact being involved in the Movement in India?

S: No. They are mostly quite ordinary children; they want, and their parents want them, to get education for quite ordinary reasons. They mostly just get jobs in the area. Yes, they are devout Tibetan Buddhists, but they are mainly concerned with the ordinary life. I think that has been a great disappointment to Dhardo Rimpoche - I know that from one of the children at his school. There is no one who has really committed himself to a spiritual life.

I used to find - I used to be a bit disappointed myself, because I (met?) so many people, one might say even many admirers, in Kalimpong; but there was no one who came forward really to commit himself, even after I had been there for years and years. I think the reason for that was that in India, leaving aside the ex-Untouchables, in India and in Nepal, and even among young Tibetans, the strongest, the most powerful force, the most powerful influence, is that of Westernization. They are mad after Westernization. Yes, they are Buddhists, yes, they are Tibetans or whatever; but they want to be Westernized. They don't think in terms of leading a spiritual life. Their eyes are turned greedily, one might say, to the [371] West, especially to

America. They want to wear Western suits, they want to drive Western cars, they want to have TV sets, they want to get around and have a good time.

I think people living in the West don't realize how strong Western influence is throughout the world. They don't realize it. The people have an absolute hunger for consumer goods. Even in communist countries - it is one of the big problems, apparently, of communist countries to restrain your pious communists from hankering and hungering after the fleshpots of the capitalist West. Apparently stand in Red Square with a pair of old jeans over your arm and you'll have a swarm of people around you offering you five times or ten times the price that you paid for those old jeans. It is like that with these young Nepalese, these young Tibetans, the young Indians, the young Hindus, the young Buddhists: they want to be Westernized. Westernization is the great powerful force. Buddhism, yes, that's all in the past - yes, it's OK, yes, we're Buddhists; but it's as though we've done with all that, in most cases. We've done with all that. That is our ancient history. We want to go forward now, we want to be modern, we want to be Westernized. That's what a lot of them think.

Gunapala: Do have any idea why this is such a strong force, this desire for Westernization?

S: Well, somehow the West has acquired prestige. I think originally because the West virtually conquered the East. Perhaps this is the basis of it: the West appears powerful, rich, and people are fascinated by this, they really are. My young Nepalese and Tibetan students used to talk about America, on the basis of their limited knowledge - mainly acquired through the films - they talked about America with bated breath, America was paradise. They would have sold their father and mother to go there! The nearest they could get, really, was Calcutta which wasn't quite the same thing. I think you've no idea, you don't realize the strength of this greed for material progress in the so-called undeveloped countries, the developing countries.

Cittapala: Is this perhaps because the essential message of the Dharma hasn't really penetrated to their hearts?

S: Well, one could certainly say that, yes. I have been surprised to see - I used to be very interested to see, stationed as I was in Kalimpong - watching these droves of lamas and monks coming out of Tibet. And I would see - I saw so many [372] instances - you'd find a young monk - there were lots of young monks coming out - maybe 23, 24, 25 - he'd come out, a fine, healthy young Tibetan in his red robes, shaven-headed, a devout Buddhist. Six months later, you'd see him in a Western suit, smart haircut, watch, maybe a ring, highly polished shoes; he seems to have forgotten all about Buddhism. About half of them fell by the wayside in this way; got involved with women - that was usually the thin end of the wedge - and settled down, got jobs, etc. etc. At least half of the monks who came out fell by the wayside in this manner within six months. And some of the incarnate lamas, too - oh yes, the incarnate lamas too. Some of the incarnate lamas were shocked and bewildered by what they found in India, were really thrown off balance. Some became mentally disturbed; some used to be coming to me, just pouring out their troubles and telling me how they felt.

I used to say, 'Come on, come on, you are an incarnate lama; you can't behave like this!' So sometimes they'd say, 'No, I'm not really an incarnate lama; I've never believed that I am an incarnate lama. My family was rich and well-to-do and therefore the monks came along from the monastery and they said I was the reincarnation of their ...who died. I have never felt that I was an incarnate lama.' Some of them have said that to me. And I used to exhort them and

puff them up a bit. Dhardo Rimpoche and myself both used to have to do this; they used to go to him too, sometimes they would go to me and sometimes they would go to him. But there were a number like this. And other incarnate lamas who had got out with a bit of money just went into business.

So this was very interesting to me, stationed as I was in Kalimpong; so I came to the conclusion that quite a lot of the monks, and quite a lot of the incarnate lamas, even, were held up, they were supported, by the strength of the system. And that is one reason why I believe very strongly that the ordinary man needs the support as it were of a positive social order. In the case of the young monks, who were very quickly secularized when they came to India, I am not saying that they were bad, I am not saying that they were insincere; I am not saying that they could not have been good monks if they had stayed in Tibet. They could have been, I think, in most cases. But they were people who just couldn't survive on their own.

Tape 18, Side 2

S: ... they could have, but not outside the monastery, not on their own.

[373]

Dhardo Rimpoche and I used to bewail these sort of things together; we used to be very concerned. We used to talk about them a lot. and Dhardo Rimpoche would say: 'Such-and-such young incarnate lama, you know, you saw him here two weeks ago.' I said 'Yes.' 'Well, he's just told me he's getting married.' Quite often I'd hear things like that. And so Dhardo Rimpoche was quite disappointed in many ways.

He himself - this was one of his characteristics; I have mentioned some of his characteristics - he had a quite intelligent approach to Tibetan Buddhism. He wasn't rigid, he wasn't doctrinaire or anything like that. He was quite flexible. At the same time, he seemed never to be carried away by the influence of Western civilization; it seemed never to disturb him. He seemed to have had it 'sussed out', as it were, it never threw him. So he seemed to follow a middle way in this respect. He wasn't a hidebound Tibetan traditionalist; he was quite critical about some aspects of Tibetan Buddhism. But on the other hand, he certainly wasn't carried away by Western civilization; not in the least. He made use of it; he was quite into using cameras and photography. But a lot of the lamas - not the Dalai Lama, of course - they got a bit carried away. He would never get carried away by these things.

: Is this Dhardo?

S: Dhardo, yes.

Even Tomo Geshe Rimpoche had got his moving cameras - two, ... But I think, since you have all lived in the midst of it, in a sense you have been inoculated against it. You cannot appreciate the tremendous, the disruptive power of Western materialist secular civilization in the East, in the traditional East. You don't know what havoc it has created, and the effect it has upon its own people, especially young men; much more in young men than young women for some reason or other. Maybe because they are more exposed to it in their education, and they go out and about much more freely than the young women do.

Ratnaprabha: Does this mean that in India perhaps Western Buddhism is more acceptable to

people than Eastern Buddhism?

S: Oh yes, among the ex-Untouchables, and especially the more 'educated', inverted commas, layer among the ex-Untouchables, Western Buddhism in a way is more acceptable than Eastern Buddhism. [374] Well, also for quite straightforward reasons, because what we have to say makes much more sense to them than what the bhikkhus say from Ceylon or Thailand have to say. When they have anything to say at all, that is. And as for what Tibetan lamas have to say, that doesn't make sense to the educated young ex-Untouchables at all. There is no contact at all between the ex-Untouchable Buddhists and the Tibetan Buddhists. The Tibetan Buddhists are not interested in the ex-Untouchables, nor are the ex-Untouchables interested in the Tibetan Buddhists. The Dalai Lama has once or twice addressed conferences, but that is about all; nobody followed up.

I persuaded the Dalai Lama years ago to go and speak in the ... Vihara, where I used to ... when I was in Bombay. He hadn't a clue what to say. I told him that we had an audience of ex-Untouchables, so he asked me what he should say. I said 'The best thing you can do, in my opinion, is to talk about the Bodhisattva Ideal and quote the Bodhicharyavatara of Shantideva.' And that he did, and it went down quite well. But it was never followed up.

Cittapala: What is your opinion of the set-up around Dharamsala?

S: I am rather out of touch; I don't know. But originally I do know that it was highly political. The people who surrounded the Dalai Lama were Tibetan officials, monk and lay officials, especially his own relations. They had, it seems, disproportionate power and influence. It was a sore point, I know, among many of the Tibetan incarnate lamas that they could not approach the Dalai Lama; that there was this barrier between him and them, the barrier of the lay officials. Dhardo Rimpoche himself was very upset about this, and for many years was unable to communicate freely with the Dalai Lama. Eventually he did manage to get through to him and to have an audience, and he told me himself, when he came back, that he had told the Dalai Lama what some of the lay officials had been up to, and exposed them; and he said, while he was speaking, the Dalai Lama's eyes became red with anger. But then he said to Dhardo Rimpoche: 'What can I do?' He was effectively in the hands of the lay officials.

But, of course, things do seem to have changed. The Dalai Lama has been in India since 1959; things have changed, and I think the political people have melted away. I think the Dalai Lama is much, much more accessible than he was before, [375] there is no comparison.

The policy of the lay officials was to keep all the Tibetan refugees, including the Dalai Lama, under their own control, and that the refugees should have dealings with the Government of India and the outside world only through them. They tried very hard to maintain this state of affairs for some years, but in the end it was just impossible. And so the Dalai Lama ceased to be in their hands, and they went their own ways, many of them. Many of them put money into business and industry, especially the Dalai Lama's eldest brother; he became quite a big industrialist. No one was quite clear where the money came from. But anyway, he became quite big. And two of his brothers who were monks disrobed, in fact, eventually; they turned to lay life. They were also incarnate lamas.

I think now that the present set-up is that the Dalai Lama is quite accessible, and anybody can meet him who really wants to. I think those around him are mainly people concerned with

cultural activities; I think there are some lay officials left, some sort of politicians, but in time a new generation has grown up, and of course some young patriotic Tibetans in contact with the Dalai Lama. But I don't know much about him. But certainly is more accessible now than he was in those early days. He moves about much more freely.

But the ex-Untouchables - well, they don't even know about the Dalai Lama. They are much more familiar with my name than with the Dalai Lama. And those that have heard of the Dalai Lama or Tibetan Buddhism think that it's too much like Hinduism; they are not really interested. And no Tibetan lama has made any serious attempt to approach the ex-Untouchables, even though many of them are down in India Hindi, many of the Tibetan lamas ... They are much more interested in the West, and going to the West. They are not interested in working in India ...

Cittapala: Do you think there are any other groups, apart from the ex-Untouchables, where Western Buddhism could have a similar effect ... ?

S: In India?

Cittapala: In India and Nepal, anywhere in ...

S: No, I think the ex-Untouchables are very much the thin end of the wedge for us. Quite a lot of educated Hindus are [376] interested in Buddhism. Educated Hindus have always come to my lectures in India, wherever I have given them. But they usually remain within their existing social system; they never come out and commit themselves. They just say, 'Ah well, Buddhism is much the same as Hinduism. No need to change.' But even that attitude is beginning to change; there are some Indian scholars now who are born and brought up as Hindus but who get into Buddhism and become scholars in Buddhism, and who do recognize quite objectively the difference between Buddhism and Hinduism, and some - a few of them - have actually almost committed themselves to Buddhism. So the scene is changing. I must be careful not to give you a picture of things as they were 25 years ago. Things do change, even though slowly.

Ratnaketu: Do you think being committed to the spiritual life is for the few, in the sense that you see all these Tibetans who were supposed to be committed going out and then just dispersing? You were saying that in India ...

S: It depends what you mean by 'for'. One has to look at the meaning of these ambiguous little words. Sometimes these little things are overlooked, their importance isn't realized. So what does one mean by 'for' - spiritual life being 'for' the few? Do you mean that it can be practised only by the few?

Ratnaketu: There will only be a few who will practise.

S: Well, that's pretty obvious, isn't it? In any spiritual tradition, in any religion, it's the minority that take it seriously. So this is why institutions are so important, why the positive group is so important, why a positive social structure is so important; because most people don't take much personal initiative, they are moulded by the system under which they live. So therefore it is all the more important that it should be a system which moulds them positively; that is to say, in the direction eventually of individuality. It is partly as a result of my contact

with or observation of the Tibetans coming out of Tibet, and my observation of the ex-Untouchables, that I really appreciate the importance for the majority of people of positive institutions and positive structures.

Devamitra: It would seem from what you are saying that the lack of commitment of those Tibetans who were monks in Tibet and disrobed after six months was roughly equivalent to that of some [377] one who is a Mitra in our Movement. Would you say that was a fair assessment or not?

S: In some cases it might be a generous assessment. But I don't want you to think that I am criticizing them too much. You must really consider their situation. Maybe they entered the monastery when they were quite young; they were happy in the monastery, they liked the puja, they liked the Dharma, they were loyal to it, etc. etc. But suddenly they are pitchforked out - not only out of the monastery but out of the country, into a different country, a different climate, a different culture; they were brought right up against the world, everybody is confused, their own teachers are confused. They are bewildered. So they are catching at anything. So the dominant trend that they find is more Westernization; that has great prestige, so they catch at this, and there is nothing to hold them back.

So you must not underestimate the force or the strength or the pressures to which they are exposed.

Devamitra: I appreciate that. Why I passed that comment was I was just wondering in a sense where that might or could lead us, as members of the Order, if we experienced a similar cultural/political destruction ...

S: One couldn't know unless one would actually experienced it. Some people might surprisingly weather the storm, people who you hadn't expected were so tough. Others that you thought certainly would have survived it very well have not done that, they might disintegrate or compromise. It is very difficult to tell until the time comes.

Cittapala: Do you think that the FWBO would actively encourage positive group formation as much as we could do. The reason why I ask that although I know the co-operative situations and so on would appear to be oriented towards developing the positive group; you have said in the past that and it takes a lot of commitment to, say, work in a co-operative, and that does seem to be the case - for them to operate efficiently.

S: I think we need to strengthen our nucleus, that is to say the nucleus of committed people. I think that is what we have to do. I sometimes feel a bit concerned that the element of, say, spiritual community within the positive group may not always be quite strong enough, and that the positive group may overwhelm the spiritual community to some extent. If that [378] happens, the positive group may even cease to be a positive group; because the positive group is able to be a positive group because, in the midst of the positive group, there is the spiritual community. But if the spiritual community becomes merged in the positive group, sooner or later the positive group will be merged into the old society.

This is why I get a bit concerned when I find for instance - maybe around the LBC - there are too many peripheral activities, activities which are not directly dharmic. Not that I am not in favour of such activities, but I don't want them to get out of proportion.

Harshaprabha: Could you state some of these peripheral activities?

S: I was thinking of things like drama groups, massage, yoga, social evenings, film shows - These are all all right, they certainly have their place, but if you have too many of such activities, and not enough distinctively Dharma activities, you will end up with quite a good positive group but without much in the way of spiritual community in the midst of it. And eventually the positive group will take over, and then it will cease gradually to be even positive, it will just disintegrate.

Cittapala: Would that be reflected, perhaps, in the fact that Order members should be more concerned with specifically dharmic activities, and then perhaps other people could be free to run these more peripheral things?

S: No, I think it is also important that Order members should be involved with these peripheral activities; in a sense, the more peripheral they are the more important it is that there is an Order member there, just to remind people that even these peripheral activities are ultimately oriented in the direction of the Dharma. They don't exist for their own sake. Otherwise you might get, in that particular group - say, a drama group or a massage group - people who are just interested in that and don't see the connection with the Dharma at all. The Order member is present to provide a sort of living link with the Dharma.

So, yes, Order members obviously need to be running purely dharmic activities, but they also need, I think, to be present in the midst of the peripheral activities too, which means that quite big demands are made on Order members.

[379]

Cittapala: To what extent do you think that Mitras can be encouraged to run these peripheral activities, or ...

S: I think Mitras should not be encouraged to run these peripheral activities at all. If they do run them, they should be only if they are in close contact with Order members, and if there is an Order member in the midst of that peripheral activity especially with whom they are in contact. Ideally, it is best if there is an Order member actually running or conducting the peripheral activity, so that the link with the Dharma is obvious from the beginning. That is why I am happy that Order members take yoga classes; I am happy that Order members take karate. I would like to see Order members doing all these sort of things, at the same time keeping up their own dharmic life and Order contact. Then it is obvious that there is a link between these peripheral activities and the Dharma, otherwise it can be lost sight of and these peripheral activities become ends in themselves, in other words they move to the centre of things, so far as at least some people are concerned. Or even act as a rival attraction.

Silaratna: You do hear from certain places where perhaps is a very low percentage of Order members that certain Mitras who may have been around for quite a while are persuaded or might be asked to take something like a class? This seems to be very much the pattern too, perhaps it's not such a healthy thing.

S: When you say 'class', what sort of - ?

Silaratna: Like a beginners' meditation class.

S: I would say that wasn't at all desirable. I think only Order members should take classes. I think it is only in very exceptional circumstances that Mitras should take classes. I know it sometimes does happen; it happened in Auckland, when all the Order members came to Britain. There wasn't anybody, there wasn't any Order member there to take anything. So it was a question of either closing down activities until the Order members came back or carrying on with Mitras, doing what they could. So Mitras in fact did quite well there, on that particular occasion. But that is quite an exceptional situation.

Cittapala: So, in a sense, the positive group can only expand at the same rate as the expansion of the Order? It's very ...

[380]

S: Yes. It is not easy to ascertain the exact balance - how many Order members you need to cope with how many members of the positive group. Perhaps you've got to play it by ear. But I think you have to be careful that the element of commitment within the positive group in the form of the spiritual community is sufficiently strong to pervade and influence the whole positive group.

Cittapala: So, from the point of view of trying to influence a wider public in terms of accepting the values of Buddhism, you couldn't really describe them as potentially members of the positive group unless they could actually come into contact with members of the spiritual community?

S: Yes. I think we could come into contact with quite a lot of people, some of whom would eventually go with you all the way and commit themselves, but the majority of whom would just be a bit interested and come to some extent under your influence, but no more than that. That just goes back to the point at which we started, about a minority of people being committed to the spiritual life. I think that probably will always be the case: that it is a minority who are committed to the spiritual life. But it is also up to that minority to try to ensure, for the majority, a sufficiently positive structure within which they can, live and within which they can move perhaps quite slowly in the direction of individuality.

Cittapala: So could one almost delineate a group on the outside of the positive group which is feeding the positive group - the group which is inclined towards Buddhist ideals?

S: Well, in a way we think in those terms already, because, say, we've got at the centre of the circle the Order, and surrounding that there is a larger circle of Mitras; surrounding that there is a still larger circle of Friends. Outside you've got the world, the old society ...

But let me just come back for a minute to this question of the influence of the West, the industrialized, secularized, urbanized West throughout the world; especially perhaps in the East. Wherever one goes, say in India, or say in Malaysia - these are two countries where we have some toehold ... - this is one of things in a way you will be up against. Because to those even who were, so to speak, born Buddhists, Buddhism will appear as something old-fashioned, something that their grandmothers believe in, and which they [381] can't quite reconcile with the modern education that they get nowadays at school.

So you will be up against that. You may be a bit of a puzzle, a bit of a paradox - the Westerner who is a Buddhist, a modern person who is following this old-fashioned cult; a

young man who is following (so it seems to a young Malaysian) his grandmother's religion. Sometimes people may say, 'What are you doing? You are a young man, interested in this old-fashioned religion. Why aren't you going out in fast cars and [have] the latest kind of TV set. Why aren't you doing these modern, progressive things?' In many of these areas they haven't reached the point of saturation in the way perhaps that we have or some of us have; they are still hankering after things that perhaps we've seen through to some extent.

Of course, also, ..., if you go to India you see that millions of people - hundreds of millions, in fact - are living there below the poverty line. You can understand them hankering after worldly goods, wanting a slice of the cake or a piece of the roti.

I think it is one of our strengths in India, it's one of the strengths of the movement started by Ambedkar, that Buddhism and all-round social improvement come together, because it means that that very powerful force, as far as our Buddhist work in India is concerned among the ex-Untouchables, is on your side and not working against you. Buddhism is the means to uplift, including social uplift. Whereas it is rather different in Malaysia, where a lot of the Chinese Buddhists one meets are well-to-do already, so they've got a Buddhist culture behind them, Malaysians see Buddhism as old-fashioned and they see modern culture as opposed to that and in some ways better. But in India the ex-Untouchables tend to see these two things as working together. That is why they are happy with Western Buddhism. The fact that you are a Western Buddhist is confirmation to them that you can be a Buddhist and still be rich and happy and successful. So if you take Buddhism seriously you do not have to give up all hope of social amelioration, and that is of course very important.

Devamitra: It seems quite odd, in the light of this lust after Westernization, which ... throughout Eastern countries including the Middle East, that you shouldn't have the sort of eruption that occurred in Iran. I can't quite reconcile that.

[382]

S: Mm! I don't have first-hand knowledge of Iran, but reading articles about what happened we are able to see that the minority went too fast for the majority; that the majority, the peasantry, were deeply attached to their old Islamic traditions, and they became disturbed, they became worried by the pace of change; and the Muslims were lurking in the wings, they took advantage of that and they utilized this strong feeling of discontent and disturbance to overthrow the Shah's regime.

Something a bit like that happened in India with Mrs Gandhi, in connection with the sterilization campaign. That really upset people; that was one of the biggest things responsible for her losing the election, because that was a direct attack on a lot of people's very cherished values. There was almost forcible sterilization; some officials got over-enthusiastic and had targets to meet, they had bonuses for reaching or surpassing their targets and they got over-enthusiastic. Sterilizations were carried out more or less by force. About 2 million men were sterilized. So there was a backlash that unhelped to unseat Mrs Gandhi for a while. She came back, of course.

So sometimes the force of Westernization, especially among the upper classes, so to speak, provokes some reaction among the lower classes; you get that also in India. The orthodox Hindu right-wing parties, fascist parties, to some extent represent that - the backlash against everything Western. But it is often very confused, because they want the fruits of Western

civilization, as they see them, but at the same time they want to keep up their old-fashioned way of life, their religious ideologies.

Cittapala: Do you think that the satiation with Western wealth is a growing factor in the West or do you think it is just a minor thing which is ... experience?

S: Well, I think there has been an element of satiation in some quarters, but I think the scene is rather changing, because there is apparently going to be less and less wealth. In some Western countries the standard of living is going down.

Cittapala: But do you think that would actually result in more of a kind of rat race to try and grab your share?

S: With some people, yes. I think in Britain - again, it is difficult to generalize - it is dawning upon people that the [383] cake is actually getting smaller and you are going to have to accept a smaller slice. That is dawning on some people; dawning on some trades unions, I was going to say 'even' on some trades unions but I thought better of it. But certainly in Britain we have enough of the world's goods, really, to be satisfied with or satiated. And more people in Britain really ought to be thinking in terms of at least cultural advance; if not in terms of actual spiritual life they should certainly be thinking in terms of a better use of their leisure than many of them make of it at present.

So I think perhaps we have quite a lot more work to do in the wider field. For instance, taking up this question of leisure, talking to people about leisure, the fact that they have got more leisure whether they like it or not; what are they going to do with it, and therefore what is the purpose of human life? Why is one here at all, so to speak? What use could one make of one's leisure? How is one to judge what is a good use? How is one to discover what would be the best use of one's leisure?

I think we could broach these sort of topics much more freely with people, rather take Buddhism specifically as a starting point. Maybe some people ought to try this some time.

We seem to have covered quite a bit of ground, even though we did start off with one rather frugal question, so perhaps we had better leave it there for this morning.

Day 18 Tape 19, Side 1

Vessantara: Today we have been finishing off the lecture on Perfect Effort. The first question from our group is from Suvajra.

Suvajra: We were discussing the hindrances, and the methods of overcoming the hindrances; and when we were discussing the second method - the cultivation of the opposite - we were mulling over the various methods of cultivating the opposite, how you could actually do it. And one of the ones that we came up with was by the loathesomeness of objects. Oh yes, if you are craving, cultivating the opposite by means of loathesomeness. So I wonder what your views are on the usefulness of doing that, since in the Mitrata Omnibus you had reservations on the usefulness of using that method of cultivating loathesomeness, especially of physical - and [384] corpses.

S: I am not sure what you are referring to - whether you are speaking of the asubha bhavana or whether you are speaking of the contemplation of the loathesomeness of food; they are two different practices.

Suvajra: Well, perhaps both, then. Not just bodies, when people have a craving towards them, but towards food as well.

S: But then isn't it getting away a bit from the cultivation of the opposite, because is not the opposite a positive quality? The classic example is that of metta in relation to hatred; you extirpate hatred by cultivating its opposite, which is metta. So in relation to the other hindrances, the question arises: what is the opposite? One has to determine what is the opposite before one can cultivate it, and the opposite has to be a positive quality, something skilful rather than unskilful.

Vessantara: Presumably in developing the feeling of revulsion or aversion for the object of your craving, you develop equanimity towards it.

S: Equanimity? Yes - but is that exactly the opposite of craving, especially, say, craving for food? You mentioned craving for food, but the hindrance is just craving in general, isn't it? It's kamacchanda. Kamacchanda can be understood in two ways: it can be both can be understood as substantive, that is to say kama as standing for sensuous desire and canda standing for something like will, something like volition; or you can understand kama as the substantive, as the noun, and cchanda as the verb, that is to say it becomes then a strong desire, in other words craving, for sensuous experience. That seems to be more like the meaning, because why is kamacchanda a hindrance? The hindrance is a hindrance to meditation, to entering the dhyana state, especially entering the first dhyana. So any preoccupation with, or any strong desire for, sensuous experience under those circumstances is a hindrance, because that desire directs you to the kamaloka, whereas your meditation practice is trying to direct you to the rupaloka.

So what would be a positive counterpart of that kamacchanda? It would be more like a desire, a chanda even, for the rupaloka or for experience on the rupaloka level. And, coming back to [385] this question of subha and asubha, the asubhabhavana, cultivating the opposite in this case would surely consist more in cultivating a stronger appreciation of more refined forms of beauty - not necessarily contemplating a corpse, say, but cultivating a positive and active appreciation of higher and more refined forms of beauty. One could say that. For instance through the arts, to literature, poetry, painting, sculpture. That would be more of the nature of a positive counterpart.

You could even say - here I am hypothesising a bit - that the positive counterpart of kamacchanda is aesthetic appreciation, if you wanted a real, positive counterpart, a positive quality that you could actually cultivate, as distinct from exercises to get rid of something. So the opposite here which you would need to cultivate, to get rid of or subdue this kamacchanda, would be the cultivation of a more refined aesthetic appreciation, appreciation of beauty.

Do you think that is actually possible? Does it work like that? Do you find that? After all, presumably you have all experienced kamacchanda and you have all experienced some measure of aesthetic appreciation. Does it actually work like that? Does aesthetic rapture

drive out naughty thoughts?

Suvajra: It's very hard to aesthetically appreciate something when there is a desire or craving there, I find. It's very hard to see something higher, because it's almost like the actual craving is much more tangible.

S: Of course, it doesn't help when the work of art itself is concerned with the presentation of some of those very sensuous objects that you are trying to get away from.

But I do suggest that as a sort of positive counterpart: a more refined, a more intense aesthetic appreciation could be considered as the positive counterpart of kamacchanda, and therefore to be cultivated as the remedy or antidote to kamacchanda. I am not satisfied that it is an opposite in the full sense, but I think it comes somewhat near it.

Aryamitra: The opposite would probably be generosity, wouldn't it, dana?

S: Well, that is usually considered the opposite or positive counterpart of greed, but - yes, perhaps kamacchanda is a [386] form of greed, yes. But the question arises more, say, in the context of meditation. Here you are trying to meditate; here you are trying to concentrate your mind; here you are trying to get into a dhyana state, at least the first dhyana; and then there comes into mind, there swims into your mind from somewhere or other this thought, this feeling of kamacchanda. All right, if you adopt the method of cultivating the opposite in order to eradicate it, what particular quality, analogous to metta in the case of hatred, are you to cultivate or try to cultivate at that moment? Perhaps you could conjure up a vision of some beautiful work of art. Perhaps this is also where the visualization practices are very helpful, because they do represent a more ideal, a more ethereal form of beauty which does give you a certain emotional satisfaction, and therefore enables you to detach more easily from grosser forms of satisfaction.

But, yes, at that particular time, in that particular context, that particular meditation, when this state of kamacchanda arose, one could try to divert one's thoughts by thinking in terms of or actually thinking about beautiful works of art, beautiful natural scenes, that one has seen. That would perhaps help, it would perhaps work.

But I think - this is a reflection which has occurred to me - I think the cultivation of the opposite as a method is more successful when the object whose opposite you are trying to cultivate is something rather painful and disagreeable, whereas the opposite is something pleasant. In the case of anger and hatred, this is not a very happy state to be in; it is rather unpleasant, it is disagreeable; in extreme cases it can be painful. So it isn't so difficult, perhaps, to cultivate the opposite, the positive counterpart of that, which is metta, which is something pleasant or enjoyable or agreeable.

But in the case of kamacchanda, it isn't quite like that, because kamacchanda itself is pleasant, it is pleasurable, perhaps intensely so. So it's not easy to detach yourself from it. You certainly can't detach yourself from it easily by thinking of something disagreeable, even though that may be a genuine opposite. You've got to think of something even more pleasurable, even more enjoyable, even more inspiring and rapture-inducing. And perhaps a more refined aesthetic appreciation, a more intense enjoyment of works of art, can be helpful in this connection.

It seems as though you can detach yourself from something [387] that you find very pleasurable only by discovering something even more pleasurable, if one is to do it in a natural way as distinct from imposing a certain discipline on yourself. This is why I have some reservations about the asubhabhavana. I am sure it does work in extreme cases, but whether it really goes far enough I am not so sure.

: This is the contemplation of ...

S: - impurity, the contemplation of the ugly, the repulsive, especially the ten stages of decomposition of a corpse. One can in that way, perhaps, break down one's attachment to physical bodies, but it isn't enough just to detach from them.

Gunapala: My experience of the Six Element Practice was quite positive; you are not actually visualizing anything rotting or - you are just breaking yourself down, ...

S: And also the elements themselves are very positive; they convey a positive feeling - earth, water, fire, air.

Gunapala: So this doesn't fall into that category?

S: No, it doesn't, it's quite different. There are some people who don't find ... - well, all the allegedly disgusting things that you raised in the practice, don't find them in fact disgusting; they don't find bones disgusting, or blood, or whatever. Especially people who are used to handling dead bodies - doctors, nurses and people like that. It's all in a day's work. So that wouldn't work for them.

So perhaps in a lot of ways it's better to think in terms of cultivating this positive, more refined, more pleasurable counterpart. It's not quite a counterpart, but does shift one's energies as it were just a little bit higher.

And, of course, as I said, eventually a lot of those sort of feelings can be absorbed in the visualization practice, inasmuch as the object of one's concentration, say, a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, is aesthetically very appealing, perhaps more especially the Bodhisattva, is very beautiful.

But anyway, does that really deal with your question, or is there something still left undealt with?

[388]

Suvajra: No, I think that has dealt with it. It arose because I had tried the asubha bhavana as an antidote to craving for bodies.

S: Well, that is an antidote; that does certainly work with some people. But if one is thinking of applying this method of cultivating the opposite to that particular hindrance of kamacchanda, then I think one needs a positive quality to develop, and that would seem to be a more refined aesthetic appreciation - even though that is not a full or perfect answer. But I can't think of anything better, anything more appropriate.

Suvajra: I can envision it, because when I did the practice I found it really painful to do the

asubha bhavana, because what I was dissolving was - it wasn't actually something out there, it was me, what I was involved in; and at moments the visualization practice became very important - as something even more beautiful.

S: One might even say the asubha bhavana practice really consists not in seeing something as more ugly, but seeing something else as more beautiful.

Subhuti: This was in connection with the four methods for eradicating unskilful mental states. We found a list in the Pali Canon of five, and ...

Prasannasiddhi: Well, there were the methods you have been ... - consider the consequences, cultivate the opposite, just let them pass, and forcibly suppress. And then you also say if all that fails the only thing left to do is Go for Refuge to the Buddha.

S: Yes, that is not actually a method attached to the previous four. I have attached it myself, because this is sometimes said, especially in the Mahayana, especially in the Tibetan tradition, that this is a way of overcoming hindrances generally - that you just Go for Refuge when all else fails. But there is no such list of five in Buddhist texts as far as I know, though that list of four does occur. But Subhuti said you had found a fifth in Pali texts?

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, and that's just saying to yourself: 'Why am I feeling negative? - if you are feeling negative - 'Why don't I just feel positive?' and then just begin feeling positive.

[389]

S: Is this method actually found in the - ?

Subhuti: It's got it here actually.

S: Ah, you'd better give me the actual quote.

Ratnaprabha: It's this paragraph here.

S: 'Monks, if when the monk has brought about forgetfulness of, and lack of attention to, those thoughts, there still arise even unskilled thoughts associated with desire, associated with aversion, associated with confusion' - yes, here it is associated with lobha, dvesa, moha rather than with the five hindrances - 'that monk should attend to the thought-function and form of those thoughts. While he is attending to the thought-function and form of those thoughts, those that are evil unskilled thoughts associated with desire and associated with aversion and associated with confusion, these are got rid of, these come to an end. By getting rid of these, the monk subjectively steadies, calms, is one-pointed, concentrated. Monks, even as it might occur to a man who is walking quickly, "Now, why do I walk quickly? Suppose I were to walk slowly." It might occur to him as he was walking slowly, "Now, why do I walk slowly? Suppose I were to stand." It might occur to him as he was standing, "Now, why do I stand? Suppose I were to sit down." It might occur to him as he was sitting down, "Now, why do I sit down? Suppose I were to lie down." Even so, monks, the man, having abandoned the very hardest posture, might take to the easiest posture itself. Even so, monks, if while the monk has brought about forgetfulness of or lack of attention to those thoughts (dot dot dot ...) concentrated.'

So what do you make of that? But this does occur; this does happen. People have told me sometimes - especially when they get involved in relationships, which is a sort of form of organized disorganized kamacchanda. Sometimes people have said to me that one day they wake up and think, 'Why on earth am I doing this? Why on earth am I involved in this? What am I really doing?' It is this sort of thing the Buddha is thinking of, as an actual practice. Suppose you get very angry, and then you start coming to your senses and you ask yourself: 'Why on earth am I becoming angry? What good is it doing me? Am I really enjoying it? Is it the sort of thing I really want to get into?' But, unfortunately, you don't really start thinking in that way, reflecting in that way, until the anger has abated somewhat. While the anger is still in full force, so to speak, [390] it is very difficult to reflect in this way, but if you can reflect in this way - 'Why on earth am I behaving like this? Why on earth am I feeling in this particular way?' - it can very often help. So it can be regarded as an additional, fifth method.

Prasannasiddhi: You don't include that in - ?

S: No. Because this fifth method is very rarely given. The four that I do give, that is a standard list, but here the Buddha seems to just give an extra method in this particular case. Yes, it certainly is useful.

Amoghacitta: Isn't that rather the same as the first method - reflecting on the consequences of such thoughts - ?

S: In a way it is, but then in a way not, because one is asking, 'Why am I doing this, what is making me do it?' Not 'What will be the consequences of this action?' but 'What are the antecedents, what are the causes of this action, the causes of this mental state?' And also it's not only that: you are seeing it as simply incompatibility with the things that you really want. To quote again the instance of the relationship - you might think to yourself, 'What am I doing, what am I involved in? I was looking for happiness, I was looking for companionship, I was looking for pleasure, for bliss, paradise on earth, and what have I got? What have I got involved in? It's more like hell on earth.' You start wondering about it - going a bit slowly.

The same when you are carried away with anger. Or when you get into a state of depression, and you ask yourself, 'Why am I in this state? What reason is there for being in this state really? Why am I in this state? There is no justification. Here I am, a healthy human being; I am young, I've got the world before me, I've got my whole life before me, I've got the Three Jewels, I've got my spiritual friends, I've got the Dharma; and here I am feeling miserable and depressed; what on earth have I allowed to happen? Why on earth have I allowed myself to get into this state? How utterly ridiculous!' So this is the way of reflecting that the Buddha gives here. You start realizing the extraordinariness, the utter absurdity, of you being in the state that you actually are.

Someone related something like this, telling his life story. I don't remember who it was; I'm not even sure whether [391] it was a life story I heard here, but it was someone relating a life story. I think they were talking about last year, when people started going off to Tuscany and they themselves, they confessed, started feeling a bit resentful that some people were going to Tuscany and they weren't. And then it suddenly dawned on them: 'Here they are going to Tuscany for a three-month course and going to get ordained, hopefully, at the end, and here am I grudging them that, almost, and feeling a bit resentful; so how utterly inappropriate this is.' So this seems to be an application of this kind of method. Because one realizes one has

allowed oneself to get into a state which is in fact utterly opposed to everything that one believes that one believes in. If people go off to Tuscany you should be dancing with joy on Hampstead Heath ...

Shantiprabha: I have actually asked myself that question several time, and just the reflection on why am I in a particular state - just asking the question seems to radically change the ...

S: Yes. If you ask why, presumably you see there is no real reason. You've got every reason not to be in a state like that, apart from having any reason to be in that state. So if you are in a state of utter depression, well, why? You'd got up here and you wanted to have breakfast, and you discovered there weren't any cornflakes (Laughter), that upset you and you've been in a bad mood for the rest of the day, you can't meditate, you are grumpy with other people, etc. etc. You kick the cat (Laughter). you snap at your kalyana mitra, you have a thoroughly bad meditation; you get your ... And all for what? When you really reflect upon it, you just realize the absurdity of it. It does help, because you feel really you are in such a ridiculous position, you have put yourself in a ridiculous position, you are in fact being ridiculous feeling the way that you do, and you see that, and seeing it you can snap out of it.

But there is another point in this passage which we have overlooked: that the Buddha represents the monk as reflecting on one thing after another, the subsequent one being easier, more pleasant, more agreeable, than the preceding one. Which suggests that, when you indulge in negative states, in unskilful mental states, you are giving yourself a hard time. Why give yourself a hard time? Why not give yourself an easy time? Why not allow yourself to experience skilful mental states, positive mental states?

[392]

Shantiprabha: I think it comes down to a lack of self-responsibility. I can see myself in my past that I almost developed myself into a negative state in the hope that mummy or daddy would come along and ... bad state and do something for me. And it seems like you have to make the transition between that sort of existence and your self-responsibility.

S: Yes, you have to accept responsibility, ultimately, for your own mental states. Sometimes you hear people say, 'He made me angry.' Well, he didn't make you angry. He may have provoked you, but he didn't actually make you angry, because if you became angry that is your responsibility. And sometimes you find people, for one wretched reason or another, hanging on to their negativity, clutching their unskilful mental state. You try to talk them or chivvy them out of it, they don't want to be talked out of it, they don't want to be chivvied out of it; they want to hang on to it. They insist on being negative, sometimes - quite a lot of people do this. They hang on to it, apparently, till they feel it has really sunk in and that you really realize how unhappy and miserable they are, you really take this seriously. If they think that you are taking it a bit lightly, they just go off, all sad and miserable, just to really convince you that they are sad and miserable, so that you will really start feeling sorry for them. These are just some of the games that people play.

I used to know somebody, years and years ago - I need not mention any names - who every now and then would just go and sit in a corner, and sulk. And I would say: 'Look, what's the matter? Is anything the matter?' And he'd say, 'No - no - I'm all right.' And I'd say, 'Well, I think there is something the matter, tell me.' 'No, no, no.' 'Come on, there is something the matter.' And eventually, with a lot of cajoling, maybe after half an hour, it would come out

what it was. But people are rather like this. But he would never say, 'Something is bothering me, so can we talk about it?' No, he would always have to go through his little act of going off, going and sitting in the corner, or going to bed - just going to bed, that was a quite common ploy, and hiding his head under the bedclothes, or sitting and looking a bit miserable.

Gunapala: This is something children do quite a lot.

S: Yes, in a quite transparent way. Anyway.

[393]

: ... arupa dhyanas.

Shantiprabha: We were considering rather briefly the dhyanas, and on reading about the fourth arupa dhyana, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, we were surprised to see that in this dhyana the whole subject-object duality is actually transcended. I always understood that all the dhyanas were very much part of the mundane.

S: Well, the traditional teaching is that the arupa dhyanas are mundane, and the fourth arupa dhyana is usually explained as a state in which there is a very subtle subject-object duality - that it is not entirely transcended. Though the actual wording of the Pali term describing it does say 'neither perception nor non-perception'; it doesn't say anything about a very subtle perception. So this, of course, is one of the reasons for raising this whole question of what really are the arupa dhyanas? Are they mundane, or are they as mundane as tradition leads us to suppose?

I think personally there is a case, so to speak, for opening the whole question about the arupa dhyanas, and even questioning - and this is going quite against tradition since at least soon after the time of the Buddha - whether the arupa dhyanas can be regarded as actually mundane; whether they do not lie the other side of Stream Entry, not this side of Stream Entry, as on the whole tradition does say. But before one could come to any definite conclusion, one would have to comb through all the references to the arupa dhyanas in the Pali Canon and perhaps in other sources.

But I begin to suspect that originally the arupa dhyanas may have had some connection with the Transcendental rather than having been included in the mundane; but I won't make any definite statement, because it awaits further investigation.

Ratnaprabha: When the Buddha was taught two of the arupa dhyanas by two of his early teachers, does this refer to the same thing, do you think? Would this imply that he was in contact with the Transcendental at that time?

S: Well, what was the Buddha taught by his teachers? It is usually said that he did reach, with one, seven out of eight dhyanas and with the other eight out of eight, but did not touch the Transcendental. But this raises all sorts of questions. Do we really know what the Buddha did study with those early [394] teachers? There are differing accounts. Asvaghosa gives an entirely different account. It seems as though with one he studied Samkhya philosophy. It could well be that by the time the scriptures were compiled it wasn't exactly known what the Buddha had studied; it was only known he was dissatisfied with those teachers and he wanted

something more than they could give him. And it may well be that the compilers inserted that list of dhyanas just to illustrate the point. By the time they inserted that list of dhyanas the arupa dhyanas would have come to be known as mundane. But this was their way of illustrating in detail how it was that the Buddha was not satisfied with their teaching.

But that raises further difficulties, because we are told that at the time of the Enlightenment, or just before the Enlightenment, the Buddha recalled his early dhyanic experience as a boy, ... So if he recalled that, ignoring, so to speak, what according to tradition was his more extended dhyanic experience under those early teachers, why was that? Why, instead of recalling an early, more limited experience of dhyana as a boy, did he not recall that more extended experience of dhyana under those teachers? Was there some difference between the dhyana experience he enjoyed as a boy and the dhyana experiences experienced under those teachers? According to tradition, it seems that there were not, but if there was not that still raises all sorts of questions.

I tried to explain myself, accepting the traditional account, but I must admit the explanation is perhaps a little strained. Perhaps one needs a more thoroughgoing reappraisal of the whole question, but more than that I can't say at the moment.

Amoghacitta: Isn't it the tradition that he had his experiences as a boy entirely naturally, whereas his later - ?

S: Yes. Well, that is to say the experience as a boy came spontaneously. But can you really speak of enforced experience of, say, arupa dhyanas? Is that really possible? You have to consider that point quite seriously.

Aryamitra: When you were speaking earlier on in one Questions and Answers about one who has 'gone upstream', I think you mentioned, according to my notes, that it seemed the arupa dhyanas were added on at a later date, as if the Buddha went up the rupa dhyanas and came down; and because the arupa dhyanas were formulated at a later date they kind of added it in.

[395]

S: Yes, this is one scholarly theory. But that is nothing to do with going upstream; that refers to Transcendental attainment, not to mundane dhyana attainments. Going upstream was supposed to be going from one Transcendental experience to another, not from one dhyana state to another.

Aryamitra: No, I pointed it out because if 'going upstream' is the beginning of an ongoing creative process, everything else after that is just an elaboration, if you like, on that process-like maybe the arupa dhyanas.

S: The arupa dhyanas did not belong to the same order of experience, though of course they may be experienced after one has gone upstream. But they belong to a different order of experience, that is to say mundane rather than Transcendental. Not that one who has developed Insight does not experience samatha, but the two things belong to two different orders of experience, one Transcendental, the other mundane.

Cittapala: How far do you think you could get, with a sort of forced will?

S: I think not very far, and not for very long. It is very difficult to generalize, because one is speaking presumably of other individuals.

Cittapala: Presumably the Buddha had considerable will power. He could manage his ascetic practices to a certain extent ...

S: But what would one mean by, say, an experience of arupa dhyanas, which is a very high state, brought about as if by sheer will power? Could one in fact get as far as that by sheer will power? That would seem to be very doubtful. Perhaps one could get by will power, so to speak, into the first or even the second dhyana, but one wouldn't be able to stay there very long, it would be too much of a wilful effort, too many opposing factors. In fact, one really doubts whether one could get very far at all in a wilful fashion. One can fixate one's attention wilfully, but is that real concentration? Is it concentration in the full sense? Is not a feeling of ease, of sukha, inseparable from such concentration?

The more I think about it, the more I doubt whether one can get very far at all in this wilful way... any more ...

Cittapala: Does that mean to say that the sort of [396] experiences which quite a lot of Indian concentration techniques advocate would really not ...?

S: It's like a sort of balancing trick. You can balance yourself on the tip of your big toe, and you can learn to do that; but it's a very unstable position, and you can't maintain it for very long. So if you haven't really prepared a basis for dhyana experience you are getting up to, say, first dhyana by means of a sort of forcible exertion of will, it's a bit like that: you are holding yourself in an unnatural position, one for which you are not even prepared, for which there is no base.

So I incline rather to doubt my own explanation, which was admittedly provisional, of the Buddha's experience of all eight dhyanas before his Enlightenment as having been as it were a result of a certain amount of wilful striving - I rather doubt whether that could have been possible.

Tape 19, Side 2

... this question of the four arupa dhyanas, what they are, what they represent.

: Is there no question whatever, then, he actually did attain experience of arupa dhyana?

S: One has only the existing records to go by, and some of them are contradictory. How does one really know what happened in the case of the Buddha? One has only got the existing records to go by, ... traditions. They don't always all fit together. they don't always ... clearly and unambiguously the same thing. Even when they do say the same thing, they don't necessarily explain the meaning of that thing. There is a lot of work to be done in a way in this sort of area, and not just investigating intellectually but at every step relating one's investigations, or the results of one's investigations, to actual experience. Perhaps someone should spend a year, or say five years, in a mountain cave and settle it once and for all.

Any further points?

Devamitra: Yes, there are two questions from my group. The first question is from Ratnaketu.

Ratnaketu: Bhante, this comes out of our discussion we [397] were having about the Tibetan Wheel of Life, and how in fact the whole universe - the Wheel of Life is a representation of the whole of mundane existence. And in the very centre of that, what makes it all go round is greed, hatred and delusion. And I began to wonder what causes beings to evolve if there is only greed, hatred and delusion as the motivating factors for any change whatsoever I couldn't see how evolution could take place.

S: Well, in a way - I suppose by evolution you mean spiritual Higher Evolution?

Ratnaketu: Well, even just the evolution of consciousness, the lower evolution, even that I couldn't explain, let alone the Higher Evolution.

S: Well, I don't think that is really such a difficult matter, because when one says, say, delusion here, much of that delusion would be regarded by many people as almost Enlightenment. But delusion includes the whole of ordinary knowledge, even ordinary consciousness, even mundane consciousness. That is delusion from the standpoint of, or in the light of, the higher Transcendental consciousness. But further than that, in the fuller representation of the Wheel of Life, you have not only got lobha, dvesa and moha at the hub of the wheel, etc. etc., you have also got the Buddha figures in the different spheres of existence. So one might say that even though within the mundane itself there is no factor, there is no force, there is no influence conducing to a Higher Evolution, what about the influence of the Transcendental? What about the influence of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas? That influence is drawing everybody up. One could look at it in that way.

Ratnaketu: What about then if you take the Wheel of Life to be your own mind, what these figures symbolize ... ?

S: Which figures?

Ratnaketu: Those Bodhisattvas.

S: Well, if they are also there, and if the whole thing is in one's own mind, they are also in one's own mind; but within one's own mind there are these forces and influences. In other words, one's own mind comprehends not only the mundane but also the Transcendental - one's own mind in the fuller, wider and truer sense. These are two further possibilities within you yourself: the reactive and the creative, the mundane and the [398] Transcendental. You give birth to the samsara which also gives birth to the Path, to the Spiral.

Devamitra: Is it possible, from the Buddhist tradition, to analyse any force or collection of forces which underlie the universe?

S: Well, underlie - that is a very questionable term.

Devamitra: Well, that move, that create the universe.

S: Well, the traditional Buddhist view, certainly the view of the Hinayana, certainly the view of the Theravada, is that there is no ultimate first beginning of things. This is one of the basic

points of the Theravada; so there are no ultimate causes, no ultimate first beginning of things. As far back as you go, you can still go further, according to ...

Devamitra: What I mean is existent forces. Well, our conditioned existence. And certainly mundane aspects of that, this greed, hatred and delusion, can be analysed as creating and producing.

S: Well, there is this Abhidhamma classification of the five niyamas. There is the physical inorganic order, the physical organic order, there is the mental order, there is the karmic order, and there is the dharmic order; the dharmic order representing, one might say, the as it were irruption of the Transcendental into the mundane. There are other ways of looking at it. There is the teaching, for instance, of the Awakening of Faith. The Awakening of Faith posits, so to speak, two tendencies, almost, within the One Mind: the mundane and the Transcendental. And something of the Transcendental is all the time rubbing off on to the mundane; and something of the mundane is always rubbing off on to the Transcendental. And there takes place what the text calls a sort of mutual perfuming. It is because the mundane is perfumed by the Transcendental that human beings are able to attain Enlightenment, and it is because the Transcendental is perfumed by the mundane that Bodhisattvas reach out towards suffering humanity, which is the teaching of The Awakening of Faith.

Amoghavajra: In the Mitrata Omnibus we came across the double vajra. There is some symbolism between the double vajra and the very basis of the universe. Would that come into it?

[399]

S: There is a sort of Tibetan cosmological teaching according to which the basis of existence is symbolized by a double vajra: that is a sort of ultimate foundation of things. The double vajra is clearly a symbol, but what does one think it means? What associations would one have with the double vajra? What is a single vajra, anyway?

Gunapala: There is this connection with the centre of the universe with the seat of the Buddha?

S: That's the vajrasana.

Gunapala: The vajrasana - is that a double vajra sort of seat?

S: No, I don't think that's a double vajra seat; I think the double vajra is the seat, so to speak, of the whole of existence, the whole universe.

Dhirananda: Does it not somehow represent the unification of opposites?

S: But if you've got two vajras, they are not opposites exactly. They are two things of the same kind. Of course you could say that they face in different directions, so the opposition perhaps comes in there.

Silaratna: Does that tie up with that sort of thing of the indestructible sort of force meeting a ...

S: Immovable object? Well, you could say that the vajra represents sunyata; the double vajra is sort of sunyata laid upon sunyata, like a warp and a woof, ... It's as though the whole basis of existence is woven of vajras. Well, it's woven of sunyata, you could say - if you want to translate it into nice easy conceptual terms. The tradition here just gives us images. The double vajra - sometimes it says the golden double vajra - lying at the basis of everything. Well, that is meant to convey something which perhaps one shouldn't be too ready to put into words, into conceptual terms.

But certainly the vajra represents something indestructible, something powerful, keen, irresistible. And a double vajra? The double vajra lying ...

We seem to have got rather a long way away from Perfect Effort. Are we supposed to be on that?

[400]

Devamitra: It did actually arise out of our discussion of the Higher Evolution, I believe. We do have one more question on the Higher Evolution...

Amoghacitta: This is probably a definition of terms. In the triangle representing the Lower and Higher Evolution, on the hypotenuse you've got the numbers 0, 1, 2, 3 to infinity. And - I'll just read this: 'Point 1 represents the point at which human consciousness emerges; 2 represents the point at which self-consciousness or awareness emerges.' ... develop this point. Can you just say a bit more about the difference between human consciousness and self-consciousness?

S: Human consciousness, I would say, if I had to stick to these terms - which I might not now, but if I had to stick to these terms - I would say that human consciousness in this sense was sort of half way between the non-reflexive consciousness of the animal and the completely self-conscious reflexive consciousness of the human being or individual in the full sense.

Amoghacitta: Is that definition - ... self-consciousness emerges rather than ... ?

S: Yes, it's a sort of tip; the growing tip emerges. You begin to be a little self-conscious, but your self-consciousness is not fully developed.

So if one thinks of self-consciousness as human consciousness, that is to say fully developed human consciousness, or one thinks of fully developed human consciousness as self-consciousness, well, before that human consciousness reaches its full development there is a point at which it just begins to emerge from the non-reflexive consciousness of the animals, so to speak. So that is the point to which I am referring, the point at which emerges - perhaps I should have said begins to emerge - the growing tip as distinct from the fully opened flower.

Amoghacitta: Would you say the beginning of self-consciousness is the beginning of true individuality?

S: One could say that, I think, yes. One is the seed of the other, almost.

Subhuti: You usually strictly define true individuality as [401] Stream Entry.

S: Yes, Individuality with a capital I. So this would be individuality with a small i.

Prasannasiddhi: And between sense-consciousness and self-consciousness is what would be termed a human.

S: Yes, which is the beginnings of full self-consciousness. Because the majority of human beings are not really self-conscious in the full sense. They are not even individuals as yet with a small i, not to speak of with a big I.

One might say - to go back to this question of the hindrances and that fifth method - that when we stop and ask ourselves, 'What am I doing?', that represents a sort of emergence of self-consciousness. You become conscious of what you are doing; you become conscious of yourself as doing something. And when you become conscious of yourself as doing it, knowing what you are supposed to be and what you are supposed to stand for, and knowing what it is that you are doing, the whole thing seems so ridiculous. So it's as though you as it were invoke your self-consciousness then. You induce a more intense feeling of self-consciousness; you become more of an individual, and hence you become more able to free yourself from the unskilful mental states of which you become conscious of yourself as having become involved in.

Gunapala: When a young child is aware of an object outside of itself and can remember it, and the memories we have when we were young children, how much of this has anything to do with self-consciousness?

S: Memory has something to do with self-consciousness, but simply to remember, to be able to identify objects other than yourself has no direct connection with the development of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness means that you not only do something, you are not only aware of doing it, but aware that you are aware; you are conscious that you are conscious. You can as it were turn around and look at yourself as though you were another being. Of course, there, there is the possibility of alienation; that's the danger that arises, that's the sort of risk that we have to take. But if we can just stand aside and look at ourselves, see ourselves subjectively, we can so to speak imagine ourselves as being different in the future; we can extrapolate ourselves from the present into the future, we [402] can imagine ourselves as different, we can imagine ourselves as changed. And therefore we can think in terms of taking steps to bring about that change.

Gunapala: It does seem very close to alienation.

S: It does indeed. There is the risk of alienation at every step. We mustn't race too far on ahead. And the ideal which we posit for ourselves, the way in which we see ourselves as existing in the future, must not be too abstract; it must have some connection with the way we are at present. There must be some point of contact.

Subhuti: You could say that the point up to self-consciousness is the point - the process of horizontal integration is going on up to that point, the process of vertical integration goes on after that point?

S: I am not sure about that. I would need time to think about that. Perhaps one could correlate them ...

Gunapala: The question would be then - I'm not sure - psychologically healthy and human psychologically and still have no self-awareness. Could that be possible, not to have self-awareness and yet be quite healthy, happy and human?

S: I don't think it would be possible to be healthy, happy and human without any self-consciousness at all. But I think you could be healthy, happy and human without having developed self-consciousness fully, even in that sense of self-consciousness which coincides with individuality with a small i. You can meet people who are healthy, who are happy, who are in a way human, but they have very little reflexive consciousness, they don't think about themselves much; they don't see themselves as it were through somebody else's eyes.

Cittapala: Is it possible to correlate this process of Higher Evolution to the Jungian theory of integrating one's anima, shadow, and other components of the Self?

S: I think it's possible to some extent, but this is more in the nature of a guess because I haven't tried to work it out for myself completely. But I think, I suspect, that any correlation would extend only as far as the mundane section of the Spiral, let us say. One could not take it through to the Transcendental. I doubt very much whether Jung himself had any real awareness of that dimension. But if the contacting of [403] those archetypes of the collective unconscious successively had any bearing upon the development of the individual, one assumes it would be possible to correlate them with the Buddhistic stages of the Path. Though the point of view, the point of departure, is rather different, so perhaps the correlation would have to be worked out rather carefully; not that the anima corresponds to the first dhyana and so on. I don't think it would be quite so simple and straightforward as that.

Yes, I think I have attempted a sort of rough correlation, haven't I, somewhere? That the shadow is Mara; that the anima is the Earth Goddess; that Mucalinda is the Young Hero, and that Brahmasahampati is the Wise Old Man - in terms of the biography of the Buddha. But that is not exactly to correlate those archetypes with the successive stages of the spiritual path.

But certainly it's as though the Buddha disposes of these archetypes in terms - so to speak, in terms of his biography - first he overcomes Mara, integrates his shadow. Then he calls up the Earth Goddess and integrates his anima. After that he harkens to the words of Brahmasahampati, the Wise Old Man; and then there appears in front of him the young Mucalinda, the Young Hero - himself, reborn. That is a bit too neat and easy, perhaps, but it is interesting.

I think I have touched upon these matters in a lecture in that first series I gave under the auspices of the FWBO, a series which I entitled 'Aspects of Buddhist Psychology'. The title of this talk was something like 'Symbols of the Buddha's Biography' ...

Voices: Archetypal.

S: 'Archetypal Symbolism in the Biography of the Buddha'.

Subhuti: We actually studied it in the Mitrata Omnibus.

Vessantara: But presumably it was very open to misunderstanding, if the Buddha only encountered the Wise Old Man and the Young Hero after his Enlightenment. You could

rationalize from that that if you got to the point of integration there was nothing much to Enlightenment. (?)

S: Yes. I think one has to correlate the archetypes with those figures the Buddha encountered at that time with some [404] caution to say the least, otherwise it could give rise to some confusion. This is apart from the fact that, as I have mentioned before, one is not to think of the Buddha's Enlightenment as occurring at a particular instant of time; rather as a process, extending perhaps over a whole period of time. The encounter with Mara, the calling up of the Earth Goddess, listening to Brahasahampati, and seeing the figure of Mucalinda - these seem to represent different phases in the whole, the total, Enlightenment experience. This is how I tend now to see it.

Ratnaketu: ...This is one of the things that I've been wondering about - if the Buddha was a Buddha that means he was before he was Enlightened he was a very, very advanced Bodhisattva, yet he got born in the world, and up until his Enlightenment he didn't know that he was a Bodhisattva, see what I mean.

S: Well, opinions differ. The full Mahayana tradition would say he knew at every instant, and all the things that he did just represented a game, a play, he didn't really go through them. That is why the Mahayana version of the biography of the Buddha, based on Sarvastivadin sources, that is to say the Lalitavistara, is called the Lalitavistara - the extended account of the sports, the games of the Buddha. Why is it given that title? Because he didn't really see the four sights, and then go forth from home; he knew all the time what it was all about, where it was at. He only went through the motions of all those activities for the benefit of human beings. That is the fully-fledged Mahayana point of view, putting it very crudely.

Ratnaketu: But then why would he undergo such austerities for so long?

S: To exhibit to people fully the futility of austerities. That is the fully-fledged Mahayana point of view, putting it rather crudely. There are difficulties here, of course.

Ratnaketu: Even the Hinayana believes that he was a Bodhisattva before he was a Buddha.

S: Yes, but the Hinayana used the term Bodhisattva simply in the sense of one who is aiming at bodhi. You must not read into that the fully-fledged Mahayana doctrine of the Bodhisattva, which is simply not there. The Buddha uses the term Bodhisattva in, for instance, the Ariyapariyesana Sutta, simply to mean himself before he gained bodhi. He did not practise the paramitas and all that in the Mahayana sense.

[405]

Ratnaketu: According to the Hinayana, would the Buddha have been a Stream Entrant - not before he was born, but once he was born was he a Stream Entrant?

S: Well, no: if one thinks of the Buddha as pre-existing and as a Bodhisattva, well, no, he would not have followed that path, because that would have taken him to arhantship, not to samyaksambuddhahood.

It all gets rather technical, I'm afraid. All this material has not yet been, as it were, critically assessed. A bit of a start was made by Mrs Rhys Davids, but no one else has really done any

sort of work. I have followed up, or tried to follow up, a few hints, a few lines of thought, but the higher criticism, so to speak, has still got to get to work on the Pali Canon. It has got to work on the Bible - all the New Testament books - got to work on them a couple of hundred years ago, so there is no reason why the higher criticism should not get to work on the Pali Canon also.

But obviously the higher criticism is augmented... a spiritualized attainment (?) because that is what the teaching contained in the Pali Canon is, after all, all about ... The higher criticism has to be carried out, carried on, in the interests of the spiritual life, and in the conviction that there is such a thing as a spiritual life. It was that that the Buddha was concerned about, concerned with.

Bodhiruchi: What do you mean by higher criticism?

S: Has anybody heard this expression before - Higher Criticism, Capital H, Capital C?

Subhuti: Yes.

S: Could you give a brief definition?

Subhuti: I think the Higher Criticism developed in Germany, in Protestant theological circles. It no longer accepted the Bible as the word of God, and considered it to be a literary/historical document, and started to analyse it from that point of view.

S: For instance, you might have a text - say - well, you've got the Epistles of St Paul in the New Testament. All right, so the question arises that according to tradition they [406] were all written by St Paul, they were all just the letters written by Paul in his own hand and sent to all the different churches. But the Higher Criticism isn't satisfied with that; the Higher Criticism points to certain discrepancies, certain discrepancies of doctrine, certain discrepancies of style; the Greek is different in one epistle from another, or that there are breaks in certain epistles which suggest that something had been joined on to something else. So Higher Criticism is concerned with matters of this sort. It can become very complicated indeed.

Gunapala: Is this Higher Criticism like a body of people that pull articles like the Bible to pieces? Is it an organized group?

S: No, it isn't an organized group. Higher Criticism has been mainly carried on by professors of Old Testament and New Testament theology and philology and so on.

Subhuti: Really what you've been offering, say, as regards the arupa dhyanas this morning that's the beginning, a touch...

S: A touch of the Higher Criticism, one might say. One doesn't just take things at their face value or uncritically.

I think what is important here is that I think the Higher Criticism in Germany ... was not always aware of it - your higher criticism has basically, has essentially, to be in the interests of the spiritual life and has all the time to be related to the needs of the spiritual life. I don't

think there can be a genuine higher criticism if you don't (in the case of Buddhism) believe, so to speak, that there was someone called the Buddha and that a state called Enlightenment is possible of attainment.

In other words, higher criticism, as applied to, say, religious documents, cannot really proceed on a basis of strict or narrow rationalism or materialism.

Bodhiruchi: The only time I heard of the Higher Criticism was that there has been a reaction against the Higher Criticism.

S: Well, there certainly has, because you can get led into very deep waters, as regards higher criticism in a Christian context. Because it can shake your faith in the Bible as the word of God. So some people, when they start realizing where the Higher Criticism is leading, beat a hasty retreat and they reaffirm their belief in the Bible as the word of God, and they [407] become sort of fundamentalist Christians. They don't want to know about the Higher Criticism; they just want to take the Bible as the word of God and accept every word of it literally. There are a lot of Christians like this. The intellectual effort is too much for them; even the spiritual effort is too much for them. There are different, even contradictory, accounts of the birth of Jesus in the Gospels; all right let's just accept all the accounts if they are all the Word of God? They must somehow be reconcilable; maybe they don't understand how, but they must be because they are all in the Word of God.

Someone once said that, according to fundamentalists, the whole Bible, every word of it, is inspired; and some ultra-fundamentalists added, 'Well, yes, and even the full stops and commas.' Though, of course, in the case of, say, the Old Testament - well, what about the text of the Old Testament? Our reading of the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and therefore our understanding of that Hebrew, is dependent to a large extent upon a device called Masoretic points. Has anybody ever heard of Masoretic points? If you have, you're a bright boy. Masoretic means - a Hebrew text was originally only printed with the consonants. Suppose you took English, you could print only the consonants, leaving out all the vowels; this would be how Hebrew originally appeared. But as it became a dead language, people sort of forgot how the words were actually pronounced, they forgot which vowels to fill in, which vowels to attach to the consonants; so scholars who became aware of this devised a system of points for putting above or below the letters to indicate the vowels. But there was a suggestion that, even by that time, the meaning of some words had been forgotten, so they put the wrong Masoretic points, the wrong vowel signs. So that made it in some cases a different word, so this led to some misunderstandings, some misinterpretations. And these points were called Masoretic points - I forget who - I forget why they are called Masoretic points. They were devised in Alexandria, I think. Can you remember?

So our present text of the Hebrew Bible is a 'pointed' text, that is to say a text equipped with Masoretic points. But supposing, as seems to be the case, some of those Masoretic points were wrongly placed? Then we read the wrong vowels and get the wrong words, in some cases. So if you are still regarding the Bible as the word of God with every word inspired, you are in a bit of a difficult position.

Vessantara: You have to regard the scholars who put in the [408] points as divinely inspired as well.

S: Yes. Well, there is the story about the Septuagint, as it's called, that is to say the Greek version of the Old Testament. It's called the Septuagint because it was produced by - 71 scholars, wasn't it? - and apparently they all produced their versions separately; and when they were compared they tallied absolutely. So that proved that they were all divinely inspired. So the Greek translation of the Old Testament, made for the benefit of Greek-speaking Jews who had forgotten their Hebrew, could be read and believed in with the same implicit faith and trust as the Hebrew Bible itself.

In the same way, many people believe that the King James version of the Bible is completely reliable, despite the fact that there has been a Revised Version and several other translations. I have met, in England, quite simple people who actually believe that the Bible was originally in English, and who find it difficult to grasp that the Bible that they have is a translation - despite the title page of the English Bible itself. They were under the impression - I have met such people in villages in England years ago - they actually believe that the Bible was in English from the very beginning. And they are quite surprised when you point out that it was actually a translation; they find it very difficult to understand. They find even the idea of translation from one language into another difficult to understand. Well, if you only know one language and you've never even tried to learn another language, you tend to think that there is only one language. You live in a village and haven't much education, you've just heard about the Bible, you haven't really read it much; you know it's the Word of God, you know it's in English; you tend to think it's always been in English. You don't know about all these refinements about it being a translation and that the words in English might not quite correspond to the words in Hebrew; that's quite beyond you.

Silaratna: It sort of does in that sense shake the whole term God, really. It shakes the foundations from under it. Is God an English word, or is it a word derived from some other - ?

S: Well, all words are derived. It has Germanic connections; Anglo-Saxon rather than Latin. For instance, what about the name of God in Hebrew - Jehovah? That we pronounce as Jehovah, but we don't really know; we've got - in Hebrew there is only really J and V and there's a Y, and I think there's an [409] H; H being a consonant in Hebrew. But the vowels have been put in: JE - the E sound has been put in. We don't really know that it was pronounced like that originally. Some scholars believe it was pronounced not like Jehovah but something like Jahveh or Yahweh. We don't even know how Latin was pronounced; there is quite a dispute between continental scholars and English scholars, or used to be. English scholars - I don't know whether this is still the case - had their own system of pronouncing Latin, which no one who knew Latin on the continent could understand very well.

Shantiprabha: You said a few minutes ago that Hebrew became a dead language. I was wondering about ...

S: No, Hebrew became a dead language for many of the Jews living in Alexandria by about - was it? - the first century BC, I think. I am not sure of that. But many Jews left Palestine, left the Holy Land, and they spread all round the Mediterranean; and some of them learned Greek, they forgot Hebrew, or forgot Aramaic. So for them the Septuagint, this Greek version of the Old Testament, was produced. I think it was the first century BC, but I won't be sure of that.

Bodhiruchi: So are you saying that these Masoretic points were inserted in the first and

second century in Alexandria?

S: I think - you'd better check me there, look it up in a good encyclopedia: Masoretic points.

Amoghacitta: The Bible as we know it in English is based on Hebrew texts - ...

S: Well, ...

Tape 20, Side 1

... It's not the elegant language of Plato and Aristotle at all. In fact, they sometimes called it New Testament Greek; you learn it separately.

Cittapala: There are such complications in the canonical literature of Buddhism?

S: Oh yes. There are many more, because there is a much more extensive literature. In the case of Christianity, everything that was not included in the authorized Bible was [410] destroyed, more or less, by the orthodox church. Buddhism being much more tolerant, a lot more survived, leaving a much larger library of canonical literature - in several languages. So in the case of the Buddhist scriptures it is much, much more complicated. It is complicated enough in the case of the Bible.

Ratnaketu: In a way, would you say that it's almost an advantage, because then you can't get - it's harder to get trapped into Sanskrit being the word of the Buddha and absolute.

S: Well, the Theravadins do tend to regard the Pali texts as the word of the Buddha, actually spoken by the Buddha in just that form, that he spoke just that and nothing else. The Theravadins can adopt a quite fundamentalistic sort of attitude. Though they are rather the exception.

Cittapala: You make that point in the - when you quote the pratitya samutpada in the Survey; you say that the reader can have the meritorious benefit of ...

S: Well, through the emotional associations - if you can see that these words were spoken by the Buddha pretty much in this particular dialectical form. So this may give rise to the beginning of faith and positive devotional and so on, which is no doubt beneficial from the spiritual point of view. I wouldn't like to swear to it that the Buddha spoke those very words in that particular dialectical form, though he no doubt said something pretty much like it. Because Pali - Pali is supposed - there is a lot of discussion among scholars - to be based upon a dialect current in India about the time of Ashoka in the north-western area - not the north-east, where the Buddha mainly taught. But the basis, the key words, would be the same, and many of the grammatical forms would be the same.

So one no doubt gets pretty close, in the case of some older texts, to what the Buddha said, even to his actual words.

Cittapala: And the way it has been written down would actually be the way that things would have been spoken in those days literally ...

S: Yes, originally of course there was the oral tradition, lasting about 400 years in the case of the Pali Canon. And only then was that material written down, that tradition written down. So, no doubt, there was room for many slips of the pen in the truth, though the Theravadins will not admit that because they believe that the tradition was passed on by arhants, whose memories were infallible.

[411]

This raises a very important point - I'm not going to go into it (oh dear, it's twenty past one), but this is a question of the source of authority in Buddhism. I'll only mention it as an important point, but I won't go into it here. The Theravadins' teaching, their tradition, is validated by the authority of the completely accurate scriptures transmitted by the completely infallible arhants from an omniscient Buddha. For the Zen people, what they teach is validated by the fact that their understanding of the Dharma has been validated by a teacher who was Enlightened, whose understanding of the Dharma was validated by a teacher who was Enlightened, back to the Buddha himself. That is their source of authority. So it's quite an important question: what is the source of authority for a particular tradition?

In the case of the Nyingmapas, what is their source of authority for particular teachings?

Well, these teachings were found in termas; these termas were hidden away by Guru Rimpoche, and Guru Rimpoche was the second Buddha. That is their source of authority. If a Hindu guru goes around teaching, what is his source of authority? His source of authority is in some cases that he is an incarnation of God. What higher source of authority could you have than that? Or that he has realized God, he has seen God, he is one with God. So, again, what higher source of authority could you have than that?

What is the source of authority of the Catholic Church? They transmit the teachings of the Apostles, which the Apostles received directly from Christ himself, who was the Son of God. They maintain that Christ after his resurrection transmitted his authority to the Apostles; they transmitted it to their disciples; they transmitted it to their disciples, who became what we now call bishops. So the bishops have been entrusted with all power and authority in the Church, and everybody in the Church other than the bishops should be subordinated to them, especially to the Bishop of Rome, who is the successor of the chief apostle, recognized as the chief apostle by Christ himself. This is their source of authority.

What is the source of authority of Muslims? It is the Koran, which was revealed to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel; it was not written by any human being, certainly not by Muhammad, not even written by Gabriel; but the Eternal Koran is inscribed on a tablet in Heaven and has always existed, and was merely revealed to Muhammad by the angel. That is the source of authority in Islam.

[412]

So this whole question of the source of authority is very important and very interesting. So what is the source of authority for Buddhism, in the broadest sense? We'd better leave that (Laughter) and go and have lunch!

Day 19 Tape 21, Side 1

Subhuti: We started on Perfect Mindfulness, and there are only two questions from our group and none from the others.

S: None from the others? Ah well.

Devamitra : No, 'fraid not. We did have a very good study.

S: You did have? You mean you have eliminated all the questions.

Prasannasiddhi: We were discussing Right Mindfulness, we were discussing recollection or memory in connection with Right Mindfulness, and we came to the conclusion that a lot of the things that we've learned or we've remembered were things that we enjoyed or things that we wanted to. So from there the argument developed to a state where we had a camp in our study group which believed that the main purpose - or they believed they were in the spiritual life for pleasure, and we had another camp which believed that there was something more to it, something else involved as well. And maybe something along the lines of ideals, like a goal - they weren't quite sure what (Laughter). And also there was another opinion expressed that there were more refined emotions and more refined ways of expressing it than pleasure, but along those lines. So we then decided to bring the matter to you.

S: So what is the actual question?

Prasannasiddhi: Could you say the spiritual life was the pursuit of pleasure, I suppose?

Subhuti: Can you just reduce it to the pursuit of pleasure?

S: Well, clearly, if one uses simply the word 'pleasure', the question would seem to answer itself. Because does not the Buddha say in that supposed first discourse that the pursuit of pleasure is one extreme and the pursuit of pain, so to speak, is the other extreme? Does he not say that? Is not the Middle Way a middle way as it were between these two extremes?

[413]

So where does that leave the pursuit of pleasure? It's probably a question, in a sense, of emphasis. For instance, as the Dhammapada itself says, nirvanam paramam sukham, Nirvana is the supreme bliss or the supreme happiness, or even the supreme pleasure. So if you are, as a Buddhist, in pursuit of nirvana, you are presumably in pursuit of that paramam sukham, that supreme bliss or that highest pleasure.

But can, so to speak, pleasure - can even bliss - be directly seized? That is really the question, isn't it? No one, it would seem, in Buddhism has ever denied that sukha is an integral part of the spiritual life; is an integral part of the Buddhist life. No one has ever denied that sukha, the mahasukha, is an integral part of the Ideal, is an integral part of the goal. But is one to think of the goal exclusively in those terms? And is one's spiritual life to be nothing but, can it be reduced to, a pursuit of pleasure, direct pursuit of pleasure? Is that possible? I think that is really the question.

I think probably one could say that if one has to speak either in terms of the pursuit of pleasure or the pursuit of the Ideal, the Buddhist spiritual life consists primarily or essentially in the pursuit of the Ideal; but that pursuit, if genuine, and also if successful, or to the measure that it is successful, is experienced as increasingly pleasurable, increasingly blissful.

Devamitra: So where does that leave you?

S: Just let me say a little bit more. If one is engaged in, if one is committed to, a particular line of action, a particular course of action, in which one deeply believes, in which there is, so to speak, a sort of existential element which is one's life in the truest sense, in the best sense, then one's pursuit of that cannot but be deeply satisfying, cannot but be pleasurable; despite difficulties, even, it cannot but be blissful, one might say.

One might even go so far as to say, coming back to this question of pleasure separately, that there are few things which are basically as unsatisfying as just pleasure. It is as though pleasure isn't even really very pleasurable unless it is experienced within a deeply meaningful context. Also one might invoke this distinction I made a little while ago between passive pleasure and active pleasure. I think passive pleasures - pleasures which are just fed to you and for which you just [414] have to open your mouth and they just sort of plop in - those pleasures, I think, very quickly pall. I think the truest pleasures, the deepest pleasures, are active pleasures, that is to say pleasures that you experience in the course of an activity, which are an integral part of that activity, though you don't pursue the activity for the sake of the pleasure; you pursue the activity because you believe in it, but as a result of pursuing it you do experience intense pleasure. That is active pleasure, and that active pleasure is an integral part of the spiritual life.

It's as though we can't keep going, we can't really live our lives, without an experience of pleasure; but we can't really experience pleasure unless we are engaged in some activity in which we deeply believe. It's as though you've got to have the pleasure and the ideal together. If you've nothing to live for, no ideal, no activity intensely pursued, the pleasure that you experience will be of a very low grade indeed. Also if you don't really have an ideal, if you don't really commit yourself wholeheartedly to it, then you won't experience any pleasure.

Gunapala: Are you saying pleasure cannot be an ideal?

S: I am saying that pleasure as a sort of separated element cannot be an ideal, no; even though the experience of pleasure is part of the ideal. But one cannot place the emphasis of experience on that pleasurable element, or that pleasure element. It's self-defeating. You can't believe in pleasure, not really. You can't really give yourself to pleasure, you can't commit yourself to pleasure. Pleasure, even though quite high grade is just not worth living for. It's worth experiencing, but not worth living for, not worth committing yourself to.

Cittapala: Don't a lot of people do that?

S: They try to do that, but think, how do they succeed, really? There used to be this old idea - I won't say ideal - of 'the man of pleasure'; the man who lived for the sake of pleasure, and usually, by all accounts, after a few years of living for pleasure, he was a pretty sorry sight. Can one really live for pleasure? Does one not get bored and frustrated after a while, even if the pursuit is reasonably successful? Is not the discovery of meaning an important element, if not the most important element, in a truly human life?

[415]

Aryamitra: I remember you saying 'a concentrated mind is a happy mind'. Does that tie up - if you are pursuing a goal more of your being will become integrated in that way, you will experience more pleasure?

S: If you are pursuing an ideal, if you are committed to an ideal, if there is a genuine ideal, yes; the pursuit of that ideal will be intensely pleasurable, despite difficulties, despite sufferings. But the pleasure is, so to speak, incidental. I say so to speak incidental but not actually being accidental. It is incidental but at the same time integral, one might say.

It goes back to what I was talking about a little while ago some sessions ago, about - I think I was talking about it - about Nietzsche and the will to power, the expansion of being, and expansion of being as being essentially pleasurable.

You see, when you go in pursuit of pleasure, you don't really expand your being. If anything, you diminish your being. But if you go in pursuit of an ideal, you do expand your being. Therefore, the pursuit of the ideal is experienced as intensely pleasurable; you get deep satisfaction from that. It satisfies perhaps the deepest part of your being.

Suvajra: How does the pursuit of pleasure diminish your being?

S: It doesn't represent an expansive movement. What is expansion of being? It is intensification. Pleasure which is not experienced in the course of the pursuit of the Ideal has a sort of relaxing effect, one might even say an enervating effect; even a dulling effect.

Ratnaprabha: Does this apply to pleasure on all levels - even, say dhyanic pleasure?

S: Well, dhyanic pleasure could hardly be said to be dulling, except perhaps within inverted commas. But there is the teaching about the devas, the beings of the devalokas, who enjoy, naturally, a sort of dhyana-like consciousness. There is a teaching that those beings can become absorbed in that, attached to that, and that will, if not actually dull them, at least prevent them from going any further. So even dhyanic pleasure, even dhyanic bliss, is not traditionally regarded as something which one should become attached to or regard as important for its own sake.

[416]

Was that the first question?

Subhuti: The first question. The second question - we were talking about the Higher and Lower Evolution, and in the triangle of the Higher and Lower Evolution, they are placed in alignment, which suggests a continuity. We are aware there is a danger of taking this too literally, but you have talked of a cosmic Going for Refuge, and we were sort of exploring this idea a bit. And we saw that the fuel as it were of the Higher Evolution is effort, conscious effort, and we were wondering what is - if you can speak in such terms - the fuel of the Lower Evolution: why do beings evolve on the lower evolutionary sphere?

S: Well, this raises very fundamental questions about the nature of evolution itself, or rather about the nature of the evolutionary process - or better still the mechanism of biological evolution. One might say that there were really only two views - this is reducing things to quite crude generalizations. There is the view of fortuitous or random evolution: this is the orthodox neo-Darwinian view. The other is what one might call the vitalist view - do you understand what I mean? The neo-Darwinian view states - very broadly speaking - that one has a number of different species; owing to external conditions, these species mutate in various ways, and those mutations which are best adapted to the environment survive and

multiply. And this is a purely arbitrary, random - what's the other word? - even mechanical process. There is no urge or force, there is no evolutionary force, there is no evolutionary urge causing things to move on to higher and higher levels of evolution. It's all random. This is the orthodox neo-Darwinian view. This view is said to have been disproved statistically, but we won't go into that at the moment. Neo-Darwinians, of course, do not accept that it is disproved statistically, but some people think that it is.

The other view is the vitalist: that life is essentially upward-moving. It isn't just life, so to speak. That there is a sort of evolutionary urge, in the sense that life by its very nature, through its various upward expressions, is seeking ever higher and higher levels of expression. Vitalism, in what one might well describe as its cruder forms, is not all that popular, but actually vitalism in some form or other, as I think I have pointed out in those same lectures or in 'The Higher Evolution of Man', is the really only alternative to the purely random, mechanical view of evolution of the neo-Darwinists. [417] So I think, in a way, what I was trying to present in those lectures on the Higher Evolution of Man was a sort of revamped vitalism. I think I more or less said that in the course of one of the lectures. That is really, howsoever one expresses it or words it, the only alternative to this purely random view of evolution, of biological evolution.

So then this raises a sort of question: what is this vital urge, what is this evolutionary urge? One can only think of it in this sort of way: one can only as it were posit two elements or two forces, if you like, in interaction. You can call, if you like, the one the reactive and the other creative; you can call, if you like, the one matter, the other spirit. You can call, if you like, the one the conditioned and the other the Unconditioned. It doesn't really matter. But what you are really saying is that the creative, or spirit, or the Unconditioned, is so to speak acting upon the reaction, acting upon the material, acting upon the conditioned, and acting upon it in such a way that should draw it upwards. You could speak of it as acting on it from within. You could speak of it as acting on it from without. The spatial imagery doesn't really matter, and can give rise to quite artificial difficulties and questions.

There is also the question of the ultimate relationship between those two forces or elements, the reactive and the creative, matter and spirit, conditioned and Unconditioned. For on the level on which they are different, to the extent to which you can differentiate them, one can only account for evolution, assuming that you have a vitalistic view of evolution, by positing some kind of action on the part of the one force on the other, either from within or from without however you choose to - [break in recording]

: ...?

S: No, it doesn't include neo-Darwinism in the sense that it does not accept the random nature of the evolutionary process. It believes that it is, in a sense, purposive. Amongst vitalists, probably ... [breaks in recording] especially creative ...

Amoghacitta: So what is the purpose behind evolution?

S: What does one mean by purpose? You see, one has to consider that question. Purpose usually means that there is a [418] goal. In the case of the evolutionary process, one can either, if one admits it to be purposive, posit a final goal or one can content oneself by saying that it is purposive in the sense of aiming at a higher level all the time; and biologically

speaking one speaks of a higher level in the sense of a level of greater complexity, because the higher one goes - 'higher' in inverted commas - on the evolutionary scale, the more complex your evolution is becoming - do organic forms become. A human being is infinitely more complex than an amoeba; even a rat is more complex than an amoeba, and so on.

And it would seem that increasing complexity of organization makes possible the manifestation, or whatever you might like to call it, of what we call consciousness. No doubt there is not a cause-effect relationship, but it would seem that a higher level or degree of consciousness can only arise in dependence on, or in association with, a higher degree of biological complexity in the organism.

Cittapala: Couldn't the actual process by which that diversification is set in train come about through random selection?

S: This is not, as I say, admitted by the vitalists... the whole argument is quite extensive and complex, and many books have been written on either side. But if one accepts any kind of spiritual view of life or interpretation of life, it is not possible for one to accept a random interpretation of evolution, apparently.

Cittapala: Could you link this vitalistic viewpoint with a sort of flow - the universe ever expanding - to this idea of pleasure?

S: It is not only expanding quantitatively, it is what one might describe as a qualitative expansion.

Cittapala: I was just wondering - I was having difficulty thinking how is it that people can say that they experience perfect pleasure when they are obviously following a very hedonistic lifestyle, and I was wondering maybe it was something to do with - that I was looking at it from almost the neo-Darwinistic viewpoint, that it was quite random whether you decided whether to follow a spiritual life or a hedonistic life. And that people who claim to be just hedonistic, just enjoying that, in effect were actually going against a natural tendency to express themselves or expand their consciousness.

S: Well, that may well be so. That is, I think, a quite [419] separate issue from this question of the random nature of the evolutionary process. But I think that there is no doubt that people do that: that they as it were suppress if not repress their own innate desire to find a meaning to existence - they smother that under the pursuit of pleasure, so to speak, for its own sake. In a way they almost try to forget or try to ignore something that is vital in themselves.

Ratnaprabha: Do you think it is possible to talk about randomness at all if one believes in spiritual evolution?

S: Well, no, because our notion of evolution, spiritual evolution, is contradictory to the notion of randomness. Otherwise we might just one day find ourselves experiencing first dhyana for no reason, because you hadn't had anything to bring it about or...; even suddenly gaining Enlightenment without there being any reason, because it just happened randomly. So if you have a conception of spiritual evolution at all, clearly you cannot accept a random evolution.

Ratnaprabha: Not in any sphere at all? Not even in the lower evolution?

S: Well, this raises the question whether there is any such thing as the random behaviour of anything at any level. It would seem that - again, this is not an easy question to go into - as far as we can tell, at the purely physical level, the behaviour of some relatively ultimate units of matter, let us say, to use a not very accurate term, is to some degree random. Does anybody know anything about this? Even at the sub-atomic level, sometimes the behaviour of particles appears to be random; but then one would have to examine what does one mean by random at that level? Again, that is not an easy matter to determine. Even the very concept of randomness, perhaps, needs going into. It is reasonably obvious what it means in the biological context, but when you are speaking in the context of physics, the behaviour of particles, in what sense is their behaviour said to be random?

No doubt there is an element of randomness in the universe: perhaps we could say that, after carefully defining what one meant by randomness. But the Buddha, according to the Pali scriptures, rejected the view as a wrong view that everything just happens for no particular reason. That is what is called 'casualism'. He also rejected the view that everything that happens is determined and necessarily happens. He advocated a [420] middle view, that in dependence on causes and conditions things arose, and in the absence of those causes and conditions, ceased; and not otherwise. So this is presented as a sort of middle way between casualism on the one hand and strict determinism on the other. It was not a matter of chance whether you gained Enlightenment; nor were you destined ultimately to attain Enlightenment. Your attainment of Enlightenment, your following of the spiritual path, depended upon certain causes and conditions which you could yourself bring about, and which you brought about not because you chanced to bring them about nor that you were determined (determined from the outside) to bring them about, but because you chose to bring them about.

Ratnaprabha: So it seems that creativity is on another level, above randomness and determinism, is it? It's another factor altogether?

S: One could put it like that. But even that is not very satisfactory, because one is interested in this idea of levels, and that perhaps would need a little critical examination first.

But the difference is really, basically, the difference between a purposive and a non-purposive ... system - or rather there are three possible interpretations: ... the Buddha ... - that things all happen by chance, that everything is determined, and the Middle Way, conditioned co-production; applicable both to the lower and to the higher evolution. You cannot have purposiveness where everything happens at random. You cannot have purposiveness where everything is determined, fated. You can have purposiveness only where there is a little room for manoeuvre, so to speak, and that is represented by the Buddha teaching that conditioned co-production was dependent on ...

But in those lectures on the Higher Evolution I tried to do quite a bit more than that - it was only a sketch, which needs to be filled in very considerably. And when I spoke of the Cosmic Going for Refuge, that was in a way a flight of poetic fancy - but then, what is poetry? What is beauty? Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty! So a flight of poetic fancy is also an insight into the Truth, if you look at it in another kind of way.

So what does one mean by this Cosmic Going for Refuge? The Cosmic Going for Refuge merely means that every form of life has a tendency, one might say an innate tendency, to transcend [421] itself; to move on to another, higher phase or mode of being. It would seem

that this urge is innate in existence itself. Or, if one likes to put it in Heidegger's terms - I think they are Heidegger's terms - being is essentially self-transcendent. Being is self-transcendence; self-transcendence is being.

But one can say there is a sort of illegitimate self-transcendence which is not a genuine self-transcendence, and that is the reactive process. And then there is a genuine self-transcendence, which is of course the creative process, where you do really get further, you get beyond your previous self; you don't really go round and round in a circle.

Subhuti: Can you just make clear why the reactive process is an illegitimate self-transcendence? I don't see how you can speak of ...

S: It is a bit self-contradictory. One can present an image. For instance, if you are on a circle, it can seem that you are going up because that particular segment of the circle is moving up; you are going round - here you are on the top side of the circle and you seem to be moving up; but if you continue that line of progression, you will just go round, you won't go up into a spiral. That is only an illustration, it's not really an explanation. The difference is really - well, one might say, as I said, the expression 'illegitimate self-transcendence' is self-contradictory. It's only an apparent self-transcendence. It's merely a reshuffling of the cards of the same old pack; you don't get a different pack, a different game.

But the question arises: even with regard to the process of the lower evolution, if you see it in as it were vitalistic terms, that also involves a process of genuine self-transcendence, because presumably man is a more developed being than the rat, and the rat than the amoeba. So even the lower evolution, it would seem, even in the process of the lower evolution, there is a movement of genuine self-transcendence, what to speak of the process of the Higher Evolution. So perhaps one could say that the basic, the essential trend of existence as such ... on this earth is towards self-transcendence, and that this finds its culmination and its fulfilment in the spiritual life. This is what I was trying to say, albeit in somewhat different terms, in the course of those lectures. I find the highest fulfilment of that in the Bodhicitta.

[422]

So there is a Cosmic Going for Refuge in the sense that each form of life struggles to transcend itself, to advance to a next higher, further level of being and even of consciousness.

Dhirananda: On a molecular level, could you have a system where energy is constantly introduced, and that would automatically develop into more and more complex molecular structures? Do you think that this could be carried over throughout biological evolution as well?

S: What does one mean by the introduction of energy on the biological level? Perhaps one can speak in terms of energy coming from the sun.

Dhirananda: Yes, it would be.

S: Because when energy streams from the sun on the surface of stagnant pools then gradually life starts evolving - this is what we are told, isn't it? A more and more complex form of life can evolve. It is the energy from the sun, the energy deriving from the sun, which is behind this whole process. It is as though the sun is feeding energy into what has been called the

biosphere.

Dhirananda: How far could that energy - could that be ... this whole life force (?) ... evolution?

S: Well, it seems that the light and heat of the sun are an indispensable factor in the process of the lower evolution, but whether other factors come into play at a later stage, that remains an open question; whether it's the light and heat of the sun that solely is responsible. What about consciousness? Or what is the sun? One can raise fundamental questions like that. When one says 'sun', does one think of something inert and merely as it were material? Some traditions maintain that there is a sun behind the sun; some say a dark sun. That's another matter, though.

Cittapala: The second law of thermodynamics states that energy is constantly disintegrating and entropizing itself. So in a sense it's just an observation of the fact that it takes effort, more energy, to maintain any complicated state of existence. I'm not quite sure how that fits in.

S: Well, it's not only to maintain it, but if, as [Dhirananda] said, energy is fed into, say, a limited system, that system [423] apparently becomes more complicated. I do believe that this law - according to the latest researches in physics this law of entropy has been exploded or at least seriously questioned. But all right, it's not really as simple as that; all right, supposing you've got, let's say, a certain limited context and energy is being fed into that from another source. All right, whatever is within that limited context will become more complex. Now presumably the energy which has come from that source and which has been fed into that context and resulted in what is in that context becoming more complex is a finite quantity and becomes exhausted: in other words, energy is simply transferred from one part of the universe, let us say, to another, from one context to another. There has been no overall gain. So therefore it is - assuming it was ... - eventually what would happen would be that all the energy in the universe would be evenly distributed throughout the universe. That would be a state of cosmic stagnation, not to say death. And I think this second law of thermodynamics is based on that assumption, isn't it?

: Yes, everything tends to ...

S: But, but, there is one very big assumption that is being made here and which needs to be questioned. What is that assumption?

Dhirananda: A finite quantity of energy.

S: Yes, not only a finite quantity of energy - a finite universe. But is the universe finite? The Buddha said it could be neither thought of as finite nor infinite nor both nor neither. So that opens up some very extensive vistas indeed, doesn't it? It introduces things like black holes; it introduces things like the positive counterparts of black holes - because if in one universe, as it were, things are disappearing down a black hole, in another universe, so to speak, they can be coming up out of a radiant fountain or whatever.

I think all sorts of hitherto received scientific orthodoxies are now being questioned - not ... talk about them outside ... It is very difficult to keep up with all these things. Perhaps we do need someone to keep pace with it. Sometimes one sees little extracts in the newspaper, in

The Times, extracts from or summaries of articles that have appeared in Nature, and some of them are very fascinating. They help to keep one abreast. It is very difficult to know everything that is going on on all these different fronts and to fling all [424] these latest discoveries and hypotheses and bright ideas into a single uniform view, a sort of synthesis, and then relate that to traditional Buddhist teaching. It's very difficult, because the picture is changing all the time. It is not quite clear what is the generally accepted scientific model of the universe, or the development of the universe, as a whole. Some scientists seem to accept the Big Bang theory, but there are other theories.

But anyway, what this boils down to is that at the very least one can say that there is, or that there appears to be, or it can be said that there is, an element of purposiveness in the universe at least as far as the human race is concerned, at least as far as human life, culture, and especially spiritual life is concerned.

Tape 21, Side 2

You can have purposiveness in the midst of non-purposiveness - that is another question. Whether the ... fact that there is such a thing as purposiveness implies that everything is ultimately purposive, that is another question. Just as it can be said that the fact that there is life at all in the universe means that the nature of the universe is such that it is essentially alive, it's geared, oriented in the direction of life, built, so to speak, to produce life, and therefore is essentially living - that is one line of argument.

Going further than that, if the universe can produce consciousness, so to speak, then surely the universe is essentially consciousness. If it can produce spirit or give birth to spirit, is it not essentially spirit? It is argued that what was not put in or what was not originally there cannot come out. But one can even question that way of looking at things. Does one have to think in that way, in that crudely spatial way? Can one rest content with Buddhist thinking that in dependence upon such-and-such set of conditions, such-and-such phenomenon arises; does one have to say that it was there or was not there as it were before, in some kind of latent form - is that necessary? Or can one not say that in dependence on a non-conscious universe there arises consciousness? Can one not say that, and leave it at that?

Anyway, that's going quite far afield.

Prasannasiddhi: In any given instance - say a person had the opportunity to either act creatively or act reactively - what [425] could you say it was that decided, or is there anything decides or can you put it in some terms of what actually - ?

S: This is a question one ought to be able to answer for oneself, because one has only to introspect. Because surely there have been occasions when one had a choice between a creative line of action and a reactive line, and one chose the creative. So what was it that made one make that choice? Is it one particular factor, or a number of factors? What led one to move in the direction of the creative rather than the reactive?

Bodhiruchi: Self-consciousness.

S: It's self-consciousness, yes, but it was even more than self-consciousness in a sense that is implied. You can actually see the difference, you can see that there is a creative alternative;

you are aware of that. And if you are sufficiently aware, if your awareness is of a sufficiently real intensity, you cannot but choose the more creative alternative or the creative alternative. Sometimes you don't see very clearly. And maybe there is an emotional factor involved too. If your emotions are moving too strongly in the direction of the reactive, even though you can see quite clearly the creative alternative you move in the direction of the reactive.

There are also external factors, like for instance a spiritual friend encouraging you to move in the direction of the creative alternative rather than in that of the reactive alternative. There are even institutions, perhaps, helping you to do the one rather than the other.

But supposing there were none of these external factors, what is it in your own experience that makes you choose? What is that? Why do you prefer the creative to the reactive? Everybody must have made this sort of choice at one time or another; so why did you make it? What caused you to make it, what enabled you to make it? For instance, when you got your invitations to Tuscany, presumably that represented a creative opportunity, so why did you accept that creative opportunity rather than reject it as, unfortunately, a few people did? So what led you to accept that creative possibility, that creative opportunity?

Bodhiruchi: A wish to grow.

S: A wish to grow. But can one be more precise than that? [426] Was that one's actual experience - did anybody really think that? Is that the major factor? Or why does one think in terms of growing? - because that itself represents a choice. So is one perhaps not just so to speak removing the question to an earlier stage rather than really answering it? Why does one choose to grow instead of to apparently stagnate?

Jinavamsa: Because you experience suffering.

S: Because you experience suffering, yes; sometimes you are scared away from the reactive process. Perhaps you've burned your fingers a few times. Yes, that is a possibility, that factor may also play its part. You know that that way lies danger, that way lies pain, that way lies suffering; perhaps you have learned your lesson to some extent.

Subhuti: In a way, isn't it almost enough just to say 'because it is a creative opportunity'? Doesn't it have its own value?

S: If you really see it as creative you cannot but see its value, and be attracted by it; because there is, so to speak, that creative potential in you which wants - inherently you want to transcend your present state of being. That is in a way your deepest urge, if what I've said about the nature of life itself and the evolutionary process is at all true. You welcome it, that is a fulfilment of your being, not the other.

Prasannasiddhi: But some people seem to be - I can give an instance - you could be faced with a creative opportunity, and in one instance you may take it and in another instance you may not.

S: Well, what would be the differences in the two sets of circumstances? What would it be that made you on the one occasion take it and on the other occasion not take it? What factors would have to be present to account for that sort of difference in the same person at different

times?

: Just ...

S: You might be in a bad mood...

Prasannasiddhi: I can only think in terms of there was the pull of the Unconditioned and there was the pull of the conditioned, and it was just one way or the other.

S: It's as though the pull of the Unconditioned has to be present in a very concrete and attractive form, and in the same [427] way sometimes the pull of the conditioned is present in a very concrete and apparently attractive form. So sometimes you may be more likely to lay hold of the creative alternative when that presents itself to you in a very attractive and inspiring form, rather than as a mere abstract possibility. Similarly, you may be less able to resist the reactive alternative where that presents itself to you in an apparently very attractive form, very concretely in an apparently attractive form.

So if the creative alternative presents itself to you in a very concrete, attractive form, when the reactive alternative is not presenting itself to you in a very concrete and apparently attractive form, you will be more likely to lay hold of the creative alternative and vice versa. Of course, when they both present themselves in concrete and attractive forms, then the choice becomes much more difficult. You need a much keener look at the two alternatives.

Silaratna: You said that there was an effect of experience. for example when you decide to come to Tuscany we've all experienced a certain amount of like men's communities, there is a chance to spend three months in a more ideal men's community, there is a chance to get into your meditation and study in a more ideal sort of ...

S: Yes, if one has had some previous taste of that particular creative alternative.

Gunapala: This idea of it being more attractive seems quite closely linked with the evolutionary process of something like being attractive or something being suffering.

S: Well, attractive is obviously a subjective term for such a quality inherent in the object itself. You see it as attractive after an account of your previous experience of similar things, partly perhaps because of your general understanding of them. To some people, if they have been presented with the possibility of coming to Tuscany without any previous experience of men's communities or meditation, Tuscany would probably seem a very bleak alternative indeed. They wouldn't really think of it as anything attractive.

Anyway, all that has grown out of that second question.

Subhuti: I'd like to follow it up with something also connected with the Higher Evolution and the lower evolution. That model presents a movement in one direction. But there is a [428] traditional Buddhist model of an ascending material order and a descending spiritual order. Is it possible to reconcile those two views, or are they just different universes of discourse which don't overlap?

S: Well, one has to raise this question of what one means by descent. I referred, to begin with,

to this idea of these two processes, reactive and creative; matter and spirit, if you like, conditioned and Unconditioned. So let's say, let's assume, at least, that being is essentially self-transcending; that to exist means to try, consciously or unconsciously, to transcend oneself. All right, one then has the process of biological evolution going on, and that reaches a point where consciousness starts to develop, if you like starts to emerge. So the question arises, where has this consciousness come from? One line of Buddhist thought, or at least Buddhist legend, maintains that that consciousness comes from a higher world, from a brahmaloka; that there is a descending order, a descending order of involution that is meeting an ascending order of evolution - that is to say, the developing biological form coalesces with a descending, one might say spiritual, form.

But one might question is it really necessary to put things in that way? Would it not be sufficient to invoke the Buddha's own formula of conditioned co-production or dependent origination, and simply to say that in dependence upon those highly complex material organisms there arose still more complex organisms manifesting a degree of consciousness: do you need to say that the consciousness has come from anywhere? One is looking at it more in as it were scientific, rather than mythic, terms; looking at it in those as it were scientific terms, does one need to posit a sort of cosmological source for that consciousness which has apparently descended? Is it not enough, as I said, to invoke simply the Buddha's formula of dependent origination or conditioned co-production?

Ratnaprabha: Does this mean that there is a continuity, a complete continuity, between matter and consciousness? There is no ... ?

S: What is continuity? What is this continuity? How strictly, how literally, can one apply these two concepts? It seems to me more and more, especially when we were talking about the point at which insight with a small i becomes Insight with a capital I, or the point at which you actually enter the Stream - it seems to ... that this whole distinction between [429] continuous and discontinuous is largely illusory. And if you try to think in those terms you just involve yourself in endless conundrums, paradoxes, like that of Achilles and the tortoise.

Ratnaprabha: Is it a case of contacting the Transcendental? You think of the Transcendental as being always there, and something that we get in contact with.

S: Well, again, one must question that whole mode of thinking about the Transcendental. The Transcendental with a capital T is an abstraction. What one has is a concrete process of continually transcending one's present mode of being.

Gunapala: This idea of the cause and effect, a higher form having an effect on a lower form, still works? A more highly developed mind has an effect on a lower form?

S: Yes.

Gunapala: So it still works ...

S: But the question is whether one can take that as a model for what happens on a cosmic scale. All right, we know that in, say, ordinary spiritual life we get a great deal of help from spiritual friends; perhaps you wouldn't go without that. So some people argue, what about humanity as a whole? Would humanity as a whole have evolved, would human beings have

risen from the brutes to the truly human, would they have become civilized and cultured, without there being spiritual friends of the human race as a whole - without there having been what some traditions call elder brothers of mankind watching over the evolution of the human race? Some people believe this. Some people believe that there are angels watching over the evolution of humanity, helping humanity: Bodhisattvas helping humanity, without perhaps humanity knowing it. Can one think in these terms? Is this anything more than a pleasant myth? Are there really these sort of invisible helpers hovering around, so to speak? Or are we quite on our own? (Laughter) Or, if there are angelic forces hovering around, may there not be diabolical forces also hovering around, perhaps even closer, perhaps even more insistently? Sometimes it is very difficult to know which are angels' wings and which are devils' wings! It is sometimes very difficult to know, perhaps, what exactly is hovering.

[430]

So how is one to think? No doubt even if mythical there are so to speak elements truth in them. Could the universe have produced what it did not already contain? That is the basic question, in a way, but perhaps it is completely wrongly put. Perhaps it rests upon all sorts of untested and unverified assumptions. But that there is a spiritual life, that there is a spiritual consciousness, that human beings can gain Enlightenment regardless of any explanation - that we know. We need not even go so far as the spiritual life - take, for instance, the phenomenon of Shakespeare: the fact that a poet like Shakespeare could arise at all - and we know that he did, or at least we've got his plays - all right, forget about Shakespeare, maybe Shakespeare was Bacon - we've got those plays; those plays exist, we know that because we've read them - or at least some of us have read them. But there are those plays. So the fact that those plays exist in the universe, which is undeniable - does that fact tell us anything about the nature of the universe? Or is it completely irrelevant? Have they been produced completely at random? If you set a company of monkeys banging away at typewriters for a million years, would they produce the plays of Shakespeare again? ... argument.

... Is there no meaning there? Is it just a purely meaningless, ultimately meaningless collocation of sounds and silence?

Ratnaketu: Was Shakespeare the monkey that came up with Shakespeare's plays?

S: Well, in what sense is a monkey that comes up with Shakespeare's plays a monkey? Extraordinary monkey, if you ask me. (Laughter) Extraordinary ... human being, not to speak of a monkey. I doubt if even one of these chimpanzees that they are conducting experiments with at present could have done it - ... bit of help.

Bodhiruchi: So we have one of two choices: that consciousness arises just upon conditions from which people ...

S: No, no: when you say that in dependence upon certain conditions consciousness arises, you are as it were avoiding, one might say, evading the issue of whether that consciousness existed before, sort of hidden, or not. You are avoiding that whole question. The Buddhist formulation of dependent origination seeks to avoid those two extremes. Because supposing you say that consciousness emerges out of [431] consciousness, that man comes from God: how did he fall? How did he fall away? How did perfection fall away from perfection? It is impossible. But then on the other hand, if perfection did not fall away from perfection, only imperfection could have fallen away from perfection. But how could imperfection have

existed at all in perfection? It's insoluble.

So Buddhism ... a middle path: in dependence upon the imperfect, the perfect arises (by perfect meaning the Enlightenment experience). The archetypal view in the one case is that of Hinduism, that everything comes out of Brahma and returns to Brahma. But why should it have come out? The other view is that nothing but matter existed and, in some unexplained way, consciousness came out of it. So you can either say that consciousness is nothing really but matter, or you can say that matter is really nothing but consciousness. But in either case ... how, in the one case, consciousness came out of matter or even appeared to come out of matter.

Bodhiruchi: So, Bhante, are you saying that as Buddhists we can't really answer the question of where Shakespeare's plays came from?

S: You can't answer any question which is wrongly formulated. No question can be answered which is wrongly formulated. You can't really be obliged to make a choice between two extremes both of which are wrongly formulated. Buddhism reformulates and adopts a sort of middle position, one might say; because this is just touching on the surface of these things, one needs to go very much deeper. But this is just to give you an idea that there is in fact something to think about! (Laughter)

In a way, the basic question is: is one justified in inferring anything about the nature of the universe as such from some particular object in the universe - in this case Shakespeare's plays - which seem to represent something higher, one might say, something of a different nature? So does the fact that Shakespeare's plays exist tell or reveal anything to us about existence as such - about the universe? Does it give us any clue, any hint? Is there any difference between the universe in which, let us say, Shakespeare's plays could be produced and a universe in which they could not have been produced? - assuming that they haven't just appeared by accident, at random, as it were.

[432]

Gunapala: It seems to be that one's expanding, the fact that there is this ability to expand the consciousness - that has been proven by Shakespeare's plays.

S: Yes: if we compare his consciousness to ours, we have to admit it is more capacious. This is what Dryden says in the first criticism about Shakespeare - that he had an unusually capacious soul. This was Dryden's way of putting it. So, yes, if we compare, say, the ... mysteries, we do feel that we are in contact with a consciousness, a mind, a soul if you like, which is wider, more comprehensive, deeper than our own. So this does suggest that there is such a thing as expansion of consciousness - presumably because it expanded in the direction of Shakespeare. Well, we do expand to some extent merely by reading Shakespeare's plays or seeing them represented on the stage: it has that effect on us. So we know - leaving aside Buddhism - that expansion of consciousness is possible, because we experience it. But does this fact tell us anything about the nature of the universe? At least it tells us that the universe is of such a nature as to permit that to happen. Is it of such a nature as to encourage that to happen? That is another question.

Harshaprabha: In a sense Shakespeare was in miniature a reversal of a black hole?

S: You could say - well, a small black hole, but yes, a reversal of a black hole. Energy was pouring out of him - whence? If it wasn't Sir Francis Bacon slipping in those plays on the quiet. Even if it was, whence did that energy come to Francis Bacon?

But one might say, probing a little further, is the universe fundamentally a dead universe in which life appears as an inexplicable accident? Or does the fact that there is such a thing as life in the universe suggest, or even reveal, that the universe itself as a whole is alive? Similarly, are mind, consciousness, even Enlightenment? Perhaps that is the question with which we should close.

We really ought to have several days of silence to think about it. (Laughter) Perhaps we will have.

Devamitra: You've certainly come up with more questions than we've been able to! I don't think I'd have the gall to try to get any more questions out of my study group!

[433]

S: Perhaps I should call them 'Answer and Questions sessions'! A great French writer did say once that sometimes questions appeared before answers, but sometimes the answers appeared long before the questions were ready. Perhaps I should leave it at that. Sometimes questions are answers, and answers are questions.

Day 20 Tape 22, Side 1

Subhuti: Not many questions, only two from my group, in fact. This first question is connected with your closing remarks last night.

S: Remind me what my closing remarks were.

Chakkhupala: You were speaking of the four, or sometimes five, esoteric functions of Buddhahood. It occurred to me while you were speaking that there seemed, at least superficially, to be a degree of correlation between these functions and the five Buddha families - or at least four of them.

S: Yes, that does indeed seem to be the case. As far as I know, it isn't explicitly stated in the tradition that there is a correlation, but it did occur to me while speaking, especially mentioning the colours - red for fascination, dark blue for destruction, and gold or yellow for maturing - that one could perhaps establish a connection.

Chakkhupala: The slight fly in the ointment of this correlation was that you said that you were not particularly happy with the fifth, empowering, which you felt was somehow not really different from maturation; and, in any case, usually empowering was given as a replacement for the first one, pacification or wise(?). But if we include empowering as a fifth in its own right, it seems to fall into Amoghasiddhi's family as green and I wondered whether you thought that was ...

S: Yes, because pacification is associated with white colour; white is associated with Vairocana, so it would have to go in the centre. In other words, the pacifying function would have to be attributed to Vairocana, which would leave only the empowering function to be

attributed to Amoghasiddhi, or to that particular family. One could probably make a correlation in that way.

I have spoken on other occasions on these different functions of Buddhahood. I have described them as esoteric functions because they are mentioned, as far as I know, only in [434] the Vajrayana. And they seem to be derived historically from various kinds of magical operation - in ordinary magic. There is, for instance, love magic; there is destructive magic; there is magic to cause the crops to grow. So those sort of functions are given a kind of Transcendental meaning and transferred to the level of Buddhahood, and regarded as modes of functioning of Buddhahood itself.

One might say that the figure of Kurukule, the so-called Red Tara, who is regarded especially as an embodiment of fascination, definitely belongs to the family of Amitabha. She is depicted with a wrathful smile, a garland, and a flower and bow and arrow.

Subhuti: Then we had a question on mindfulness of body from Surata.

Surata: Yes, we were talking about awareness of the body and the fact that people seem to shrink and contract, or expand; so that when one is in a quite good state one expands out of oneself almost towards other people, but sometimes if you are in a bad state you shrink, and you even shrink to the point where you just become your head, in a sort of severe form of alienation.

S: I think one has to be a little careful here, because one can as it were shrink because you are in a positive state; and also you can expand because you are in a somewhat negative state.

Surata: Ah.

S: Do you see what I mean? You expand when you are angry, and you might shrink from contact with other people if you'd been meditating, you are in a very sensitive state, and perhaps they haven't been meditating. So one must be a little careful about generalizing here. Anyway, what was your question?

Surata: The question was, with regard to this negative form of shrinking where people sort of become alienated to the point where they're not even in contact with parts of their own body, I wondered whether you had encountered this sort of thing, say, in India, or whether in your experience it seemed to be limited or confined more to the West.

S: I think it would be very difficult to generalize. I [435] know it would be quite reassuring to us to hear that we were much more alienated than people in the West. (?)

Surata: ... often say this, don't they, that we are much more alienated than people in India?

S: I really wonder about this. I think it is very easy to romanticise and idealize other people. Maybe in some respects people in India are more in touch with their emotions, even with their physical bodies; perhaps, but I have met many cases where people have not been. There is in the Indian character - if there is such a thing as the Indian character; after all, it is a vast subcontinent - there is in the Indian character a sort of puritanical streak also, especially in Gandhian circles. I wouldn't like to say what their position was in that respect. I find it more

and more difficult to generalize. I have met some people in India who were extremely alienated. What proportion of the population they represent there as compared with the proportion of alienated people ... in the West or in England I find it very difficult to say. I don't know of any reliable statistics, and I don't think I have been able to gather any myself. All I have is a number of personal impressions from perhaps a quite limited contact.

One needs to inquire what one means by being in touch with your - body, did you say? Or ...

Surata: Yes. Well, inasmuch as, particularly, say, in yoga classes, sometimes you find that people have just got no awareness of their feet whatsoever. They almost haven't got their feet on the ground.

S: No awareness of their feet? Well, how would this show itself? Because surely people know that they've got feet?

Surata: Yes, they know they've got feet ...

S: What does one mean by awareness of feet?

Surata: Well, their feet [are] as it were - what shall we say? - a bit out of control, a bit insensitive,

S: Well, if you stick a pin in their feet they would feel it. I'm just trying to gather what you really mean. Do you mean they don't think about their feet?

[436]

Surata: Maybe it's that. But (Laughter)...as much as they don't really experience them.

S: What do you mean by experiencing your feet? I only question what might, if one was not careful, be rather cliché ridden language. People surely - they know that their feet are there, they can see them. They feel heat and cold through their feet. If you stuck a pin into their feet they would feel it. So what does one mean by saying that they don't experience their feet?

Ratnaketu: Is it that they see their foot as a sort of appendage to themselves rather than?

S: Well, it is! [Roars of laughter throughout all this.]... In a sense it's not the whole of you.

Ratnaketu: Perhaps what I'm saying is they see it in a utilitarian way.

S: ... utilitarian ... to be walked on.

Ratnaketu: But there's also when you just see it purely in that kind of way, you abuse it (Laughter).

S: ... very strange territory indeed (Laughter). I'm afraid you haven't made things very much clearer.

Bodhiruchi: Maybe it's that you could be more aware of your feet, say, that you are quite aware of your hand because you use your hands quite a lot in quite delicate ways, but you could be more aware of your feet. A lot of people's feet feel quite cold - OK, because you're putting them on the ground, but also because ...

S: Poor circulation. Do you distinguish between being aware, say, of your feet - since we have to talk about feet - ... ? For instance, supposing you used your feet in the way that a baboon or a chimpanzee uses his feet, almost as much as he uses his hands - you would certainly be more conscious of your feet, just because you were using them more; you were using the toes in a way that we use fingers. But we don't normally employ our feet in that way; so one might say why should we be more conscious of them? Why should we be as conscious of our feet as we are of our hands? It would seem to be a quite natural thing. Or does one distinguish between being conscious, more or less conscious, of one's feet, one's hands and so on, and being aware [437] of them? If so, what is the basis of the distinction?

Ratnaprabha: What yoga teachers sometimes do is to ask us - their pupils - just to bring our awareness into different parts of our body, and what I find sometimes is that in some cases it is quite difficult to bring my awareness down into my feet; in other words, to be at a particular time fully conscious of all the nerve-endings, if you like, that are down there. It is quite difficult; as if the pathways are somehow blocked and stagnant because they are not used very much. I think this is what is meant by not being aware of one's body, that the pathways that keep one in touch with different parts of our body have got blocked up through lack of use.

S: It seems to be highly metaphorical language. How literally is one to take this? - that there are pathways and that they get blocked up? What is happening? Is it also not a question of, say, focused awareness and peripheral awareness? Presumably one isn't aware of the whole of one's being equally at the same time. You are peripherally aware of certain parts of yourself, because they are peripheral; but you can no doubt, with training, focus your attention more and more on those peripheral parts. No doubt it is desirable to do that from time to time.

But does it suggest that anything is wrong that one's consciousness is not normally focused on a peripheral part, say, one's feet?

Surata: I suppose it depends, say, to what extent that represents - what shall we say? - a sort of a disintegration as it were of one's total being. That is the way I was thinking.

S: I find it rather difficult to imagine that someone asked to do so could not in fact focus his attention on his feet, more than he normally does. Usually one has got a sort of peripheral awareness of one's feet, just as one has a peripheral awareness of every part of every part of the body - nose, ears, whatever. But it shouldn't be very difficult to focus one's attention more on the feet than is usually the case or than usually is necessary. Do some people actually have difficulty focusing awareness, say, on the feet?

Surata: Yes, in my experience they do.

S: Well, how does it work? Because surely if they feel the feet they are conscious of the feet, the sensation in the [438] feet. What is this difficulty? What is it that they are not able to do? Is it that they are not able to concentrate on the feet?

Cittapala: It seems that almost the information they are getting isn't qualitatively of the same order. That's the sort of - I don't know, I haven't been through it with Surata but when he says 'Bring your awareness down to your feet' - it seems almost as though he is implying, get a lot more information about, I suppose, the ground and the feeling or whatever.

S: Well, this should normally happen if one is focusing on that particular part of oneself in a way that one doesn't usually do - you will be more aware of the sensations reaching that particular part of the body, sensations of which usually you are only peripherally aware; that would be the normal and natural thing that would happen.

Cittapala: But even when I do direct my attention down into my feet, it's as if through lack of - well, through always using that peripheral awareness, I am not actually able to interpret the sensation in a very sort of articulate way.

S: But is it a question of interpretation or just being aware of? For instance, if you put your foot down on the ground, normally you are peripherally aware of your foot, so you are only peripherally aware of that sensation of resistance coming from the floor to your foot. But if you focus your attention on the foot, the foot becomes central in your awareness rather than peripheral - well, you feel the floor impinging on your foot more vividly, let us say. Is not that all that happens?

Ratnaprabha: I think there is another element, which is a certain emotional element, which maybe is clearer in, say, massage, perhaps, than in yoga; I don't know. And I have found that massaging people there are certainly areas of the body that it seems they don't want to be aware of, and these areas of the body are tense; they have very powerful tensions in them. And if people's awareness goes into those parts of the body, not only do the tensions begin to release but it also seems that emotional energy is released as well. And this may be a kind of emotional energy that people do not want to experience, they try to avoid experiencing. It may actually cause them to cry - just because you are massaging one part of the body that previously they have not really been aware of. I am not quite sure exactly [439] what is going on, but it seems it is something to do with awareness, or lack of awareness, of the body.

S: Well, let's stick with the foot. Does anything happen, say, in the case of the foot?

Ratnaprabha: Well, in massage, yes; that seems to be quite a sensitive area, an area where ... lots and lots of very small muscles. And it can get quite blocked up and clawed out - especially, as Ratnaketu [said], if it's been abused when one was a child.

S: But does that really say no more than that you would become aware that, say, the muscles in your foot were stiff?

Ratnaprabha: It doesn't explain the emotional connection. There does seem to be an emotional connection that, when the muscles are released, there seems to be a corresponding release of emotion.

S: In other words, one is saying that the tension of the muscles is not simply physical in origin but is psychological in origin, and therefore the nature of the tension offers a clue to the nature of the psychological or emotional state? This is what one is saying?

Ratnaprabha: What is more, it also offers a means of therapy, in that releasing tension may also release the energy.

S: But then, of course, the question arises - maybe we should have gone into this before - what do we mean by foot? It is not so simple. Does one mean by the foot the skin at that part of the body which is in contact with the surrounding atmosphere or with the sock or with the floor, with the ground? Or does one mean the whole assemblage of veins and nerves and flesh and blood and muscle? So, if one is speaking, say, of becoming aware of the foot, does one mean becoming aware of all those things?

Surata: Yes, that's what I would ...

S: Which normally one is not aware of, one does not need to be aware of. So where does that leave your question? Is there still a question there? If so, what is that question?

Surata: It leaves me with some enormous questions!

[440]

Prasannasiddhi: You have mentioned something about people being disembodied. You said right from birth they'd been disembodied; they had never actually been in contact with their bodies, in a sense. And I think it was thought that this might have an aspect or connection with alienation - people being alienated from their emotions - and perhaps to get in contact with their physical body is one way of recontacting one's emotions.

S: One assumes that a normal healthy person is aware of himself, and he is aware of himself as a whole; he is aware, say, of his body. But even in the case of a normal healthy person, presumably, his body awareness is not equally intense in all its parts. That is to say, even in a normal healthy person there will be a peripheral body awareness as well as a focused body awareness. But it would also seem that a normal healthy person should be able, when he so wishes, to focus attention on any part of his body and experience that more fully and more vividly than he normally does, just because it has moved from the periphery to the centre of consciousness.

But presumably what one is saying is that quite a lot of people cannot do this; that they cannot really shift their attention, they cannot focus their attention, on these more peripheral parts of the body in such a way as to fully experience the sensations which are going on there. This is in fact what one is saying. And further, one might even be saying that there are some people who are not able to have any real awareness of any part of their body, and such people one might really describe as disembodied - as, for some practical purposes at least, not having a body. Has anybody got any sort of experience of this, or has anybody had an experience of this - not actually experiencing very much of themselves bodily? What do you expect to experience? What does it consist in? Is it that one doesn't experience the skin tingling, or one cannot actually feel the blood racing through the veins? Is this what it amounts to? Do you normally expect to feel, say, the workings of your kidneys? What I am really getting at is that we mustn't use cliché-type expressions, thinking that we know what they mean but not really knowing what we are talking about. So what do we expect of ourselves in this respect, if we are supposedly normal, healthy? What is the optimum, what is desirable? It is said that some yogis can direct attention to particular parts of themselves, particular organs, and not only feel but actually see them. Is that desirable? Should that be normal, or does that represent a degree

of specialization that one doesn't need to aspire to?

[441]

And there is, of course, as we were saying a few minutes ago, the question of muscular tension, and the correlation of muscular tension with perhaps emotional tension, so that one is able to feel, to find one's way to the underlying emotional tension from the muscular tension, if one understands these things sufficiently. But that is perhaps a separate aspect.

So really the basic question is: what degree and what type of bodily awareness is to be expected from the normal healthy person, and what degree of bodily awareness is as it were necessary to spiritual life? Does one have to go as far as the yogis? What is it that one should be able to experience via the body, or of the body, or in the body?

Gunapala: Surely it's no more than control of the mind, being able to concentrate the mind on something, whether it be the foot or some body outside the foot? Surely there is no need to have total awareness of the ends of your foot; it's just the ability to be able to concentrate the mind on it.

S: Yes, this seems to be the real question. That one should be able, because one has the capacity for fixing one's attention, to direct attention, direct awareness, to any part of one's body, and what one finds when one has done that, that is a separate matter. One may find tension, one may not find tension: that is a separate matter. But one should be able to direct attention to any part of the body and to make that part temporarily the focus of one's attention.

Now are there people who find it difficult to do this? Presumably some people find it difficult to focus their attention on anything - whether it's their own body, or a matchbox, or the breath, or whatever it may be. But are there any special difficulties in this field?

Aryamitra: You spoke about does anyone experience anybody with this sort of disembodied experience. I have, and maybe, in that case, it would be a good thing.

S: Well, what is one saying? Because if one speaks of this disembodied person, what does one mean by that? Is it a person who has difficulty in focusing his attention on any part of his body, focusing his awareness on any part of his body? Is this what one means by such a disembodied person?

Aryamitra: It seems to me it's more like just totally [442] alienated from the body - and you could say alienated from other things as well.

S: Well, that's putting the same thing into other words, isn't it? So what is that?

Aryamitra: It's alienated awareness. Well, not awareness ...

S: It's only alienated awareness with regard to the body.

Silaratna: In terms of the unity of body, speech and mind, if someone - just using that example - someone seems to be disembodied, surely, in view of that unity, they will be out of touch with those other aspects as well: with the aspect of speech and with the aspect of what they were thinking in the mind, what's going on in the mind.

S: Not necessarily, because one can meet people who are relatively alienated, let's say, from the body, but whose perception of ideas is very acute.

Aryamitra: Sort of dragon's head and snake's body?

S: Yes. The Buddha spoke of awareness of the body; the Buddha spoke, in the Satipatthana Sutta - which we will be studying, a group of us will be studying later on in the course - he spoke of awareness of the body and bodily movements. Why do you think the Buddha spoke in those terms, 2500 years before the advent of psychotherapy and encounter groups and things of that sort? Why do you think the Buddha included this?

Bodhiruchi: It can actually tell you quite a lot about what you are doing, interpreting your actions.

S: Well, yes, it has that useful function, if you know what you are actually doing - which maybe people don't always know.

Shantiprabha: You do communicate yourself to other people through your physical appearance and ...

S: Yes, indeed.

Aryamitra: It spreads to other awareness and maybe could be a starting point.

[443]

S: Yes, I think this is the main reason. Awareness is regarded as important in Buddhism for obvious reasons. One speaks of awareness of the Truth. Awareness is a form of knowledge, it's a form of direct perception. But it isn't something that is very easy to develop, so one starts by developing awareness with regard to easy, i.e. comparatively gross, objects - in other words, the physical body. If you can't even be aware of your physical body, its position and its movements, how are you going to be aware of something infinitely more subtle, infinitely more changeable, like the mind? Awareness of thoughts helps you to still thoughts. But how can you practise awareness of thoughts, or awareness of feelings, before you have practised awareness of the body?

So it's as though awareness of the body and its movements, for the Buddha, was a sort of introduction to higher forms of awareness: awareness of feelings, awareness of thoughts, and eventually awareness of Truth, awareness of Reality. This would seem to be the reason why the Buddha spoke of awareness of the body and its movements. Presumably - we like to think, at least - that he was dealing with comparatively normal, healthy people, people who were happy, healthy and human, and who were already, as we say, fully 'in touch' with their bodies and not needing to be brought more in touch with them. If anything, judging by some passages in the Pali Canon, they were only too much in touch with their bodies, they didn't need to be made more in touch with them.

But what is it that makes people out of touch with their bodies? We know, of course that this is a well worn absolutely cliché ridden subject but what is it that makes people out of touch with their bodies? And are we absolutely clear that it's a good thing to be in touch with one's body? We just accept this, but why do we think it's a good thing to be in touch with our

bodies? Wouldn't it be better to forget about them, not spend so much time on them, pampering them and feeding them, pouring drink into them, putting them to bed, making them comfortable? Let's question our assumptions. Do we really need to be more into our bodies? Is it really a spiritual goal? Surely we ought to be trying to get out of our bodies and more into our minds, into our spirits or our souls, or our higher feelings? Why has so much importance come to be attached to this getting into one's body, experiencing one's body?

Bodhiruchi: Because we don't.

[444]

S: Well, why not just let it rest there, and try to experience our souls? As I say, why not just forget about our bodies? Perhaps it's a good thing that we don't experience them too much.

Ratnaketu: You've got a body, there's nothing you can do about that. You've got a body, it's part of you, it's an expression of you. There is a reason why you have a body, so ...

S: Greed, hatred and delusion in previous existences!

Ratnaketu: Greed, hatred and delusion are what is stopping us from being Enlightened, so we do need to be aware of our bodies.

S: But do we? On that basis, are the reasons that you've given adequate ones? For instance, suppose you are meditating; suppose you get deep into meditation, suppose you get deep into the dhyanas, is there any body-consciousness? You are not into your body then; far from it.

Amoghavajra: To the extent that you not aware of ... and you are just not aware, you've got to start somewhere pretty basic. The body is basic, ... start, so presumably that's what people mean when they say 'Get into your body'.

S: Are you satisfied that when people speak in terms of getting into their bodies, they are as it were practising on that level, so that they can get into themselves on higher levels? Or are they tending to think of getting into their bodies almost as a sort of end in itself?

Bodhiruchi: Also there's the point that the body is a vehicle. It's very well to go into meditation, into the higher dhyanas and lose touch with the body, but the only way you're going to get back in the Shrine Room the next day is by means of your body, so if you develop a cold or you get ill then it's going to be difficult to get into those higher states.

S: But that is not an argument for getting more into your body in this sort of psychotherapeutic sense. It merely recognizes the objective fact that you have a body and you are dependent on it to some extent; but that is not by itself an argument for getting into your body more; if anything, it is an argument for getting out of it a bit more so that you don't feel those colds and coughs and things, and those aching knees.

Harshaprabha: Is this not a simple correlation with a healthy body and healthy mind?

[445]

S: Well, the body can be healthy without your necessarily experiencing it in that sort of psychotherapeutic way. You have a healthy pair of lungs and a healthy heart functioning quite

vigorously, but you are not aware of them. You can have a perfectly sound bone structure, but are you aware of it?

Gunapala: It seems to me that it's a method of developing awareness, this concentrating on the body, and it's no different, it seems, from the mindfulness of breathing, where you are concentrating on the breath.

S: The mindfulness of breathing is just a specialized form of that, it's concentrating on one particular part of the body, namely the breathing, the chest. There's a reason for that which Lama Govinda has explained in one of his books. But, yes, it's a more general form of mindfulness of breathing.

So if as it were you are cutting your spiritual teeth in this particular way, by practising mindfulness of body, that is perfectly intelligible; that is in fact what the Buddha teaches. But what about this more, let us say, extensive going into the body, experiencing it? Where does that come in - or does it come in? Is it necessary? This is really perhaps what I am asking.

It does seem to me - just hearing or sometimes overhearing things, maybe around the LBC - as though some people had got a bit stuck in their bodies, and don't almost look very much further.

Amoghacitta: Sometimes it's the quickest, the greatest way of experiencing energy, experiencing anything at all. It's just the easiest way of experiencing.

Devamitra: Isn't it that, in this latter case, getting into your body represents in many people's minds a means of growth? And so therefore this means that growth is somehow associated with the Dharma, which is also the means of growth, but it's like bringing the Dharma down on to a psychotherapeutic level.

S: Yes. Well, one can certainly say that bodily awareness has a connection with individual growth; it has perhaps from a Buddhist point of view inasmuch as the body being the grossest of objects it's easier for you as it were to practise with, when you are trying to develop awareness; you can then proceed to develop your awareness with regard to more subtle objects, i.e. [446] your feelings and thoughts. That is perfectly intelligible and perfectly acceptable.

But I do get the impression, as I say, hearing and overhearing, people talking around for example the LBC, that they may have got a bit, in some cases, bogged down on that particular level and are almost preoccupied with the experience, not to say enjoyment, of bodily sensations for their own sake - which is rather a different thing; different from the traditional Buddhist approach.

Bodhiruchi: Can you go back a step? - because you asked two questions. The first was 'Why are people out of touch with their bodies?' and the second one was 'Do we need to be in touch with our bodies to the extent that we are?' You've been going into the second question but didn't go into the first one at all.

S: All right, why are people out of touch with their bodies? - taking this expression 'out of touch' at its face value. Also, of course, assuming that they are out of touch with their bodies.

I am concerned rather, perhaps, this morning with questioning assumptions: well, are people out of touch with their bodies? This is why I started by asking what we mean by this expression. After all, we do have sensations in our bodies, etc. etc. etc.

It would seem that to be out of touch with one's body means to have difficulty in bringing one's peripheral body awareness into the centre of attention; it would seem to be connected at least with that.

Devamitra: I wouldn't have thought that you could say that generally that was true of most people that I come into contact with.

S: That they were out of touch with their body? Perhaps the expression, though it is used so generally, just needs much clearer and more precise definition. I think this is basically what I am getting at: that we've got into the habit, in the Friends, even, of using these sort of expressions as though we knew exactly what they meant; but only too often we are not so clear what they mean. So what do we mean by saying that we, or anybody, is out of touch with his or her body?

Bodhiruchi: They are comparatively less aware of their [447] bodily functions and bodily capabilities.

S: Comparatively - as compared with whom?

Bodhiruchi: Well, yourself.

S: But who is the norm? All right, where does the norm reside? Who is the norm, or how does one measure? When one compares one person to another, A is more in touch with his body than B - well, how does one measure that, how does one know?

Ratnaketu: To the extent that your lack of awareness gets in the way of communication in ...

Tape 22, Side 2

S: Well, how could that happen, for instance? Give concrete examples. How could your lack of bodily awareness get in the way of your communication with other people? It could be, so how?

Ratnaketu: I think it would certainly relate to one point of what you were saying before - you were saying that people communicate quite a bit through bodily gestures, in an almost unconscious way or subconscious way. And if you really aren't in touch with your body, to that extent funny things can go on - your body could be communicating quite different things to what you are consciously...

S: In other words, you must know what you are communicating subliminally, so to speak, through the body. Yes. Otherwise you don't know what you are communicating.

Devamitra: There's the question of people who have difficulty in co-ordinating their physical movements - could that be considered as an aspect of being unaware of one's body?

S: Not necessarily. [aircraft noise] ... neurological ... dysfunction. That is as it were physical causes, psychological causes, sometimes it's difficult to say. But a person even with such a dysfunction could still be quite aware of that dysfunction - that he was functioning in a way different from other people regarded normally as an impaired function ...

I get the impression that there are certain expressions, [448] certain phrases, that people like the sound of, like 'getting into one's body' - usually pronounced 'buddy' [said with an American-style accent] (Laughter) - I get the impression of someone wriggling into a little hole, getting into their body.

Devamitra: Do you think it's possibly just a basic rationalization for indulgence?

S: Well, indulgence in what?

Devamitra: The body. Bodily experiences, bodily sensations, bodily pleasures.

S: Well, this is in a way the sort of question I was indirectly raising a little while ago. When does experience, when does mindfulness of the body, become indulgence in the body or in bodily sensations? Because presumably the Buddha was not thinking in those terms; he was certainly speaking of awareness of the body. But when does that awareness of the body, bodily sensations, pass over into indulgence? What does one mean by indulgence, anyway? Is it necessarily unskilful? Or is it necessarily unskilful?

Devamitra: Presumably, from the spiritual point of view, it would become indulgence in a sense; when awareness of the body ceased to become a means to an end, it would be an end in itself... [aircraft noise]

:

: ...

S: I think in a way this is the crux of the matter, or a crux of the matter: that Buddhism starts with the posture, let us say; that awareness is desirable, awareness is skilful, awareness is necessary - in the broadest sense, in the general sense, at the highest possible level, at all levels. But awareness is not very easy to develop. So how do you make a start? All right, you make a start with the body. You become more aware of your body, its position, its movements. You become more aware of your bodily sensations. Some of those sensations are pleasurable, some of those are painful. The Buddha does not say that you should block the pleasurable sensations, or that you should block the painful sensations; the Buddha as it were says 'Allow yourself to experience all these sensations; allow yourself to be aware of them; allow yourself to taste them.'

[449]

But the important element here, certainly from the standpoint of the development of mindfulness, is the mindfulness or awareness itself. So not only must you eventually pass on, so to speak, from mindfulness of the body or awareness of the body to mindfulness of one's feelings, emotions, thoughts, mental states, moods and so on; but also one must not - there seems to be a lack of a word that is needed here - one must not indulge, I was going to say, but that's not quite the right word - one should not as it were linger over awareness of one's

bodily sensations, not for the sake of the awareness but for the sake of the sensation itself. In other words, you make an end in itself of the content of that bodily awareness, rather than being more concerned with the development or cultivation of the awareness itself.

This, it would seem, is what happens with some of those people who are concerned with getting into the body; they want to experience bodily sensations more and more intensely, more and more pleurably - sometimes, one suspects, for neurotic reasons, because then it's a sort of inner emptiness which they don't have anything to fill. They try to fill it with bodily sensations. I think this is quite - well, almost dangerous, one might say.

To be aware of bodily sensations, to accept bodily sensations ... level in the course of one's spiritual life, in the course of one's individual development, to be aware of them - that is one thing, but to linger over them, to hanker after them, to explore them, try to intensify them, to preoccupy oneself with them almost exclusively - that is quite another matter.

I have been giving some thought to this whole question recently. Why is there around - well, I'm talking about the LBC, because that example just happened to come to mind; there may be others - there is quite an emphasis, it seems, at present on things like dance and massage and yoga, which is all right. These things all do help, they have their place, they play their part in the development of the individual. But I think there is something of a danger, at least a possibility, that they can become ends in themselves and people become over-preoccupied with bodily sensations.

Cittapala: It seems almost that people project their feelings of dissatisfaction into their bodies, and try and cure their bodies as a means to getting... things like homoeopathic and - there's a whole range of alternative medicines.

[450]

S: Yes, that's another thing. I've noticed - this is ranging a little more widely, but I talk about it because it has been on my mind to some extent over the last year or two - one does notice that every now and then there is a sort of let's say wave of interest - or perhaps that's rather too mild an expression, but what happens is that someone goes off to some wonderful acupuncturist or someone of that sort and comes back with a glowing report, and then so many people start going to that acupuncturist - or whatever else it may be - some kind of healer; it's something to do with health, it's something to do with the body. And I've seen this happen in the course of the last few years with regard to several such people outside the FWBO. And it would seem as though the reason for that is that the quite intense - in some cases perhaps slightly unhealthy - preoccupation with one's health.

Now I must be careful about generalizing, but I suspect that this tendency is exhibited rather more by the women in the Movement than by the men. I won't be too positive about that, but that is the impression I get. And also I think even recently the question has arisen not only of acupuncturists or herbalists or what not, but even fortune tellers. Yes, even mediums. Quite a lot of people in the FWBO, it would seem - but again in this case, I think, definitely women rather than men - go to such people: ... their health, personal problems - presumably love and romance and all the rest of it. So again this would seem to be symptomatic of this same sort of rather unhealthy interest in the body and its concerns.

Yes, one must be aware of the body, yes, one must look after the body, yes, there is nothing

wrong from a Buddhist point of view, nothing unskillful in actually enjoying pleasurable bodily sensations; but one must look beyond, one must look to other levels, look to higher levels at the same time. I do get the impression that some people in the FWBO are getting a bit bogged down on this bodily level in one way or another.

Cittapala: The implication seems to be something like [Harshaprabha] said, healthy body, healthy mind; it almost seems to be the ... and actually become fit and healthy and they sort out those accumulated poisons which have been built up over the years, they'll suddenly become ...

S: Oh yes, it is quite reasonable that people should seek to make themselves as healthy as possible. But it's not that [451] that I'm talking about; not a sensible, objective concern with one's own health, but in a way an unhealthy preoccupation with health, and in the end perhaps not really doing very much about it.

Subhuti: Usually very passive, get somebody else to do it for you.

S: Yes.

Ratnaketu: Isn't this similar to what you were saying about the middle path - you've got your reality principle and your pleasure principle and here it's a case of people getting involved in the pleasure principle without seeing any idea why.

S: And also the pleasure principle on what from a Buddhist point of view is a relatively low level; if you got preoccupied with the pleasure principle on the dhyanic level that would be another matter. But yes, there is perhaps insufficient awareness of - using that terminology - the reality principle.

Harshaprabha: Could it not also be rooted in an inability to think for oneself, to think and act for oneself? It seems as though those activities require very little thought.

S: Yes, I think one aspect of it which bothers me a bit is that quite a lot of people seem to be willing to put themselves into the hands of somebody, into the hands of this favourite doctor or - well, some of my doctor friends describe them as quacks, but I won't use that expression - to put yourself in somebody's hands and be a bit passive and do what they tell you and feel that something is happening, it's all right - even though the advice that they are giving you may be of the vaguest and most general kind, and you may not end up actually doing anything.

Harshaprabha: So would you say it's Right Livelihood for Friends Foods, for example, to be selling homoeopathic remedies ... ?

S: Oh yes, homoeopathic remedies do work; I'm quite sure of that. I'm not saying anything against the actual use of any particular remedies. I was speaking of the mental attitude of going along to someone and depending and being quite passive and placing quite a bit of faith in such people, due to your basically unhealthy preoccupation with your own health and with your body.

[452]

I was even reflecting whether, if this sort of attitude, this sort of dependence, went too far, it would not become incompatible with Going for Refuge. That is a quite serious matter. Because you may start listening to these sort of people more and more - not just about health but about general matters: your life - you get talking and they give you advice, you might be quite interested by that; but that might be something which is coming from quite a non-Buddhistic source, perhaps, something quite opposed to your Buddhistic ideals.

We must not forget that, when investigations are held and surveys conducted, the thing in which most people are most interested is health. This comes at the top of their concerns - in some ways quite rightly, because physical health, bodily health, is very important. But there is a right attitude towards the body and a wrong attitude, there is a right attitude towards health, physical health, and a wrong attitude. By all means make oneself as healthy as possible; by all means have a healthy mind in a healthy body. But go the right way about it. Don't become over-preoccupied with the body, over-concerned with the body. And don't let your concern, your unhealthy concern perhaps, with the body lead you into dependence upon those who profess to be able to cure the body for you or to cure the bodily complaints that you have for you.

Bodhiruchi: But - that still hasn't really answered the question.

S: Which was the question?

Bodhiruchi: Why do people get out of touch with their bodies?

S: Well, perhaps people could be a little autobiographical: why generalize? Everybody here has a body. Everybody is in touch with it or out of touch with it to varying degrees. Has anybody any contribution to offer? Anybody who felt that they had been out of touch with their body, that they've got back into touch with it? Have they any ideas as to how they originally got out of touch with it? When one has got this pool of personal experience to draw on why hypothesise, why speculate? It has happened to all of you, presumably, unless some were born and remained so bouncing and healthy that they never got out of touch with their bodies but remained in contact with them ever since.

So if you did get out of touch with your body - what happened? How did that fall take place? (Laughter) Had it anything to do with Eve and an apple? Had it anything to do [453] with mother, or father - or the priest? (Laughter) Did it actually happen? Are you clear about that?

Gunapala: I don't know whether I have actually been out of touch with my body; I can't definitely say I have.

S: Hm, good.

Surata: I don't think I have, either.

S: So you don't know how one gets out of touch with one's body. Fair enough.

Cittapala: If one is to say that being sick represented being out of touch with one's body, perhaps one could go so far as to say that to the extent that one stereotypes a particular approach to one's body, say particularly in terms of food and so on, then one can say that is a

means by which one gets out of touch because one doesn't see one's own body and its particular needs, one just approaches it as a uniform object which just needs ...

S: But how does one come to do that? That is the question.

Cittapala: Well, I think one is encouraged by one's environment to just feel that certain things are good for it and certain things are not. I'm thinking in terms of people who talk about good healthy diets - they don't really know what a good healthy diet is, and they don't even really know whether a particular good healthy diet is good for them in their particular instance. And it's amazing how some people can become quite adamant about that sort of thing as being good for them when ...

S: - and good for you. I remember, years and years ago, some of my friends were very much into macrobiotics, and they were always talking in terms of yin and yang and the rest of the jargon, but hardly any of them were at all healthy; hardly any of them, which was really quite amazing.

Ratnaketu: I couldn't help thinking that it might be something to do with the environment, I was reflecting - when you think about all these mediums and ... doctors and things. From my experience in New Zealand there was none of that, ... no concern with doctors at all, or mediums.

S: New Zealand itself is the great doctor!

: ... great doctor.

[454]

Ratnaketu: But maybe if your environment that you're living in is particularly unpleasant and ugly, you start to retreat a bit, not so expansive.

S: I am not so much worried about that, assuming that you experience it as unpleasant and ugly. Perhaps some people don't. Maybe some of the people who have lived in Bethnal Green for generations think it's the most beautiful place on earth. One is safe there.

Aryamitra: I think it's fear of experiencing one's sexuality; I think that's one reason. And another one is something to do with painful experience - maybe a bit sensitive and the world and people is felt as painful. I know it's a very practical thing about where somebody hurt themselves - I forget what it was - a hammer and a nail or whatever - actually it was a bump on the head, I think - and I went to help them, and it's as if they'd disappeared. Because of the pain, they kind of shot right out, and I suddenly felt them coming back into their body again, the warmth and ...

S: Sometimes it just happens that you get out of touch with the body, so to speak, because it is just too painful to remain in touch with the body. In almost sheer self-defence you may be a very sensitive person, you can't get away from your environment or from your body - if that is the source of your painful sensation, so you just withdraw from the body itself.

There is an extreme case where someone has a very, very sensitive skin; they may cut and bleed very easily. So that tends to make them less inclined to get in touch with the body or be

in the body. There is that factor too. It is not necessarily due to entirely negative reasons that one gets out of touch with the body. There may be a perfectly valid reason for it. To remain in touch with it may just be too painful.

Silaratna: In my own case, when I was at school, I used to sometimes avoid getting into physical activities. I knew I would come on with an asthma attack if I did that. And it did eventually become - it might have started off with a physical base, but it did become psychological. Until I became aware of that at about 14, that I was evading a lot of things because I thought I was going to come down with asthma which was an intensely unpleasant thing.

S: Right, so one wants to avoid it at all costs.

[455]

Anyway, I think we've reached the end of our time. I think two main points really emerge, at least so far as I am concerned, this morning. Question one's own use of any expression which is in general circulation - especially if it is of non-Buddhistic origin. Question one's use of any term, any quasi-cliche, virtually, like this one of 'getting into one's body': ask oneself what one really means by that, what is really involved in getting in touch with one's body, whatever it may be.

And secondly, beware of any sort of trend. If you see that say within - I'm talking about the Movement but it applies outside - if you notice that there is a sort of trend to do something, there is a trend to go to somebody, a trend to go to some healer or some kind of unorthodox medical man, let us say, or medical woman, ..., don't just jump on the band-waggon, don't automatically also think, if people are going it would be a really good thing if I went too. Just stop and ask yourself: why are they going? Why am I thinking of going? Who is this person? Is this person really qualified? Could this person really help me? What do I want him to help me for? Don't just go with some vague idea of this person is really good and is helping a lot of people and therefore he could help me - even though you don't have anything really specific to ask about.

Recently I came to know that quite a few people in the FWBO were going to one particular - I'm not quite sure what she is, whether a healer or medium or what - and paying 20 quid every time for a consultation. So I also couldn't help feeling: oh, a hell of a lot of money going out of the FWBO!

So there must be a reason for people doing this. You don't pay 20 quid a time, do you, without some psychological if not logical reason? So this is something we should be careful about.

Gunapala: They're a bit crazy in the head as well.

S: Well, you know the saying: someone who goes to a psychoanalyst wants his head examined. (Laughter)

Sometimes when people who have been to such people speak about them, they do so quite enthusiastically, but in very general terms - 'Oh, they were really good, oh, they really listen to you, oh, they're great. I'm sure they could help you' - or 'They know a lot.' Well, what are

they? Are they naturopaths or allopaths, or are they acupuncturists? 'Oh no, [456] but he's got great insight.' Well, what does he actually give you? Does he give you any pills? 'Oh, he doesn't give you any pills.' Does he tell you what to do? 'Oh no, we just had a good talk; I think he really understood what was wrong with me.' Well, what are you doing about it? 'Well, not exactly doing anything. I just felt a bit better talking to him.' And of course, that minus 20 quid apparently was working.

Anyway, perhaps we'll leave it there.

Day 21 Tape 23, Side 1

S: So are there any questions?

Vessantara: We've been finishing off the seventh limb of the Path, Perfect Mindfulness, and our group were talking about awareness of other people ...

Amoghavajra: You mentioned in the lecture about Ramana Maharshi and people just going for darshan; and from that, we were discussing the grace waves of gurus; and often in the Life of Milarepa this idea of the guru's grace waves. And we couldn't get a good idea of what is meant by that. I wondered if you could ...

S: The English expression 'grace waves' isn't a literal translation. The Tibetan term is chin lap, which corresponds, or is said to correspond, to the Sanskrit adisthana. There is a very good note on the meaning of adisthana in Snellgrove's translation of the Hevajra Tantra - some of you, I think, have access to that. You can look that up in due course, perhaps.

But more generally speaking, I think it is helpful, or even necessary, to consider this whole question within a wider context. I have sometimes said that I don't like to use the word 'vibrations'; even less perhaps do I like to use the word 'vibes'. But it does sometimes seem that this word vibration or vibrations is unavoidable. We don't have any better word to use in its place. So I think that we have to see all living things, and especially all living beings, as constantly giving out vibrations of one kind and another. Perhaps we should think of the analogy of the incense stick. Smell is a very strange thing. How is it possible for the perfume of a stick of incense to pervade a whole room, or even to be smelt hundreds of yards away? What is this phenomenon of scent?

What it means is that tiny particles of the original [457] substance, detaching themselves from that original substance, travel to your nose. They travel to your olfactory organ; they contact your sensitive nerve endings, and you smell the perfume. So in a way it's not even that the stick of incense is sending forth vibrations; it is sending forth, one might say, even tiny portions of itself. And apparently a person is surrounded by an aura of tiny particles of themselves - that is to say, their skin etc. - which are detaching themselves from the body all the time.

So one finds much the same sort of thing happening on the mental level. Everybody is sending forth mental vibrations, that is to say tiny portions, tiny particles, so to speak, of their mental selves, which are travelling in all directions and affecting, being perceived by, other people. So in this way we constantly have an effect upon our surroundings. The kind of mood that you are in communicates itself to your surroundings, communicates itself to other people.

This is one of the reasons why we need to watch our thoughts, make sure that they are as skilful as possible, because our thoughts are not only influencing, not only affecting ourselves, but other people with whom we are in contact and perhaps with whom we are not in contact physically, as well.

So one might therefore say, if someone is in a highly positive state, surely they will be sending forth so to speak highly positive vibrations; they will be having an effect on other people. If they are in a negative state they will be having a negative effect. And if someone is in a highly concentrated mental state, if his thoughts, if his being even, if his consciousness, is integrated, and integrated in a very positive as it were powerful way, then surely the vibrations which come forth from him will be much more positive and much more powerful, much more directed, than those which come from other people. So in this way one arrives at the conception, the traditional conception, of the chin lap, the adisthana or, if you like the English expression, the 'grace waves of the guru', which is so to speak a higher, a more specialized, a more positive, a more intensified form of a general phenomenon, something that is happening all the time with all people.

You probably have noticed that when different people are around the atmosphere changes. When some people are around everything seems to be disintegrating; everything becomes scattered, fragmented. Sometimes when other people are around things seem more calm and harmonious.

[458]

So perhaps we should look at the conception of the 'grace waves', as Evans-Wentz calls them, in this way. Sometimes I think the comment has been made that when people come back off retreat they feel different; they look different; they have a different sort of effect on their surroundings. People feel something very positive, even something inspiring, coming from them. Well, you might say they are little tiny grace waves.

Ratnaketu: Bhante, do you think it would be possible to direct these ... vibrations into a particular object or a person?

S: What about the metta bhavana? Do you just discharge a quantity of metta into the air and hope that some of it will do some good somewhere? Is it not possible to direct one's metta? Has anybody ever considered this? I have spoken about it a few times in the past. Does anybody remember or was anybody present?

Aryamitra: I remember you saying once that if you wake up feeling really good, it was quite possible that somebody has directed metta towards you.

S: There is that possibility, yes. There are other possible explanations (Laughter). I was not thinking of that, but that is a possibility. It could have been that you were practising the metta bhavana in your sleep, of course.

Ratnaketu: But you have had an experience, perhaps, - the last Order weekend, the last Order metta - we did it by reading out at the LBC all the names of the Order members, and it just happened that Nagabodhi had forgotten that it was the Order metta and so he was out for a walk just at the time when we were doing it. And he came back, and he told us without us telling him in the first place that we had done the Order metta, that he had been walking along

talking, and then all of a sudden he had become overwhelmed by this really strong feeling of warmth. And he said it just came from nowhere, and it just ... It was quite interesting.

S: Well, one could say - the sceptic might say that that was coincidence. But something that I have mentioned, some time ago, more than once, was that some years ago I did experiment myself with this: that is to say, supposing - I think I started doing this in India, even - supposing I had had any little misunderstanding with anybody, I used to try directing the metta towards that particular person, and I always found the next time I met that person a change seemed to have taken place. Again, [459] the sceptic might say that the change was in me; but I don't think it was entirely in me. I did observe, or at least I thought I observed, some change in the person towards whom I had directed the metta, presumably brought about by the metta. So this does suggest that metta can be directed. If metta can be directed, why not other positive mental states?

There is a more general point that emerges here. When people have misunderstandings, or they have difficulties in getting on with other people, they tend to think much more in terms of talking it out, talking it through, even talking it to death - the problem ought to just die of boredom because it has been talked about so much. But rather than try to do things that way, one could either instead or by way of supplement just do more metta bhavana - sort of saturate that person in metta, and just see whether that did not make a difference. It ought to make a difference.

I don't personally think that that incident involving Nagabodhi could have been just a coincidence, but as I say the sceptic might well consider it such. But if one does have very much to do, or even a little to do with things like metta and meditation, one does become aware that things like that do happen. And perhaps one should place more reliance on, or have more confidence in, not to say more faith in, the efficacy of things like metta operating in this way than one usually does. We are only too ready, perhaps, to fall back upon something overt, something explicit, insist on talking about it, summoning it in that way - not always realizing that things can be, if not solved, certainly helped towards solution, in other ways by more subtle methods.

Cittapala: Did you ever observe there was any effect of distance upon this?

S: To the best of my recollection, distance makes no difference at all.

Devamitra: When you say that you were directing your metta towards somebody, did you mean at the time of doing the metta bhavana practice, or do you mean at other times as well?

S: No, as far as I remember it was at the actual time of practice, simply because then one was likely to be more concentrated and therefore presumably more effective. One could, of course, ... [aircraft noise]

[460]

Devamitra: So presumably it was just a question of the person that you were dealing with in that fourth stage during that particular practice?

S: Yes.

Aryamitra: If, say, you've got a spiritual community in an area and it obviously is regularly doing the metta bhavana practice and is spreading out, do you think it's possible it would have an effect on that area around them?

S: I think it must have an effect. It's impossible to quantify it. There is no way of conducting a scientific experiment to prove or disprove that it has a certain effect, but it would seem a logical conclusion.

Devamitra: This is one of the points that TM is selling, isn't it?

S: I am sure that in principle they are right, and that the more people there are in the world doing some kind of meditation, no doubt, the better. I think they look at it, though, in a rather naive way, and I think they also perhaps tend to think of the power that they generate through meditation as a sort of power, by means of which they will do things and achieve things in their own way. I think that is perhaps a little, one might even say, dangerous. One must not, for instance, even think of metta as a sort of power, that if you sort of beam your metta towards someone, he's got to do whatever you want him to do. It's not really quite like that, obviously.

Harshaprabha: I don't know if it's just coincidence, but it is quite noticeable round the LBC how many shops and pubs have decided to paint the outsides the same colour as the LBC's was originally painted.

S: Oh, that's interesting. Well, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. It may not be necessarily due to waves of metta etc. emanating from the LBC, but it could well be that the LBC and Sukhavati are having a positive effect on the whole area, whether people are conscious of that or not. It would ... getting inspired to brighten up their shops so that ... by the fact that Sukhavati is bright and colourful. And that is the sort of effect that we should be having, on a very much wider scale.

Shantiprabha: When we started talking, you used the word [461] adisthana. What is the literal translation?

S: That's why I referred you to that note: it isn't really easy to give a literal translation. It roughly means something like 'a basis from which power is exercised' - not power in the sense that we give to the word when we contrast it with love, of course.

Vessantara: From there our group went on to discuss the awareness of Reality, and Campbell had a question related to that.

Jinavamsa: In the section on awareness of Reality, you talk about the practice of reciting mantras constantly. If you haven't thoroughly cultivated the previous stages of awareness, is there any value in mantra recitation?

S: I am not suggesting that you can't become aware of Reality if you haven't previously become aware of things, self, persons; because when it's a question of reciting a mantra, what is important is the concentration, even the intensity, with which you recite it. That is the most important thing then, perhaps. So it could be that you haven't fully cultivated awareness of things, self and persons, but you are able none the less to keep up the constant repetition of a

mantra with the requisite concentration and intensity. No doubt, if you did that a lot, something of that concentration, something of that intensity, would rub off on to your dealings with, your awareness of, things, self and people. But the fact that one felt that one's awareness of things, self and people was not perfect should not prevent one from taking up recitation of a mantra as a means of becoming aware of Reality.

This is why I used the expression 'dimensions' originally when speaking of these four kinds of awareness. I spoke of four dimensions of awareness because I didn't want them to be viewed as successive steps of a path. You don't have to, so to speak, perfect the first before you can perfect the second and so on, because they are not arranged seriatim like the steps of a path; they are more like, as I have said, dimensions or aspects of one thing with one total overall awareness.

Jinavamsa: Isn't one stage more subtle than the one before it, though?

S: I wouldn't like to say. Suppose one thinks in terms of awareness of things: well, you can see things as void, you can [462] see things as sunyata, you can see things as being in their depth Reality itself. So here awareness of things merges with awareness of Reality. The same with people: when you become more aware of people, you see, so to speak, the Real in them. Again, awareness of people merges with awareness of Reality. The same with regard to oneself.

So one might say that there is one awareness which one can look at in different ways, from different points of view, as applied, so to speak, to this or that particular object. But supposing you have cultivated awareness of Reality in the way that I have described: well, when you look, say, at things, when you look at yourself, or when you look at other people it won't be that you see things, self and other people as you saw them before; you will see them as it were in the light of the Reality of which you have become more aware.

Vessantara: You were saying that reciting a mantra was important for the concentration or intensity with which you recite it? It seems sometimes people within the Friends may be engaged in some other task which is taking up the major part of their attention, and they just keep a mantra going which consists of a very thin link with Reality - it's not as if they fully sort of concentrating on that. Do you think that's better than nothing, or is it ... ?

S: Oh yes, certainly. Because if you keep up that sort of connection, well, when you do have time to devote yourself to the mantra fully, you will be more able to do that.

Vessantara: Are there any circumstances in which it would be inappropriate for somebody - say who has been given a mantra...?

S: To try and keep up a constant repetition?

Vessantara: Yes, to ...

S: Well, if the fact that you were keeping up this constant repetition of the mantra meant that the greater part of your awareness was on that, and less on your surroundings and what you were doing, in a situation where there might be some risk to your life, then it would be inadvisable. For instance, if you were so absorbed in the recitation of your mantra that you

crossed the road as it were carelessly, that is to say without awareness of what you were doing and the traffic that was coming, that would be inadvisable, obviously. But only in [463] that sort of way. Or if you were, say, to try to carry on a conversation with someone, or someone was trying to carry on a conversation with you, I think you probably wouldn't be able to go very deeply into the communication if you were trying to keep up the repetition of your mantra in the background of your mind. The person with whom you were speaking might think that you weren't really with him. He would be quite right, and perhaps it wouldn't be appropriate on an occasion like that that you should not be fully with him, even though your consciousness was to some extent with your mantra. This is all really a matter of common sense, one might say. There's no profound wisdom needed here.

Vessantara: I think when we were talking about it in my group the question was raised whether by almost automatic repetition of a mantra in the way that it would not get debased rather than through something automatically you lose the feeling ...

S: Can you recite it automatically? What does one mean by reciting it automatically, anyway?

Vessantara: I suppose with a small portion of one's attention.

S: Well, the bigger the portion of one's attention with which one can recite it, the better. Perhaps what the expression really means is that one should not get into the habit, so to speak, of giving only a small portion of one's energy and one's attention to one's mantra; because it cannot become, I think, automatic in the strict sense.

Devamitra: Moving on to questions from my group, we have one quite deep philosophical question from Ratnaketu.

Ratnaketu: At this point I put my head on the block! I have two questions, both in the same area. The first one is: what is awareness? and the second one is: what is aware?

S: What is awareness? Well, the further question arises: how does one define something which cannot be reduced to any more basic elements? Awareness is in the same category, say, as pleasure - how do you define pleasure? The dictionary tells you it's an enjoyable sensation - that's really cheating, because 'enjoyable' is synonymous with 'pleasurable'. So the irreducible cannot be defined. I can say what is awareness? Well, awareness is clear consciousness - but again, that's cheating, because consciousness or clear consciousness is a [464] synonym for awareness. If I told you it was seeing things clearly - well, that would be speaking analogically. I would be saying that awareness was analogous to sight. It was a sort of mental seeing. And in a way that would be cheating, because it wouldn't be giving you a proper explanation of what awareness was.

So it would seem then that awareness, like pleasure, is something basic in human experience, something irreducible. You cannot as it were reduce it to something else and thereby give some kind of explanation of it; that is not possible. Actually, you all know what I mean by awareness - you do.

Ratnaketu: Is it the same as consciousness? Could you say that consciousness the same thing as awareness?

S: Well, the term consciousness can be used in such a way as to be synonymous with awareness. Some psychologists would, of course, introduce subtle shades of difference of meaning between the two.

Let me go back to the question of defining pleasure, because that is in a way even more basic. You can't define pleasure. And we can take it that we all know what pleasure means: that we apply this word pleasure to the same kind of experience. We contrast it, say, with pain. You stick a pin into somebody and he says, 'Oh! that's painful.' So you know exactly what painful means, because when someone sticks a pin into you you use the same word and your reactions are the same. Similarly you give someone a sweetmeat - well, that's pleasurable, your reactions are the same. So you agree that the sweetmeat shall be called pleasurable and the pin being stuck in you should be called painful.

But if you are asked to define pleasure, or define pain, you can't do it. You can't give a logical definition, because there is nothing more basic, nothing more fundamental, into which you can break them up. You can say that pleasure and pain are certain kinds of sensation, but what kind of sensation? You can only say pleasant in the one case and painful in the other. You can't get further than that.

So in the same way you can contrast awareness with unawareness, the sleep state with the waking state. And since you are clear about what awareness is and what unawareness is, you can imagine higher degrees of awareness, even higher degrees than you at present experience. You can even imagine, so to [465] speak, an ultimate awareness.

So one can't really define something as fundamental as awareness. One can't define consciousness, ... consciousness is practically synonymous with awareness.

But what about the second question of yours - who is aware? There is a great big assumption here, of course - that somebody is aware. But how do you know that anybody is aware? Are you aware of the one who is aware? Because, as soon as you become aware of the one who is aware, he becomes the object of awareness, not the subject of awareness. Can you see the subject of awareness? Can you see the subject of perception? We go back to the Surangama Samadhi Sutra, that is to say the one which is included in the Buddhist Bible, where the Buddha has a dialogue with Ananda as to where the mind is located: is it in the body? No. Is it outside the body? No. Is it in between? Is it on the surface of the body? It doesn't seem to occupy space at all.

So these are quite good questions on which people can as it were cut their philosophical teeth.

Devamitra: You meant there are even worse ones!

S: Well, the simplest questions are always the most tricky. The simplest, and in a way the trickiest, question is: why should it be that something exists? Why should anything exist? Why should not nothing exist? Why should there be anything at all?

Gunapala: I can't write that down! (Laughter).

S: Why is not just a vast nothingness? Why does anything exist at all? Surely there must be a reason. What was it that caused somethingness to be preferred to nothingness? Was it just

accident? How is it that things came into existence? Even if you posit God as having created everything out of nothing, why should a God have existed? Why should there not have been even no God?

Bodhiruchi: If there was no such thing as existence, then we would know it.

S: Well, if there was no such thing as existence, in the sense of nothing existing, of course there would not be anybody [466] to know that there wasn't anything existing. Why should there be not only existence but beings to know that there is such a thing as existence? Why should not neither exist? - neither anything existent nor anyone knowing that there was something existent? Why is that the situation, rather than the situation of nothing existent and no one knowing that there was nothing existent?

Harshaprabha: Are you just going to pose the questions, ...

S: It's you who have to cut your teeth.

Harshaprabha: This is a question and answer session!

Bodhiruchi: If there is existence but nobody knows of their existence, then it seems to me there is no consciousness in that existence.

S: No, that wasn't what I was thinking of. But anyway, that is just a little supplement to Ratnaketu's question...

What I have said with regard to Ratnaketu's questions is part of something, in a way, more general - that is to say, nothing that is a matter of experience can actually be defined. Experience can be communicated or can be indicated, but it cannot really be defined. Pleasure is a matter of experience, pain is a matter of experience. Awareness is a matter of experience.

Ratnaketu: Is that the way in which things - is that what is meant when we consider things are sunyata?

S: One could say that it was part of what was meant. Anyway, I leave you those little questions to consider.

Devamitra: There were no more questions from our group.

Subhuti: I think you've just answered our question. But just to make sure - I will just stick my neck out. We were involved with the mind-body problem. The Buddha said that the jiva and the kaya were neither identical nor different.

S: Nor both nor neither.

Subhuti: Ah, I thought that was the one where he only gave two.

S: Yes, in the list; but elsewhere, as far as I remember, [467] it is applied to all the ...

Subhuti: At the same time, it is a basic Buddhist principle that consciousness determines

being. Jiva and kaya presumably can be correlated with consciousness and being.

S: Mm, I'm not so sure of that. Jiva is usually regarded as life principle, not exactly consciousness; not mind, not thought - life principle. Or something more like vitality. It is that the presence of which makes the difference between organic and inorganic life. So far as I remember, it would not seem to be used in the sense of conscious organic life, but simply organic as opposed to inorganic. It may be that the word is used quite imprecisely. There isn't really a very philosophical, not a very technical term. But anyway, what was the question?

Subhuti: Well, it seems in a way that being and consciousness are of different orders.

S: Well, being is a more general term than consciousness, one could at least say. Because, in order to be conscious, one has first to exist, logically; but because one exists it does not necessarily follow that one is conscious, because there is something that exists without being conscious. So being is a more general term, a more general concept.

Subhuti: Oh dear, the question is not very well conceived. But really what we wanted to know was what the nature of the relationship between body and mind is. It seems it might even be one of these irreducibles.

S: Well, everybody has a body, everybody has a mind; just look and see. Does one really need to ask somebody else? It isn't as though I'm the only one with a body and mind, we've all got bodies and minds. They are all interacting, they are all working together. Isn't it just a matter of looking at one's own experience?

Tape 23, Side 2

S: I see - well, you have eyes as well as I have. So what is the nature of the relation between body and mind? One can of course always ask whether the question is rightly put, because the question does assume ... things which are separate and which therefore are actually related. It is the old Cartesian difficulty. If body and mind are two different things, how do [468] they interact? Descartes thought in terms of a sort of parallelism: that things were so created by God that actually the mind didn't act upon the body, but that when the mind acted the body also acted. Leibnitz developed this into his theory of pre-established harmony.

Vessantara: What was that?

S: Pre-established harmony between mind and body.

Vessantara: Is that Leibnitz?

S: Yes. It is quite simple. He is saying 'Here is my hand'. Well, my hand is part of my body; so I decide - and decision is presumably a mental act - I decide to lift my hand. So as a result of my mental decision to lift my hand, I lift my hand. My mind is acting upon my body; my mind is related to my body. So how? You can do it just as well as me. Do you feel one thing acting upon another? How do you feel them related as your hand is raised in relation to your volition to raise your hand? You have control, you have mental control over your hand; you can do anything with it you like. So how does it work? There is some relation there: could not one see what it was? It is something you directly perceive and experience - or do you? Do you

perceive a volition? Do you perceive a hand here, a body here, and a mind there, and a relationship between them? Is that a correct model for what actually happens? If not, what would be a correct model?

One wonders what sort of ... (?), in a way - when you ask about the relation between mind and body, are you not assuming that mind is some sort of object, and you are asking what is the relation between these two objects? But is mind an object in that way? So therefore can you ask how they are related, as though they were two objects?

Perhaps the Buddha said that mind and body are neither the same nor different because they are two things of such different orders they cannot really be compared or related in that kind of way.

Some of you who know your Milton may be thinking of Milton's words about philosophy:

"How charming is divine philosophy! Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose, But musical as is Apollo's lute."

Cittapala: Have we time for another question?

[469]

S: Yes.

Cittapala: The other day, you didn't have time to finish your discussion on the source of authority in Buddhism; you contrasted ...

S: Apart from not having had time to finish it, I didn't have time to begin it.

Cittapala: I was wondering whether you would care to continue it.

S: I'm not sure about that (Laughter). But first, what does one mean by authority? I know I used the word first, but then (Laughter) - What does one mean by authority? I believe - I haven't consulted my dictionary for several years, I think, with regard to this particular word - however, I seem to remember that when I consulted the 12-volume Oxford English Dictionary I discovered that the word authority was etymologically connected with the word author. Is that of any significance?

Ratnaprabha: It suggests a sort of creator, it seems.

S: Yes, it seems to suggest a creator. It does seem to suggest responsibility - that you are responsible for what you create.

Devamitra: And also control.

S: Control, presumably. But when we use the word authority, what do we usually mean? What is the usual meaning of the word 'authority'? How do we usually use the word?

Shantiprabha: It's more of a sort of institution. In a social sense, you have various authorities in the sense of say perhaps an electricity authority. Also more in an expert sense - somebody

knows more than you do about something.

S: Yes: he is an authority on marine biology. And yes, the water authority - someone having competence, executive power in relation to that particular subject matter. In a wider sense? - authority?

Subhuti: Connected with power, isn't it?

S: It's connected with power.

Amoghacitta: Implies a kind of absolute. Even on that mundane [470] level, if someone is an authority on marine biology, you wouldn't question his authority.

S: That's true.

Ratnaketu: Somebody or something invested with power.

S: Yes, but what kind of power? Is that different? For instance, if you say someone is an authority on marine biology, is he thereby invested with power? If so, what kind of power?

Cittapala: It's irrefutable.

S: Is it irrefutable?

Cittapala: Well, from your point of view.

S: From your point of view, as you consider yourself not an expert so you have nothing to say as it were against him; you just have to accept what he says, because you are not an expert in that particular field. So that is an authority with regard to a field of knowledge, but does that not differ from a sort of executive authority in the political sense?

Cittapala: Well, not really, because if you refute his power you are subject to justice.

S: But if you refute, say, the conclusions of a marine biologist, you may be right and you may succeed in proving him wrong. So nothing happens to you then, does it?

Ratnaketu: Executive power is about - there is a body of people or even an institution which has been invested - everybody generally has resigned responsibility to them for a particular area, and so in fact they do have a certain amount of power over you, because you have given them your responsibility.

S: Well, the power of the state in principle is of this nature, because in theory at least the individual citizens of a state have surrendered their power to the state, and the state, so to speak, then delegates that power to certain appointed persons. For instance, let's say in a state where there is such a thing as capital punishment, the individual citizen has given up his right, let us say for the sake of argument, to kill anybody who commits a murder. He has given up his right of individual retaliation to the state. The state then delegates [471] that to the police, to the courts, and then ultimately, if there is capital punishment in that state, to the executioner, who has the right to do what the individual citizen no longer has the right to do

inasmuch as he has surrendered that right to the state. So the executioner is authorized to carry out the execution. The policeman is authorized to arrest someone; the courts are authorized to try them. You cannot as a citizen, except under exceptional circumstances, arrest someone who commits a crime, or try them, or execute them; you delegate all that, or you hand it over or surrender all that to the state who has delegated it on behalf of the community to certain persons.

But does that exhaust the notion of authority? I think practically, with regard to all these different forms of authority, it comes down to the question of that which cannot be questioned. If it is agreed that someone is an authority, the essence of the matter is that his verdict cannot be questioned. If someone, say, is an authority on marine biology - really an authority - he cannot be questioned by the layman; the layman has to accept what he says.

So what is the source of authority in Buddhism? This is the question that I raised, isn't it? How can one know, or by what means does one know, what is Buddhism without being able to question that? Is that which cannot be questioned, so far as Buddhism is concerned - is it a book? Is it a tradition? Is it a teacher? What is it? Or is there anything of that nature in Buddhism? That question also might be raised. Is the notion of authority relevant here?

But then, of course, the question might arise: what is one's authority for adopting that position?

Harshaprabha: Based on experience.

S: Well, does one say that in Buddhism experience is one's authority? What is the ultimate authority as, say, the Bible is for Protestant Christians or the Koran is for Muslims? Is the ultimate authority for Buddhism what is written in the scriptures? or what your teacher says? or what your experience tells you? or what your reason tells you? What is the authority in Buddhism?

Cittapala: You certainly can't question experience - well, somebody else's experience, presumably - because you've got no way of knowing what their experience is.

[472]

S: But that would apply, of course, to any experience at all. You cannot question that they have had the experience, unless of course you have reason to believe that they are faking an experience or telling a lie - because one can tell a lie. So where does that leave you? You can ask someone, 'Are you feeling happy?' and he says 'Yes'. But sometimes it is possible to infer, I won't say know, but to infer, that he is not feeling happy.

Cittapala: Perhaps it's interpretation - maybe he had the experience, he just wants to interpret it as happy when actually it may be painful, or he may not be able to make a distinction as to the quality of it - it was just an experience.

S: So then you cannot rely upon what someone says as a source of information regarding even his own experience, sometimes.

Devamitra: Yes, but isn't it a question of a combination of different factors?

S: Well, traditionally this seems to have been the position in Buddhism. In early Buddhism, the Buddha himself seems to have regarded only reason and experience - that is to say, one's individual experience - as sufficient authorities. Later on, the view seems to have developed that what was called the testimony of the Enlightened person could be regarded as authoritative: that is to say, the words of the Buddha as contained in the scriptures, as being the expression of an Enlightened state of consciousness. And all three were given some serious consideration - that, yes, the testimony of the Buddha, of Enlightened teachers, was regarded as authoritative in the sense of unquestionable; but also your own reason, also your own experience. And in practice it amounted to trying to harmonise these three.

Devamitra: So this amounts to the analysis you give of *śraddhā* in the Survey.

S: I suppose it does; I hadn't thought of that, but no doubt it does, yes. Because first of all, for instance, you read something in the Buddhist scriptures, and perhaps you accept - well, this is the testimony of the Buddha; on various grounds you have accepted the Buddha as an Enlightened being and what he says can be trusted. But that isn't enough; you must then ask yourself, is it reasonable? All right, you conclude it [473] is reasonable and you put it into practice. Does it work? Do you actually experience it as the Buddha says you are supposed to experience it? Yes. Then presumably you can accept it. So there is a sort of threefold source of authority, it would seem: historical to Buddhism - what the scriptures say; what your own reason tells you; and what you find out as the result of your own experience. And you feel on the safest, firmest ground when these three authorities coincide.

For instance, you read in the scriptures that if you cultivate *mettā* you can get rid of anger. So you might say, yes, this is reasonable; you think about it rationally and you think well, yes, anger and *mettā* are opposites, and where one exists the other cannot exist. So it would seem reasonable that one could get rid of anger by cultivating *mettā*. So, all right, you try it and you find it does work. It is confirmed in your own experience. So these three sources of authority - I won't say coincide, but they co-operate; they conduce to the same result, the same conclusion.

So you might arrive, if you consider yourself a Buddhist, at certain conclusions by rational means, and they may seem to be confirmed in your own experience. But if they are not in harmony with Buddhist tradition, you will be as well to be a bit cautious about the matter. If, on the other hand, there was, say, a particular teaching contained in the Buddhist scriptures which seemed reasonable but you had no personal experience of it, then you should not speak of it too confidently. You have yet to confirm it from your own experience.

Ratnaprabhā: There seem to be some things where one's experience or even one's reason is quite a long way from them; like maybe even the possibility of unlimited individual development, something like that ...

S: Well, then one just has to as it were suspend judgement. You cannot be dogmatic about those matters. You can say that's your faith or that's your trust, but you can say no more than that.

Again, one might say that there might be certain things, certain statements found in the Buddhist scriptures which are not in accordance with reason nor in accordance with experience. According to what the Buddha himself says in the Pali Canon, one is justified in

rejecting those things. They might be purely incidental matters, matters of things like geographical knowledge; [474] there may be mistakes in geographical knowledge in the scriptures. Now the Buddhist scriptures are not supposed to be verbally infallible, because it is recognized they contain the utterance of the Buddha, but they don't contain simply the utterance of the Buddha - the essential message, yes, is to be regarded as authoritative, but that has come down to us in the language, including the cultural language, of those days. So we don't have to accept every single word of the scriptures in the way perhaps that Christians and Muslims have to accept every word of their particular scriptures. Buddhaghosa gives an inaccurate account of the digestive process; it is quite useful from a meditation point of view, but it isn't accurate from the physiological point of view. Assuming that to be based on the scriptures, one doesn't even then accept it. It doesn't pertain to the Dharma proper, only to the presentation of the Dharma in a particular language, in terms of a particular culture.

Ratnaprabha: Presumably, it would be difficult to take the same attitude of just sort of suspending judgement on something like the possibility of Enlightenment that's quite central to the whole spiritual life. Is one just using one's reason to extrapolate - is that what one must do?

S: One can do no more than that, unless one feels that either directly or through the scriptures one is in contact with a mind which, as far as one can tell, is an Enlightened mind. But then you have no way of convincing anybody who is not prepared to accept that; you can only convince yourself. There is no as it were objective proof which could be guaranteed to satisfy the sceptic that the Buddha was an Enlightened being. You would have to communicate to that sceptic something of what it meant to be Enlightened before he could even understand, before he could accept, that the Buddha was an Enlightened being. When one says that the Buddha was an Enlightened being, what does one mean by that? Does one, even though one might be a Buddhist, have a very clear conception of what it is to be an Enlightened being? You can only extrapolate.

Shantiprabha: Would you say that you could only be truly convinced that you were in contact with an Enlightened mind when or after you have reached the point of Stream Entry?

S: Well, what does one mean by convinced? That isn't so clear. What is conviction? Is it belief? Is it knowledge? Is it a mixture of the two?

[475]

Whence comes certainty? You can be certain of your own existence; you can be certain of what appears to be the existence of other people. You cannot be certain of the existence of other people in the same way that you are certain of your own existence. You can be certain that they appear to exist to you, but you cannot be certain that they exist; that is another matter. You can be completely certain only of something that falls within your own experience. So you can really be completely certain that the Buddha was Enlightened only when you yourself become Enlightened as a result of following his teaching.

So one is not justified in feeling complete certitude about anything that falls outside your own experience, that is to say other than things which can be logically demonstrated, such as that two and two make four. One could say that is a matter that also falls within your experience, because you can take two marbles and put them together with two other marbles and you can see that there are four marbles.

Prasannasiddhi: Can you be certain of your own experience?

S: Well, in this case what does one mean by certain? What is certainty?

: ... doubt.

S: Can you doubt your own existence? You can't doubt your own existence. You may doubt whether your existence is really existence, but there is something there, which may be only appearance, but you cannot doubt at least that it appears to exist.

Prasannasiddhi: You cannot doubt that something appears to exist.

Subhuti: You can doubt the content of your experience, but you can't doubt the experience.

S: You can have a doubt with regard to the evaluation of that experience, the assessment of that experience, even the understanding of that experience; but you cannot actually doubt that experience that which you actually experience. But you cannot doubt your own existence - by existence meaning your own self-experience.

Cittapala: But one presumably doubts the degree of perception that one has of that experience. One might feel that [476] it wasn't very substantial.

S: That is another matter, because that is a question of interpretation; but you cannot doubt that what you experience you do experience - whether you then judge it to be superficial or profound and so on.

Prasannasiddhi: At the time you experience something, you can know it since you are experiencing it; but in retrospect ...

S: Well, you cannot experience something without knowing that you experience it; the two are virtually synonymous.

Prasannasiddhi: But after the experience has occurred you can't be sure you had the experience ...

S: That's true. But what you can be sure of is that you exist, and you can be sure of the fact that you have a thought, which is a doubtful thought in this case, about whether you did experience something in the past or not. But you have no doubt about that whole process going on at that time. You don't doubt that. You can doubt whether you experienced something yesterday, but you cannot doubt that you are doubting today whether you experienced something yesterday. You have no doubt about the fact that you are doubting. You experience that directly.

Cittapala: If you take that to an extreme, you end up standing on one moment of time, wondering whether what I was saying two seconds ago I actually said. You ...

S: Well, this raises the question of memory. How reliable is memory? Is there such a thing as memory? Is there such a thing as time? (Laughter) You can doubt everything except your present experience; but what does one mean by present? Because the present would seem to

reduce itself to an infinitesimal, indivisible point, and that doesn't exist.

Prasannasiddhi: That doesn't exist?

S: Well, if it is infinitesimal and if it is indivisible, how can it exist?

Prasannasiddhi: Well, I would say perhaps it didn't, nor did it exist nor not exist nor both nor neither.

[477]

S: Well, though it is indivisible, it is not existent.

Prasannasiddhi: Is it indivisible?

S: Well, by very definition, the present is, because supposing the present lasts, let us say, a minute, you say, well, the present lasts a minute: well, you can divide that minute into two half-minutes, one of which is past and the other of which is future. So the so-called present disintegrates into the past and the future; there is nothing there except a half-minute, let us say, which is past and another half-minute which is future. There is no present. Say it lasts half a minute, you can do the same; or even a thousandth of a minute, or a millionth of a minute. You can divide it into a past and a future, leaving no present. Where is the present? How long does the present last? (Laughter) divisible into past and future.

Prasannasiddhi: The present is your experience.

S: So that would even suggest that - there is no experience!

Prasannasiddhi: I don't agree with that! (Laughter).

S: The experience itself dissolves, the subject dissolves. So where does that leave one?

Bodhiruchi: Surely time is just a logical construct that we apply to what we experience, and therefore you are questioning this logical construct, which you can't do.

S: Well, yes, time is a logical construct, self is a logical construct, non-self is a logical construct. Past, present and future are logical constructs. Experience is a logical construct. So it would seem that what one is exposing is the logically self-contradictory nature of all of these concepts; so what is one left with? One is left with something to which, presumably, no concept really and truly can be applied... one might call experience, one can call 'awareness', within inverted commas, but it is something of which no logically satisfactory account can be given. As soon as you try to give a logically satisfactory, consistent account, you land yourself in contradictions. This is the Madhyamika approach broadly speaking, dialectical approach.

You can see the same thing happening quite clearly in this case of relation of mind and body. You have no difficulty in [478] relating your mind to your body, if that is the right way to put it; but you find it quite impossible to explain. So the solution perhaps lies in action and not in theory; one could say that.

Silaratna: This morning I was reading the Survey where you talk about the different schools,

and you go through the Madhyamika and the Yogacara and the devotional schools; and you come on to the Tantra; is this why it seems that in Buddhism it eventually arose in the form of the Tantra, because it just had to get to ...

S: One could certainly look at it like this, yes. It does seem that the Mahayana philosophers exhausted the possibilities of the philosophical approach. Perhaps they overdid it; perhaps they became one-sided. But certainly a sort of reaction, as we may describe it, set in, and people wanted much more emphasis upon direct experience, especially through meditation and through ritual. Not that they disagreed with Mahayana philosophy, but they felt it had to be reduced to practise, to experience.

But it does seem that, in the course of several of these sessions, we have been perhaps made aware of or brought up against the fact that words have to be used with care - at least, that words have to be used with care, words have to be used with mindfulness. We must be very sensitive to the meanings of words. Without that sort of sensitivity, no effective communication can take place.

Cittapala: Is there any short answer which one can employ effectively, say, in the situation where a beginner would pose, perhaps not quite in this form, what is one's source of authority? Can you see any particularly easy - ?

S: Well, I think it would be best, if he was a reasonably intelligent beginner, just to give a brief account of these three sources - that is to say, the spiritual experience of the Buddha and other Enlightened masters right down to the present, one's own reason, and one's personal experience; that these three in the end should mutually confirm one another.

Anyway, we have reached the end of the session, but I am going to ask you just to stay put for two more minutes and I am going to get my camera and see if I can take a group photograph of at least some of you - especially those who are sitting in [479] the light.

Day 22 Tape 24, Side 1

Subhuti: We were doing the first section of Perfect Samadhi. We've got two more days.

S: Have you got any questions?

Subhuti: Yes, not many. We had two slightly technical questions. First of all, when you are discussing samatha, you talk about three stages of concentration. Does this correspond to the three samadhis, preparatory concentration, access concentration and full concentration?

S: I can't really remember. They certainly could refer to that, because samatha certainly is so divided. I seem to remember that around that time I tried to also popularize the term samapatti; I did sometimes use that. I did sometimes speak in terms of dhyana, samadhi and samapatti, but it didn't quite catch on and I dropped it. So it could be that I am referring to dhyana, samadhi and samapatti here.

Subhuti: No, because you are dealing with samatha, samapatti and samadhi, and under samadhi you enumerate the ...

S: Ah, I see, under samatha. In that case it is definitely the three that you mentioned.

Subhuti: It's only the last of those three, the full concentration, that ...

S: Apana, that would be.

Subhuti: Yes, it corresponds to dhyana as it were. So it's just a slight inaccuracy in that you say that samatha corresponds to the four dhyanas; it corresponds also to the ...

S: Yes, but if you make a broad distinction of samatha and vipassana, samatha is then everything that is not vipassana. It's a very broad term; just as if you speak in terms of sila, samadhi and prajna, samadhi then includes even mindfulness. So samatha can be stretched, so to speak, to include even the preliminary degrees of dhyana, even the approach to dhyana.

Subhuti: If samatha includes the dhyanas, it's not quite clear to me how samatha differs from samapatti, because [480] there are attendants arising, insight ...

S: Ah, samapatti, used in a very loose sense, is used I think more in the Mahayana than in the Hinayana. It does refer to all sorts of higher spiritual attainments in a very general sense. One can even speak of the arupa dhyanas as samapattis. But it includes all sorts of supernormal powers, quasi-insights, revelations, inspirations; it includes everything of that sort, especially in a Mahayana context.

Subhuti: So would it include the experience of bliss, say, arising in second dhyana?

S: I would say that, from my quick recollection of the various contexts in which the term occurs, that it usually refers to something more extraordinary than that. It has a sort of connotation of, to use the Christian theological term, a special grace, if you see what I mean; it has that sort of connotation. If, for instance, you are meditating and your eyes suddenly open and you see a vision of a Buddhaland, that would be regarded as a samapatti.

Vessantara: In the text it's almost as if you give the three as a series, as if they were samatha, samapatti, samadhi; but is it not, more that ...

S: I think I am probably systematising a little more than the texts, taken all together, would in fact permit. I try to introduce a little order into a certain amount of chaos.

Vessantara: So could you look at it that there is a sort of a path of samatha and samadhi, and the samapatti experiences happen in the upper reaches of samatha ... ?

S: You could so confine the term; you could, but you might well find texts, sutras, in which the term refuses to be quite confined in that way. I get the impression, reading various Mahayana texts, that samapatti covers a whole range of supernormal and spiritual and, well, as I say, quasi-Transcendental phenomena, which are not really covered by anything comprised in dhyana, at least not according to the traditional accounts of dhyana. Hence the term which I borrowed, so to speak, from Christian theology - 'special graces'; because these graces come about as a result of one's own efforts, though they can come about as a result of the blessings of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, but presumably you [481] had something to deserve those blessings.

Ratnaprabha: The indication in the text is that samadhi even includes Insight experiences but fall short of Enlightenment itself; because samadhi ...

S: This is why I say quasi-Insight, quasi-Transcendental experiences; the term is as loose as that, so that Insights in sunyata are described as samapattis.

But I have, nowadays at a subsequent date, dropped this term; it was so imprecise, so vague, in the original texts themselves; so I tended thereafter not to use it. It resisted my attempts to regularise it. I think I would not use it now; I think I have not used it for quite a few years. I remember Mr Chen going into some quite complicated explanations about samathas of samapattis and samapattis of samathas, samathas of samathas and samapattis of samapattis; it became very complex indeed. So I think we'll probably leave it at that.

Some Mahayana texts speak, referring to the experiences of Bodhisattvas, of hundreds of thousands and even millions of samadhis and samapattis. You are just left with the general impression of all sorts of wonderful higher spiritual experiences, almost, you imagine, verging upon the Transcendental, but you are not given anything very precise. Perhaps you don't need to be.

Subhuti: One more on the same thing. In the text of the Eightfold Path series, you talk about the third level of concentration, and you say that in that you become one with the visualized image of the Buddha - you were using the Buddha as the example of progressive stages of concentration. In the Survey you talk about the kasina practice, and you say that the third level of concentration - full concentration - commences when the visualized image disappears.

S: Uh-huh. When the visualized image disappears, that is to say the subtle counterpart disappears.

Subhuti: Yes, the reflex image.

S: Yes, and then that is replaced by the brilliant image.

Subhuti: Ah, well, you say that access concentration takes place when the subtle image, the reflex image, takes over from I [482] suppose what is the eidetic image.

S: Hm; I would say, without consulting the text but as it were consulting one's own experience, that first of all when you have a gross external object and you fix your attention on that, that is the first level of concentration. And then, when you as it were close your eyes, you reproduce that gross physical object in your mind's eye, quite perfectly and quite vividly. That is the second. And then, in the case of the kasina, when from that subtle mental counterpart of the original gross material object, there appears a brilliant image, that represents the development, or that takes place together with the development, of full concentration.

Subhuti: That definitely is at variance with what you say in the Survey.

S: Ah, then I will have to iron out the discrepancy. If it is a discrepancy.

Subhuti: Yes. The apparent discrepancy, let us call it.

S: We might have gone into that last year even, ... There is the possibility I was following a scholastic authority here, when writing the Survey, but the correlation I am making at present is my own correlation. This seems to be the correct one.

Subhuti: How far can that brilliant image persist in one's progress through the dhyanas?

S: Well, light images of various kinds persist certainly all the way through the rupa dhyanas - in fact, some of the worlds to which those dhyanas give one access are described entirely in terms of light. This is something which the usual Abhidharma-type psychoanalytical approach to the dhyanas does not give any hint of. We are told that the dhyanic experience includes an element of sukha, of priti, of ceta and ekagrata(?) and so on, but nothing is said about light experience; but it does seem quite clear that a light experience is very often present, especially if one practises the kasina method; and that light experience can increase in intensity. In, of course, the visualization practice, when one visualizes a figure, it takes a definite as it were embodied form, the brilliance or luminosity of which can increase as one becomes more and more, so to speak, concentrated.

[483]

Amoghacitta: And that form persists through the rupa dhyanas? - you still experience that light?

S: Ah, yes and no. If you are in, so to speak, a dhyana state, you see that form, but then there are practices in which you deliberately dissolve the form, you no longer see the form. You try to as it were replace the experience of the form with the experience of sunyata, which will be an Insight experience. In this way, the samatha experience becomes the basis for the development of Insight, of vipassana. And then, of course, at a later stage, you try to combine the two; that is another practice. You try to have the simultaneous experience, the vision of the form and the realization of its void nature. The symbolism itself sometimes helps you here, because one is asked to visualize the visualized form as vacuous; sometimes it is said like a tent of coloured silk, or as though hollow, as made of glass; like a vase in the shape of that particular form. The fact that you can visualize it in this way does not mean that you have Insight into sunyata, but the fact that you visualize it in this way means that you can take that as a basis for the development of Insight into sunyata.

Harshaprabha: So does that mean when you dissolve that bright form and the brilliant-coloured form, that you are left with something else, and that something else would be sunyata?

S: One must always remember that, as the Heart Sutra says, 'form is sunyata and sunyata is form'. If you are left with a sunyata which is without form, that is so to speak one-sided in the sense that it is not sunyata. Because not only is rupa sunyata, sunyata is also rupa. So one would end up, ideally, with a double or dual experience of the form and, in the case of the visualization of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, sunyata; and not two things together, but one thing - or rather, not two things. You try originally to do a quick change with form-sunyata, form-sunyata; then form sunyata ... You try to get them both as it were into focus at the same time, so that they coincide, and you see that form is sunyata, sunyata is form; you don't have to add one to the other.

The image of let's say the Buddha or Bodhisattva made of hollow glass - that gives one a very good idea, so to speak. It is empty, but the emptiness is inseparable from that particular form, and that form is inseparable from the emptiness which, so to speak, it encloses. If the emptiness was not there, that translucent form would not be there; if that translucent form [484] was not there, the emptiness would not be there... the two are as it were distinct - actually, they aren't even distinct.

Devamitra: Just one question from my group, ...

Bodhiruchi: In the course of the lecture, Bhante, you say that the more refined the thing you're talking about, say you use the example of Enlightenment and the Buddha didn't actually say anything about it, you say the more it seems that the more refined something is the less one can say about it. We talked about it quite a bit and we concluded that there is more or there's less that you would want to say about - you'd have to be very careful about what you'd say, but it didn't necessarily mean that you had less to say. Does that make sense?

S: Say about what?

Bodhiruchi: About, say, something like Enlightenment, for example.

S: Well, if it was Enlightenment you wouldn't need to be careful. You would have passed beyond the necessity for carefulness, presumably; you could afford to be quite spontaneous and let yourself go and breathe out an udana!

Bodhiruchi: But then in that case why is there less to say?

S: Well, who says that there is less to say? The Buddha has said less, but that does not mean that there is less to say. With whom was the Buddha speaking? The Buddha might have had quite a lot to say; in the Mahayana sutras he has a lot to say, but when he is speaking to ordinary human beings, he might think that things like Enlightenment were way beyond them, so he spoke about simpler matters which were more relevant, like ... sila, samadhi and wiping one's feet on the mat before you entered the vihara and things like that; not making a noise while other monks were meditating. One might say this; no doubt the Buddha had a great deal to say on the subject of nirvana, it was an inexhaustible topic, but he might have felt it was not the most appropriate of topics for some of his disciples.

One has to distinguish, perhaps, between intrinsic difficulty of communication and extrinsic difficulty of communication; that is to say, one speaks of intrinsic difficulty of communication when the subject matter itself is difficult for you to communicate, difficult for you to formulate, difficult for you to get clear in your own mind, [485] difficult for you to find the right words. And one speaks of extrinsic difficulty when there is some obtuseness in the person to whom you are speaking, some lack of comprehension or something of that sort.

Harshaprabha: Would that person be more likely to be moved by the actions of the Buddha rather than his words?

S: Well, perhaps if the Buddha gave him a good blow over the head, it might help, like a Zen master. It does sometimes happen that you are more obtuse in one direction or less obtuse in another; sometimes it happens you are equally obtuse in all directions, and then you perhaps

exhaust the patience even of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and Zen masters.

Amoghavajra: You were talking about samadhi in the text, using samadhi in two different ways, two different senses, and ... The Mahayana developed the term samapattis and samatha

S: No, the third samatha is there in the Theravada.

Amoghavajra: The question is: did the Buddha actually derive or coin new phrases, or did he always use just phrases that were around at the time?

S: Well, the Buddha obviously had to use the speech which was current in his day. He couldn't, obviously, speak or devise an entirely new language. But we do find, as we go through the Pali Canon, that he seems to be using words very often in a sense of his own; at least he gives a sort of twist, a new twist to the old words. And sometimes one has to be quite alive to this. It is well known that you can't, for instance, find out the meaning of a Pali word, a Pali technical term, by translating it into its Sanskrit equivalent and then looking up ... a Sanskrit dictionary. That doesn't help you very much.

But, yes, the Buddha did speak the language of his times, but increasingly in a way, or in a sense or in a manner, or with a nuance, of his own. But after the Buddha's death, of course, his followers increasingly developed technical terms which were not found at all in any of the other Indian traditions. I think this is a sort of natural tendency in the case of any new religion or new philosophy: it has to start off using words which are generally current, but it gives them its own interpretation to some extent. It may even coin words.

[486]

Some of you may know of Teilhard de Chardin. He coined all sorts of words like biosphere and noosphere and omega point: some of these have caught on a bit, others have just not caught on at all. I don't think any of them have passed into general currency. It's not so easy to launch a new word; the public very often obstinately refuses to accept it. They prefer to coin their words themselves.

I tried, as I think I have mentioned, to popularize the term normative as a substitute for religious or spiritual; from 'norm', from dharma, to normative - but no, it didn't catch on.

Ratnaprabha: Lewis Carroll managed it.

S: He did, that's true. Ah, but he was a poet. The word Jabberwocky. And burble - burble was a nonce-word coined by Carroll.

Ratnaprabha: He coined chortle as well.

S: : Chortle, yes, indeed. You see? Perhaps there is hope for us yet. Perhaps there is hope even for normative. One would have to embody it somehow in a nonsense frame so it would catch on. Only if one could incorporate it in verse:

He looked with a normative eye  
Upon the ladies passing by,  
And saw them all as bones and  
skulls - etc. etc.

... for yourselves.

But this question of language and this question of using old terms in a new sense, putting as they say the new wine into old bottles, is a quite difficult problem. We come up against it ourselves, because we use widely current words like positive and creative in a sense of our own; we use the word individual in something of a sense of our own. So we have to be very careful, in speaking to other people, to make clear the special sense in which we use these terms. It is rather interesting that, in India, our Indian Buddhist friends do not like the Indian religious terms which are in general currency. They don't like the word dharma; they would like to avoid the word dharma, because dharma, as usually current in India, has a Hindu connotation very different from the Buddhist connotation which it has in the Buddhist scriptures or which it has for Eastern [487] Buddhists and Western Buddhists. One might even say that some of our Indian Buddhist friends really hate the word dharma as much as some Buddhists in the West hate the word religion. Our Indian Buddhist friends are quite happy with the English word religion, they rather like that, it has a much more positive ring than the word dharma. So that is the rather extraordinary situation: we prefer the word dharma as a rather neutral word for us which we can read in an exclusively Buddhist sense. For them religion is a comparatively neutral word which they can read in their own way; they happily describe Buddhism as a religion, but tell them it is a dharma and they are not so happy.

We compromise at present and we use the word dhamma, the Pali dhamma, always now in our publications, instead of the Sanskrit word dharma. Because the Sanskrit word dharma is current in Hindi and Marathi in the general Hindu sense; but if you use dhamma instead of dharma that makes it clear that it isn't the same thing as the usual Hindu word dharma. It is as though we were to spell religion with a '-un' at the end, to make it quite clear that it is something different. Well, some people do spell it that way. (Laughter)

Devamitra: In a way, in the West you are at a bit of an advantage in trying to - you don't have to coin some new term because some of the original Sanskrit terms have been absorbed into the English language anyway - like dharma.

S: But some words have been absorbed into the English language in a rather sort of perverted sense; for instance, a word like karma, and nirvana. I cut out from a newspaper a little - it wasn't exactly a speech but a few remarks by Ken Livingstone, the chairman of the Greater London Council. He said something like this: 'Oh, if we follow that policy we'll just end up in nirvana' - meaning in a complete mess, apparently. (Laughter) One finds the word nirvana used quite widely to mean annihilation, nothingness.

Ratnaketu: Just down from our community in New Zealand there is the Nirvana Rest Home for Old Folks!

S: You might say that that would not have been entirely inappropriate, because the lamps are gradually dimming, blowing out.

: ... extinction.

S: Is that all? I think I'd better perhaps not get on to [488] the subject of language again.

Bodhiruchi: This may seem a bit obvious. Ken mentioned that you used two meanings of the word samadhi, as in concentration and as Enlightenment. We thought in our study it was one that applied to the mundane path and one that applied to the Transcendental path.

S: Well, if one is speaking of samadhi as more or less synonymous with Enlightenment, well, yes, it would pertain to the Transcendental Path, surely, or to the Goal of the Transcendental Path. Samadhi is used in that extended way by the Mahayana, and by Zen people sometimes - Samadhi with a capital S, as it were. It would seem that the Sutra of Wei Lang, the Sutra of Hui Neng, uses the Chinese equivalent at least of this word samadhi in that extended way, as virtually tantamount to Enlightenment. But certainly that is not the usage of the term in Pali, where it is definitely used in the more mundane sense of concentration.

Bodhiruchi: Why did they use the term samadhi to be tantamount to Enlightenment when they had, say, nirvana terms already?

S: Well, the term nirvana they probably regarded by that time as having a definitely, distinctively Hinayanic connotation, suggesting the realization of the arhant. So presumably they thought that the word samadhi would be a more suitable term for a more Maniacal kind of Enlightenment, so to speak.

In modern Indian parlance, a samadhi is a tomb. Because a yogi's or a saint's death is politely referred to as his attainment of samadhi or mahasamadhi; so the place where he attained samadhi, the place of his death, becomes known as his samadhi, the place of his samadhi or for short his samadhi. And the monument or the tomb he is commemorated at is also by extension called his samadhi.

Subhuti: Bhante, you develop your interpretation of samadhi mainly on the basis of the Mahayana use of the term, and yet it is ...

S: In what sense?

Subhuti: In the sense that - in the Hinayana, the Theravada, and presumably the Pali Canon, samadhi is used exclusively -

[489]

S: ... dhyanas.

Subhuti: With dhyanas, yes. But you talk about Perfect samadhi as being a fixation of one's total being ... state of ...

S: This is certainly, one could say, from a more Mahayanic understanding of the term, yes.

Subhuti: And your whole interpretation of Perfect Samadhi is based on that understanding of samadhi.

S: Yes, because if that samadhi is not, so to speak, oriented towards the Goal, towards the Transcendental, in what sense is it perfect, in what sense is it samyak? There is also another point: that even in the Pali literature, even in the suttas themselves, samadhi is used with a Transcendental rather than with a mundane connotation. For instance, one speaks of the

sunyata samadhi, the aparihitasamadhi and the animittasamadhi - samadhis corresponding to or leading to those three vimoksas. So here samadhi is clearly used in a much higher sense, one could say a Transcendental sense.

So even though, in the Pali Canon, the word samadhi usually covers the four dhyanas, especially when one speaks of, say, sila, samadhi and prajna, it is used in other senses, especially in this particular context. In a sense, samadhi in the lower sense has been included in Right Effort; because if, as a result of Right Effort - or Perfect Effort, rather - you do succeed in eliminating all unskilful mental states, which is quite an achievement, what is that other than a state of dhyana? So it's as though I have somewhat upgraded the Perfect Effort; that means that one needs also to upgrade the succeeding angas. But if one takes Perfect Effort seriously, it does include what is usually regarded as meditation.

Ratnaprabha: So in terms of the Threefold Path, samadhi as Perfect Effort could also be included on this second triplet, above the first triplet of the Threefold Path you were talking about earlier - is that correct? Some time ago ...

S: Say that again.

Subhuti: Some time ago in Questions and Answers you talked about sila, samadhi and prajna occurring as it were twice; you could see it as a double path. And when samadhi occurs a second [490] time, this would be Perfect Samadhi in a sense.

S: Ah, right, yes, indeed. It would seem as though, in the FWBO generally, there is a sort of trend to upgrade things. This is true particularly of the Going for Refuge - not that this is an innovation, but returning to an earlier usage from which some parts at least of the Buddhist world have fallen away. So one certainly mustn't think of concentration, in the sense of samadhi, just as the fixation of the mind on a particular object. It comprises very much more than that, though that is what for some people it has come to mean - simply that.

Cittapala: Have there ever been any instances of you - I am trying to use the right phrase - sort of crossing swords, with other Buddhists on matters such as these interpretations?

S: None at all, none at all, no. Some of them seem to have been accepted or to have caught on. No; because I quote all the relevant texts. And that, I think, is a sort of general feeling in many parts of the Buddhist world - well, things aren't as they were in the good old days, everyone has to accept that there is a certain amount of degeneration, what can one do about it? - they shrug their shoulders and wait for the coming of Maitreya Buddha! (Laughter)

No, I don't think anybody has ever once crossed swords with me. They might have muttered a bit in private, but there is certainly nothing in print, in print only agreement. So far.

Oh yes, there was one - I must correct that - one small exception. I was once taken to task for suggesting in an editorial in the Mahabodhi Journal that it might be a good idea, it might be a good idea, if some, some, of the money which was spent on regilding certain Burmese images and pagodas might be spent on the propagation of the Dharma. I was taken severely to task, and an ancient legend was quoted against me, a legend of a pratyekabuddha who was a dwarf. He had become a pratyekabuddha but why was he a dwarf? Because millions upon millions of years earlier, in a previous birth, when a certain pratyekabuddha died (no, sorry, he was an

arhant, that's right, he was a dwarf arhant) - millions of years previously a certain arhant had attained Enlightenment and had died subsequently, and there was a proposal that a stupa should be built over his ashes; and this particular person, this arhant in this previous life, suggested that it wasn't necessary to build the stupa for this pratyekabuddha quite so high - it could be a bit shorter. So as [491] a result of that evil karma he was reborn as a dwarf, and was still a dwarf when he became an arhant. So this legend was told ...

Subhuti: That will be the first thing to look for in finding your tulku.

S: ... golden complexion - certainly not golden hair. But I think this was the only open criticism to which I was subjected.

Bodhiruchi: I remember hearing that a pamphlet came out. It was about the Spiral Path from a Hinayana point of view, and because you had brought it much more into current use, and they went through all the stages, and they were quite positive, and right at the end said 'knowledge of destruction of the asravas', and they compared that to getting your arms and legs cut off.

S: That's true.

: ... Hinayana?

S: Oh, yes, that is very true. This was the Bhikkhu Bodhi, whom I referred to some days ago. He does - I think it is he - quote this extraordinary passage from a Pali text to the effect that this stage of the knowledge of the destruction of the asravas is comparable to having one's arms and legs cut off and knowing that they are cut off. Well, this really gives a most extraordinary idea about the ultimate attainment of Buddhism; because what would a beginner say if he asked what nirvana was like and you told him it was comparable to having your arms and legs cut off? It does confirm the strength of this idea of Buddhism as a very negative, life-denying sort of thing. It really was most unfortunate, that particular quote. The author of the book has seemed to have no sense of, well, I was going to say sense of humour, but sense of the appropriate at all. I was really quite staggered when I read it.

Ratnaketu: Was it printed in English?

S: In English, but brought out in Ceylon. Almost as bad as having no head. But that's another story - that's an esoteric joke that one or two of you may know about.

Harshaprabha: You mentioned stupas earlier on. I was just wondering how soon it would be before we could build stupas in [492] the UK. I know there is one built in Milton Keynes ... which is ...

S: I am quite happy about stupas being built, but I would prefer to see Centres and men's spiritual communities built first.

Tape 24, Side 2

- very high on my own list of priorities.

Gunapala: On that point, there is supposed to be one on top of Sukhavati. You don't feel that

that is a priority? - it's more of a priority to get a men's community at Sukhavati?

S: Well, it wasn't exactly a stupa at the top of Sukhavati, it was a stupa-shaped sort of spire or pinnacle, which would set off the whole building and make it look really like a Buddhist centre. I am told it needs \$5,000, which certainly wouldn't build a men's spiritual community. Well, it would hardly put the roof on. So I certainly have no objection if somebody with \$5,000 to spare spends it on a beautiful gilded spire for Sukhavati; I should be very pleased, very happy if that was done.

Silabhadra: You were talking about certain terms that we use, say, in the West and that they consider differently in the East. I just wondered if you would talk a bit more about any other implications. For instance, I have heard some Indian Order members don't like the idea of Bodhisattvas; that they've taken on the Shakyamuni visualization.

S: This is true, though some of them have got over those difficulties, if not all of them. Because, to an Indian, a Bodhisattva, as represented according to the Indo-Tibetan iconographical tradition, looks suspiciously like a Hindu god, and they just want to get away from Hindu gods and goddesses; they have all sorts of very unpleasant, very undesirable connotations for them. But quite recently there was held in India, near Poona, an Order retreat, and the English Order members who were present gave talks on the Bodhisattvas, very much, I imagine, as the Order members gave talks here on the different Bodhisattvas. And Indian Order members commented afterwards that they now realized that the Bodhisattvas of the Mahayana were in fact quite different from Hindu gods, and were very happy to have realized that. It has been now made clear. But we keep all talk about Bodhisattvas, even pictures of Bodhisattvas, in India very much within the Order. We have [493] found that we can't show pictures of archetypal Buddhas or Bodhisattvas as it were openly; openly we can only show Sakyamuni in the very familiar human form.

Silabhadra: Would this also spread to things like the Sevenfold puja, for instance?

S: Yes, we keep the Sevenfold puja definitely within the Order, with perhaps, I think, sometimes a few of the older Mitras participating. It is never used generally. But the Indian Order members do appreciate it and enjoy it very much.

Shantiprabha: Do you envisage that situation carrying on, or now that the Order members have introduced Bodhisattvas ... do you think they are likely to start putting it through to Mitras or...

S: No, I think we have to be extremely cautious, because there are millions of not very well informed Buddhists who could be confused. And feeling against Hinduism is so very strong, I think we will have to be very careful for quite a long time. It's rather like as though, for instance, in the West, it so happened that traditional representations of Tara made her look exactly like the Virgin Mary. Well, how would ex-Catholics feel about that? They wouldn't be very happy. Fortunately, she looks rather different.

Suvajra: What about talking about the Bodhisattva ideal, then? Is that - ?

S: The Bodhisattva ideal, as a spiritual ideal, irrespective of its embodiment in particular Bodhisattvas, is usually quite well received. Though it sometimes is understood in rather

narrowly humanitarian terms. Working for the good of the people, which could include political activity, is regarded as functioning like a Bodhisattva. In India politicians always loudly proclaim that they are working for the good of the people, so they can of course be quite easily regarded as Bodhisattvas. So the Bodhisattva ideal, in a broad sense, is usually found quite acceptable. A little misunderstood.

But, since we are on the subject of India and the Order members there, it really is extraordinary to find that, despite this vast cultural difference, despite the great difference in the surrounding culture, one finds within the Indian Order and within the Movement generally one might say a [494] completely similar spirit to what one finds here. When I say 'here', I mean in the West, especially England. It really is quite extraordinary; there is the same sort of atmosphere, the same sort of attitude, the same sort of understanding, the same sort of communication. You just don't find it outside the FWBO, either in the West or in India. In India, Order members and even Mitras are becoming increasingly aware of this, and even people way outside the Movement are becoming more and more aware that there is something different going on there; that the FWBO is different. They can't quite identify the difference, can't quite describe or explain it, but they are increasingly aware of this.

Devamitra: You saying that of people in India, or do you mean that both India and people in the FWBO - ?

S: I am speaking just now of people in India, especially those who are either nominally Buddhist or have some connection with Buddhism, or some awareness of what is going on among the ex-Untouchable Buddhists. They are increasingly aware that the FWBO is not like other Buddhist groups, not like other Buddhist organizations; there is something quite different about it. And they usually see that difference in very positive terms. Well, there are some people who have been hoping and praying - some old friends of mine - for something like the FWBO in India for years, if not for decades; and they are very happy that it has at last appeared on the scene; very happy. Even though they don't necessarily take a very active part in it; some of them are quite old and have other things to do, so to speak. But they are very, very glad that we are doing what we are doing, and give us their support in their own way. For instance, there is an organization set up by Dr Ambedkar, called the People's Education Society; it is mainly run by ex-Untouchable Buddhists, though there are others among them. It has a number of colleges and high schools all over Maharashtra State. Every one of those is at our service for retreats and so on if we want it - usually free. They are very happy to place any facilities of theirs at our disposal.

This is partly because on the governing board there are some people I have known for 25 to 30 years. They are not exactly active Buddhists, but they see what is being done and they give it their full support. In India you find quite a few people like this; they may not even believe in Buddhism or if they are Buddhists they may not practise it very vigorously; but they will help you quite a lot and co-operate with you quite [495] well, and be quite sympathetic - be quite good Friends, with a capital F. And it is certainly a good thing to keep in touch with such people.

Silaratna: I suppose a more flowing communication between the Order here and the Order members in India would really help to keep things going - like just writing to the Indian Order members. Would that - ?

S: Yes; I think also it would depend how you wrote, to be quite frank. If you wrote about trivial things, they would simply be left wondering why on earth you were bothering to write about those things.

Silaratna: I was thinking of sort of friendship lines.

S: Maybe if you wrote about yourself and your own practice of the Dharma, your interest in the Dharma, that would be very well received. But they would certainly expect a decidedly dharmic note to be struck; they would be surprised if it wasn't.

Anyway, there's a few minutes left, but anyway let's close on that note.

Day 23 Tape 25, Side 1

Vessantara: Today we have been carrying on with Perfect Samadhi, and our group have got one or two questions relating to the signless samadhi, the animitta samadhi. Could you explain first a bit more just how penetrating impermanence would lead you to animitta samadhi? Why should penetrating impermanence lead to animitta samadhi?

S: Well, why should it not? Why should there be a logical reason? No doubt there is some thread of connection.

Vessantara: There's a logical ...

S: What do you think it might be?

Vessantara: Well, presumably it arises in dependence on your consideration and so on, so why should this samadhi arise in dependence on that consideration, as opposed to consideration of some other concept?

S: No one was able to get any clue?

[496]

Vessantara: We played round with some ideas. Can we define a bit more why this signless or imageless samadhi - the word nimitta is also the word which is used when we were discussing yesterday, when we were talking about the stages of concentration? There you see what you concentrate on as for instance a reflex image, that's the p... nimitta. Is there a connection between the two ... ?

S: Yes, it is the same word. Nimitta means image or sign. It is something that indicates, so to speak, the presence of something else; as a word indicates the presence of the appropriate object - that is to say, when a word is used, you think of the object to which that word refers. That word is the sign, or the image, of that particular object. It calls it up; or the image or object is called up when the word is used.

So Reality is animitta; there is no word, or no expression, which can call it up for you. It doesn't correspond to any word. There is no sign, no linguistic sign, no sign of any kind which indicates it, really. Certain words may point you in the direction of the experience of Reality, but they do not actually themselves indicate Reality itself. It has in any case no

characteristics, no specific characteristics, not being this or that, by which it can be indicated or pointed out, anyway; so it is animitta.

But how is that connected with impermanence?

Dhirananda: Things are constantly changing, ...

S: Things are constantly changing, they have no fixed identity. If they have no fixed identity, they cannot really be pointed out. Also the whole concept of transitoriness, that existence is becoming, suggests that the two words that we use most often, or which are in the back of our minds most often, that is to say 'is' and 'is not', or 'being' and 'non-being', the two principal signs of all, are just inapplicable. So the consideration of impermanence presumably gives us some idea, some inkling, of the inapplicability of signs, even to the conditioned, one might say, not to speak of the Unconditioned. The point of connection seems to be somewhere in that area.

Vessantara: Why is the word nimitta used for the reflex image or the image on which you concentrate? In what sense ...?

[497]

S: Well, sign in the sense of image. It is a subtle image as distinct from a gross one, image in the sense of a duplicate; it is a subtle duplicate, a subtle counterpart.

Subhuti: It is also used for the object itself, in preparatory?

S: Yes, it's used for the object itself.

Any further question about nimitta?

Vessantara: Something I couldn't ... - what happens when you go from the eidetic image to the reflex image? Why should your concentration lead to this sort of reflex image appearing ...?

S: Well, one could attempt an explanation, I suppose: that is to say, with increasing concentration your mind comes to be in an increasingly 'luminous', inverted commas, state, and something of that luminosity is reflected on to the image, it transfigures the image. Some 'mystics', inverted commas, have reported that when they come out of a mystical experience or, as we might say, out of a samapatti, having experienced that with closed eyes, when you open your eyes you find that the whole of existence, even the whole of the natural world, appears to be transfigured; it seems to be brilliant, it seems to be illumined. Some say it appears as though made entirely of gold. So this being the case, it isn't surprising that the subtle counterpart of the gross physical, material object of concentration should not itself appear transfigured or radiant when a certain stage of your concentration has been reached. As you are, so the object appears. You have become radiant; you therefore see a radiant object. Just like looking in a mirror, if your face is bright you see something bright in the mirror.

Some traditions, some schools of Buddhism even, teach that the mind is immensely bright, immensely brilliant; and that when the mind, the mind in the more ordinary sense, reaches a

certain degree, a certain level, of tranquillity, something of that original brightness shines through.

Vessantara: If you relate this process of going through deepening degrees of concentration ... to the Yogacara's... view of the vijnanas.

S: I'm not sure about that. I suppose they must be related or relatable in some way or other. I can't say that I have ever tried to work this out, but no doubt somebody more [498] ingenious among you might be able to do it.

The klisto-mano-vijnana in the Yogacara system would seem to indicate that 'part', inverted commas, that 'aspect', inverted commas, of the mind which stands between oneself and the development of real Insight.

Any further point? [Murmurs.]

S: The other groups? Oh dear, ...

Devamitra: We were discussing the different samapattis, for example I think it was Ratnaketu was wondering if there was any connection between certain samapatti-type experiences and dream experiences. This led us on to quite a lengthy discussion about dreams. So Ratnaketu has two questions concerning dreams.

Ratnaketu: The first one was - when a person in a group had heard of something that you had said about controlling dreams, that it would not be good to control one's dreams, and I just wondered whether you would like - I didn't really know what you meant by that, and whether you might say something about it. The other question was, some dreams that I've had have been very bright and colourful, very intense dreams sometimes, and I wondered what the connection between those and the dhyanas was, or where did they fit in the range of mental states.

S: First of all, I haven't said that it is a bad thing to control one's dreams: that must be a misunderstanding. I have spoken a few times about controlling one's dreams, and I have referred to the Indo-Tibetan yoga of dreams, which is associated with Naropa, and is one of the so-called Six Yogas. I have referred to the fact that one can, in various ways, learn to become aware of one's dreams while one is dreaming: that is to say, one can learn to become aware in the dream state itself, while you are actually dreaming, and in a sense to know that you are dreaming. I have also referred to the fact that, in that state, it is possible to shape your dreams and to dream of whatever you wish to dream of.

So here perhaps is the source of misunderstanding. I said one should not direct or control one's dreams in an unskilful way, but direct or control them in a skilful way. This no doubt has occasioned the misunderstanding.

With regard to the second question, it would seem that [499] dreams can span - here I am being a bit speculative - but it would seem that dreams can span both the kamaloka and the rupaloka; because one can definitely have spiritual experiences in dreams. So those dreams which are simply a sort of spill-over from your ordinary, maybe not very elevated, waking experience, certainly belong to the lower reaches of the kamaloka; more inspiring dreams no

doubt belong to the higher reaches of the kamaloka; and perhaps one's most inspiring, maybe one's very archetypal, vividly coloured, deeply moving or meaningful dreams may even correspond or belong to the lower reaches of the rupaloka and approximate to dhyana experiences.

Because there is a sort of analogy between the state of meditation, in the sense of dhyana, especially deep dhyana, and the sleep and dream state; because while you are dreaming there is no consciousness of the external world. In the same way, in deep dhyana there is no consciousness of the external world, but there is a very vivid internal content; and where the dream is of what I have called an archetypal nature it may approximate to the content of a rupa dhyana experience. Some people have had very profound experiences in dreams, maybe going beyond even the rupaloka.

So I think - well, one doesn't want to get into one's dreams in the way I said one shouldn't get into one's body. None the less, dreams can be very significant, and all the different Buddhist traditions do attach considerable importance to dreams - except the Zen people, who dismiss them as they dismiss everything else. But that's all right; if you have reached that point, if you are hovering on the brink of nirvana, you don't need to bother about dreams, not even dreams about nirvana. But if you haven't yet quite reached that point, dreams may well have something to tell you; it may well be that you can learn from them, that they are important for you.

Ratnaketu: ... that you have said in the past that the first dhyana is equivalent to the healthy human state.

S: Yes, healthy human state, yes and no. Taking a quite exalted view of the healthy human state; not the healthy human state in the sense in which I spoke of the emerging ... consciousness on the ... of the Higher Evolution. No, I am using the words healthy and human now in a much more exalted sense than that.

But yes, if one was a truly human being living in a truly [500] human environment, it could be expected that one's normal state would be the first dhyana state. One Order member wrote to me recently - he had been on a month's retreat somewhere - and he wrote to me that, rather to his surprise, the last day or two of his retreat he found that actually it was possible to live, under ideal conditions, in a first dhyana state and experience that all the time. He said he knew that I had said this before, but he hadn't really believed it; but actually he had now experienced it for himself, that you could actually stay in that state of first dhyana the whole day, not only just when you were meditating but when you were eating your food and doing other things. So he was quite impressed by this fact that it was actually possible to stay in first dhyana state for all 24 hours, under relatively ideal conditions, admittedly towards the end of a one-month's solitary retreat.

I must be careful to quote him correctly: I think he might have said - I'd have to look at the letter from him - a state of 'diffuse' first dhyana - I'm not quite sure of that. So be a little careful when you are quoting him.

Aryamitra: So you are not saying that all dreams are similar to dhyana, only certain examples?

S: Oh no. I said earlier on that there are some dreams - the majority - which pertain very definitely to the lower reaches of the kamaloka. Some might pertain to the hells or to the realm of hungry ghosts. Supposing, for instance, you dream that you are working your way through a gigantic cake as big as St Paul's - well, that would be a preta realm type of dream. (Laughter)

Ratnaprabha: When one speaks of the kamaloka, I think of it as being the realm of sense experience, and I had always thought of it as being rather a material, solid world, as we usually experience the world. Yet in dreams, and also indeed in the other lower realms of existence, it seems that the body is very immaterial, somehow, even when one is having these relatively low-level experiences.

S: Well, there is also the fact that some of the lower heavens are included in the kamaloka, not in the rupaloka. There is a heaven realm, in traditional terms, the heaven of the Four Great Kings, the heaven of Indra. These are included in the kamaloka, they don't belong even to the rupaloka. So perhaps this expression the kamaloka, the world of sense experience, corresponds to something a bit broader than one [501] usually thinks of. It is both gross and fine sense experience, both gross and subtle sense experience. It includes what some traditions speak of as the astral plane.

Vessantara: Going back to dreams, you said that you hadn't said not to control one's dreams, but that you shouldn't direct your dreams in an unskilful way; that you don't want people getting into dreams in the same way as getting into the body.

S: Yes, you mustn't become over-preoccupied with them in an unhealthy way. I think you know what I mean by that. You remember the analogy with getting into one's body in an unhealthy way.

But certainly dreams can be almost signposts for one. They can mark or register important turning points.

Vessantara: So would you actually recommend people to try to control their dreams, and to shape them in that skilful way? Under what circumstances do you think you could try to - ?

S: Well, if you do find yourself aware, in the dream state, you could perhaps so shape your dream that you would have a vision of Sukhavati, the Pure Land: that would be quite ... Rather than, say, an experience of home.

Bodhiruchi: I had an example - because it was me that heard second or third hand that you had said not to control dreams. We were talking about taking examples: if you meet a big black dog in your dreams, and you constantly run away from it, you could call that in Jungian terms the shadow, and it would be a good idea to turn round in your dream and face it. I can understand that; that is quite a good thing to do, to turn round and face what you are up against. But I thought that you meant controlling dreams - that, say, if you turned round and consciously turned the black dog into, say, a white poodle, to take the force out of the dream ...

S: Then that's what you would be doing, that would be to turn and face it; to accept the black as really not so black - as being as it were white. If it was in fact black.

But I think, on this question of the meaning of dream symbols, I think one has to be very careful of one-to-one points of correspondence. A black dog can mean anything in a dream: it could mean your father, it could mean your shadow, it could mean your higher self. You have to examine the whole [502] context of the dream yourself. You may have your private symbolism; for you a black dog might mean sausages, or haggis. One mustn't assume that you can get hold of a dream book which tells you what they mean and interpret along those lines.

One must pay attention to the feel of the dream; what sort of feeling it leaves you with - whether with a light, happy, positive feeling, or a feeling of foreboding, or a feeling of something terrible about to happen, or a feeling of rapture; or just a very peaceful feeling, or whatever. We spend quite a lot of our time dreaming, don't we? Seven hours, perhaps, ...

A lot goes on on that sort of level, so to speak, of which very often we are not aware; very often we don't remember our dreams. It's as though we have another life on another level, another plane. There is another self, disporting itself there, with which we are not in very close connection, more often than not.

Ratnaketu: I was wondering - why would it be that something you might have been meditating and your meditations are just normal, just like they always are; but in your dreams you sometimes have these quite special dreams? Why - ?

S: Well, the external world is not there to bother you and distract you for some time, maybe for some hours. And then these other experiences, these other images, these other feelings, have an opportunity of coming up from deeper levels of the mind. You give them a chance. They may need a little time; maybe even longer than you can give them during your meditation period.

But on the other hand your meditation period, what you do during your meditation period, may have helped to stir them up.

Ratnaketu: One thing I've noticed is that it is always a lot easier to see very mundane images than it is to see images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It's much more regular in a dream. Is this because of those images themselves, they are not just nice drawings; there is something more to them?

S: Well, we are just more familiar with the mundane, I suppose. It is probably as simple as that.

Are there any further points, or have we ended up in the world of dreams today? I don't know whether that is significant in any way. Perhaps it is something to do with the weather.

[503]

Cittapala: You mentioned that you had gone into the dream yoga and Naropa's ... something or other; when was that?

S: It must have been in some study group or other. I don't remember. Perhaps Devamitra can tell us.

Devamitra: I haven't come across it.

Dhirananda: Sometimes in meditation one goes into a sort of dream state, almost. Do you think that's the same state as ...?

S: Yes, that's interesting, because there is some resemblance between the images seen in meditation and the images seen in dreams. Subjectively, of course, the main difference between the two states is that usually in the dream state you are much less aware. In the meditation state your awareness is obviously much brighter. But there is a sort of resemblance between the two experiences. You could be supposedly meditating, but actually be in a slightly sleepy state and then you can see images that are half way between the images you see in dreams and more visionary experiences that you might come across in the course of meditation. Sometimes as you wake up, or as you fall asleep, you can have experiences which are half visionary, half dreamlike; so that you are not quite sure what it is you are actually seeing.

Devamitra: A few moments ago you referred to the astral plane. I have never understood what that corresponded to. Could you say?

S: It is a not very precisely defined term. It is used mainly in occult circles. The astral pertains to or denotes the subtle material side of existence.

Devamitra: So would it be like a bardo, perhaps?

S: The bardo in Buddhist tradition, in Tibetan Buddhist tradition, is said to be experienced in one's subtle body. One could describe that as one's astral body. It is usually described as being made of fine matter, but that really doesn't help one very much.

Some traditions again speak of 'etheric body'. The Pali texts speak of 'the body made of mind', but though the expression is mind, mano, it is clearly quasi-material. The divine eye can be spoken of as astral vision, seeing things on the astral plane, or from the astral plane.

[504]

Gunapala: Is it possible to have a feeling of yourself without this astral body? Is it necessary to have a - ?

S: Well, if you experience yourself, you have an experience of, say, self-identity and you are completely separate from the physical body, you could be said to be experiencing yourself in your astral body.

Gunapala: You have an awareness of your astral body?

S: No, I think you are taking it a bit too as it were literally. If you have no awareness of yourself as identical with your physical body, but if you are definitely aware of yourself and aware of yourself as having hands, legs, eyes, nose and so on, but not physical in the ordinary sense, that is an experience of yourself in your astral body, as it may be called.

Silaratna: This point has arisen for me just through doing the Six Element Practice while Surata was taking us through it, and he got through the various stages and finally the one about consciousness and stages of consciousness - your consciousness as it is here passes into a wider expanse of consciousness, and some ... seems to have kept coming into my head, so

to speak. So I was wondering where that is placed in relation to something like the Six Element Practice - I found it quite confusing, this idea kept popping up.

S: One could look at it as subtle material. You can consider yourself as it were giving back to the subtle earthly element whatever in your subtle earthly element belonged to it. But that would be no doubt complicating the practice too much. Or one could say that, yes, the subtle inasmuch as it is ultimately, so to speak, material is included; you give up the subtle body, too. The Buddha is represented as saying in the Pali texts somewhere: 'I do not teach the acquisition of any body. I teach the relinquishment of any body on any level.'

Harshaprabha: So would you say it was actually possible to feel somebody who has died, to get an actual physical feeling, if, say, the body is there in front of you - or in one room and you are in another room? Would it be possible to get a feeling of whatever it is that's left of the body?

S: Oh yes, that is possible. I have had this sort of experience myself a number of times. It is certainly possible. If you like I will just relate one little incident. No doubt you [505] might find that more illuminating than just the simple statement. I have told this story before; some of you must have heard it.

Long ago, before the FWBO was started and also after it was started, I used to go down to Brighton to the then Brighton Buddhist Society, which afterwards transformed itself into the Brighton FWBO. The two people who ran that were a husband and wife, a fairly elderly couple, who became quite good friends of mine. They were both well on in their seventies at that time. And I used to go down every month to Brighton; I used to stay with them. The Centre was held - was in fact a room in their house, and I used to stay there overnight after the evening meeting once a month. They used to meet once every two weeks and I went down once a month. So I got quite well known to both of them: both to the husband, whose name was Carl, and to the wife, whose name was Violet - perhaps rather better known to Violet, who was the more active of the two and actually ran the group; though she was about 75 or 76 she was a quite active woman, with a background of occultism, theosophy, spiritualism and so on.

Anyway, what happened was one Wednesday I was due to go down there but I wasn't very well, so I phoned to Brighton, asking Violet if she would take the class instead of myself. So she agreed, and she took the class; went upstairs, where she and her husband had their flat, sat down in the sitting room. Husband went into the kitchen to get her a cup of tea; when he brought it, he found that she was dead.

Anyway, I went down a few days later for the funeral; I was asked to conduct the funeral. So I was sitting in this same sitting room, in the same seat I always occupied - you know, a lot of people like to have things the same way every time, so it was this chair that I always occupied or was expected to occupy when I was with them in their sitting room; and Violet always occupied her chair, which was the one opposite. So Carl went off into the kitchen to get me a cup of tea, and while he was there - in came Violet, and sat down in her chair; and we had a sort of conversation; and then she left.

Now I didn't see anything with my physical eyes. The experience took place through, one might say, my subtle senses; but it was definitely and emphatically Violet herself who was

sitting there. There was no difference. The only difference was that her physical body wasn't there; which might seem a [506] strange thing to say, but that is how it is. The person is not a physical body, even the person in the ordinary sense, as you know, is not the physical body. You can experience someone fully without experiencing, without perceiving, their physical body. So that sort of experience I've had... Sometimes in slightly different ways, like hearing somebody calling you, ...

Cittapala: Do you think she was actually aware she was dead?

S: I personally think so, yes. She just came to see that I was all right and to say hello, and that was that - just as usual... came back from the funeral.

Ratnaketu: Where would you put that in terms of the after-death experience in the Bardo?

S: I don't know. I hadn't thought about it. I suppose I could work it out if I sat down and thought about it. Different people have different experiences. Actually, as far as I remember, this must have been six or seven days after her death. But she was a very positive person; she had been interested in spiritual thing all her life, she'd done quite a bit of meditation, and she was what is called 'psychic' herself, and had had some experiences ... in connection with ...

Gunapala: Was she the same one that saw Padmasambhava?

S: That was, she saw something, yes. That was the same one, yes.

So that was presumably Violet in her astral body. And her husband told me that he was not in the least upset by her death; he said he continued to experience her, to feel her there, just as she was in life (?), so he felt as though she had just gone into another room, quite literally. He wasn't in the least perturbed, and during the funeral was quite happy and chatting away. When their two sons-in-law came to attend the funeral, dressed in dark suits, he sent them back home to change into brighter clothes. He wasn't going to have any mourning clothes at his wife's funeral. And the whole party was chatting and laughing all the way to the cemetery, rather I won't say shocked but certainly surprised the undertaker's men, who weren't accustomed to such behaviour.

: ...

Prasannasiddhi: What things did you talk about when she came in?

[507]

S: Oh, just ordinary things like 'How are you? Did you have a good journey?' Just things of that sort, ordinary things. The actual words passed - it wasn't a feeling or impression - actual words were spoken, not words which were audible in the ordinary sense, but which one could nevertheless pick up. Everything was exactly as it usually was, except that it wasn't on the ordinary physical plane, it was on another plane.

Suvajra: Did you reply to her verbally or internally?

S: Internally. Anyway, enough of those stories.

Silaratna: Can you give the scriptural reference of what you said about the Buddha said 'I do not teach the acquisition of any body'?

S: I can't, but the passage does occur in, as far as I remember, Some Sayings of the Buddha.

Tape 25, Side 2

: This might be a bit of a sidetrack, but I was wondering whether people who are in a deep coma - if their consciousness is away from the body or is it just cut off from the centre?

S: I do know from talking to people that there are cases - I won't say that all cases are of this kind - but there are some cases in which the person appears to be in a deep coma but none the less knows exactly what is going on around the body. I think personally that this is not because his physical senses are operating, but because he is around, so to speak, in his astral body and perceives things through the senses which pertain to that body.

Aryamitra: It seems it's quite common, this. I remember my mother was telling me when she was having an operation she could see everything going on as if she was on the ceiling looking down on to it. So I suppose a lot of people have this experience.

S: Quite a few people seem to have it in connection with anaesthetics.

Bodhiruchi: There is an American book by a researcher, he [508] is an anaesthetist, called Near-Death Experiences, and he has done a lot of research into these. He was very sceptical at first and eventually turned round and said that was the result, there was something in it.

Aryamitra: I wonder if it's in relation to anaesthetics or whether it is because the normal senses have been deadened that it somehow allows ...

S: You are awake without being asleep; awake in a non-physical way without being asleep - it seems something like that.

Gunapala: It sounds a lot like meditation or dhyana, where you remove yourself from the physical senses and yet still have a very clear mind and awareness of what is going on.

Aryamitra: Would the other samapattis like clairvoyance and so forth be a similar thing? - so if one experiences, say, a friend some miles away ...

S: Really it is the subtle bodily senses which are then operating; certainly not the physical ones. Or if you see through a door, see what is in the room on the other side of the door, it's one could say subtle sight, divine eye, astral vision, clairvoyance - these are the terms that we use to cover experiences or faculties of this sort.

Ratnaprabha: I don't know if I'm being too literalistic about it, but it would seem that if you can see physical objects using the subtle senses, presumably you are not seeing them in physical light, so to speak; so presumably even inanimate objects must have subtle counterparts, that you are able to see using your subtle senses.

S: Yes. The occultists speak of an astral light - the light which illumines, so to speak, the

astral plane; and in which light you, with your astral vision, see astral objects or the astral counterparts of material things. It would seem that everything has this sort of astral counterpart - it would seem, but I won't be positive about that. Certainly all living things.

Cittapala: It would seem that one has super-faculties ..., if you can communicate with people miles away. It doesn't seem to bear very much correlation to one's normal ...

[509]

S: Well, Buddhist tradition is that these in a sense higher faculties or these different faculties do sometimes develop spontaneously in connection with meditation, or can even be acquired by a course of training. It would seem that the spontaneous experience is the more common. I don't think I have ever met anyone who claimed to have developed these powers by training and whom I could believe. I have met a number of people who have had spontaneous experiences of this sort.

Aryamitra: My driving instructor told me of a friend of his. And he was just an ordinary person in the East End, and a friend of his, who again was an ordinary East Ender and wasn't into anything occult, used to go into fits where he would go into, say, the house next door, psychically, know exactly what was going on and what people were saying, what was there, the kind of furniture, everything - or up the road or somewhere else; and then he would come out of this trance or fit and be quite normal.

S: It would seem that some shamans have this sort of power. This is how, apparently, they discover lost or stolen objects. Of course, many shamans fall back upon guesswork and information and all that sort of thing, but a genuine shaman is supposed to be able to see astrally, as a clairvoyant can, where the lost or stolen object is, who stole it.

Cittapala: Could these vivid experiences be the basis of the LSD experience?

S: This I don't know, I couldn't say. I am not quite sure - not at all sure - in which of your bodies you have LSD experiences. Different people might have LSD experiences in different bodies. It is hard to say. My personal impression is that LSD activates something else - I'm not quite sure what. But just answering the question off the cuff, it would seem that the astral experience is of a different kind. But I'm not quite sure exactly how; I wouldn't be too sure, even, that it is of a different kind, but it would seem to be. I am just trying to rapidly compare experiences of both kinds which I have had myself, but I don't find it really possible to come to much of a conclusion. But they certainly seem different experiences - so far as I was concerned.

Devamitra: Is there a distinction between the sort of psychic powers that we have just been talking about that are associated with the divine eye, and supernormal faculties which one needs the fourth dhyana as a basis for their development? [510] Or are they - ?

S: No, they are all much of a muchness.

Devamitra: So if you wanted to develop those psychic powers you would have to have that ... ?

S: Buddhist tradition is that if you want to develop them consciously as a result of training,

you need to take the fourth dhyana as a basis.

Gunapala: Didn't Milarepa develop the power to cause thunderstorms and so forth by doing it in that way? He went to a teacher and learned how to develop psychic powers.

S: That's true. I am not sure that that degree of psychic power is necessary. I did discuss this whole question of making rain or stopping rain with a Tibetan incarnate lama friend of mine who was quite skilled in this. And from what he told me and what I knew of him, it would seem that a very high degree of concentration wasn't really necessary.

Gunapala: It was quite simple?

S: That is the impression I got, yes.

Vessantara: Do you think there is anything in the Western occult tradition of ... on the astral plane, clairvoyance and so on ...

S: There is quite a lot of rather confused tradition. All that sort of thing was rather suspect for centuries and under the ban of the church; if you dabbled in these things you were suspected of being in league with the devil. So there is a shadow over that whole side of things, so far as we are concerned in the West - historically, at least. It's a rather murky area. Not so for Buddhists, at least in the East.

Yes, it is a bit shadowy, but not in any sinister sense. It is not considered a very important area, it's something that they more or less accept; they don't bother about it. And there is certainly no suspicion of your being in league with the devil, or even with the comparatively harmless Mara, if you develop some interest in this area.

Cittapala: Would there be any qualitative significance to the fact that witches were generally the source of occult [511] powers, particularly in the middle ages, whereas in the East it would apparently seem to be males, or even in primitive countries more males are involved in ...

S: I think it is quite difficult to generalize. Witches became important, it would seem, in Europe only after the Reformation. They inherited all the opprobrium that formerly attached itself to heretics. And there is no doubt that a lot of witches just indulged in fantasies; they were often half crazy women, rather than anybody with actual occult powers. Dabbled in a bit of herbalism, read tea leaves, told fortunes.

There is a phenomenon in Scotland which is well known, called the second sight, which is some kind of astral vision. There are many, many stories in Scotland about the second sight; and I think in Ireland too. You're supposed to be born with it naturally if you're the seventh son of a seventh son or a seventh daughter of a seventh daughter.

If we go on talking about these things much longer we shall hear the banshees calling! ... more likely ... going to be the ...

Amoghacitta: Can I ask a question to clear up my own personal confusion? Following what [Dhirananda] said about comas and so on. Quite often you read about Zen masters or Zen

practitioners entering samadhi for perhaps weeks on end, and they are roused from it and don't even remember anything about it, or even been aware that they have been absorbed for so long. And we are told that this is samadhi. It doesn't seem to link up in any way with what we have been discussing or reading about. Can you call it samadhi and what's going on? Is it not just a state of unconsciousness?

S: Well, Buddhist tradition does maintain that it is possible to remain in a genuine samadhi-like state for long periods, and you may well be unaware of the passing of time; in a sense you have gone beyond time. But no doubt it is also possible to get into a sort of cataleptic state, rather like that of certain animals when they hibernate during the winter. And some Indian hatha yogis are able to get into that sort of state; they can be buried for a month and then dug up again. Fairly recently in India, things of this sort happened, reported in the newspapers. But one has, of course, therefore, to distinguish very carefully between a genuine deep, prolonged [512] samadhi experience during which you are completely oblivious of the body, and a simply cataleptic state. Externally the two may look like very much the same kind of thing.

Gunapala: The person who had the samadhi experience, though, would be aware of another experience - though he would not be aware of the physical body?

S: Oh yes, if he wasn't aware of the physical body, if he was in a genuine state of samadhi, there would be the content of that samadhi experience - the awareness, the bliss, have visionary experiences and so on.

Gunapala: With this other one, nothing at all?

S: No, apparently that - from all that we know, all that we can tell, is just a state like that of sleep, just a blank state. Possibly without dream - I'm not sure about that. Or more than a sleep state: a sort of state of suspended animation, just like an animal that is hibernating. It is more than sleeping.

Gunapala: I take it they don't breathe, if they don't experience anything.

S: Some say that they breathe, but that it is a very, very subtle breathing. Whether that very subtle breathing is in any way perceptible, I haven't inquired. But certainly in the case of yogis who are buried underground, say, for a month, they are not breathing certainly in the ordinary way. I am not sure whether a hibernating animal breathes; I haven't looked into that.

: They do. Very slowly.

Aryamitra: The yogis that get buried, their hair doesn't grow either - they have a clean-shaven ...

S: We are told that their hair doesn't grow, which would suggest that the metabolic processes are suspended. I don't know whether the hair of hibernating animals grows; you could go out and get that information ... (?) But certainly animals come out of hibernation very much thinner than they went into it, so metabolic processes are clearly going on. But whether, if you bury a fat yogi, you would dig up a thin one, again I haven't inquired; ... One hears about these things ... believes or sort of accepts them, but then one [513] doesn't really bother to

inquire into them very much; one isn't really very interested. Otherwise ... would go to India for that.

But if it is possible to bury a fat yogi and dig up a thin one, it would really give one food for thought. (Laughter) I don't know whether it would be possible to bury a thin yogi and dig up a fat one; that would be even more spectacular.

But anyway, talking of fat and thin will no doubt again lead to dinner time. Anyway, are there any final points before we conclude?

Bodhiruchi: You said that these yogis ... completely ... they just didn't dream. It just set me thinking that we need to dream, do we not? And is it possible that, by doing meditation, one does not need to dream? Is there some correlation...?

S: It would seem that one of the functions of dreaming is to sort out sense impressions; because sense impressions are constantly impinging on us all the time. But, of course, if you are in a state of deep meditation, no sensations are impinging on you in the ordinary way; they are not registering. There is less to sort out. Therefore you will need to dream less, therefore presumably you need to sleep less. And we do find normally that if people meditate a fair amount or quite a lot they seem to need less sleep. And it could be - I won't be very positive about this - but it could be because, since the intake of sense impressions is less, there is less sorting out to be done, and therefore they don't need so much in the way of dream experience.

Bodhiruchi: Could it also be that you are sorting out some of your sense experience in the meditation?

S: This I would say was rather doubtful.

Cittapala: You are not really aware, then, of sorting out these sense experiences? Is it that the mind just transfers them to other symbols?

S: You are aware of it in a sense; you may not label it as such, but you - that is to say you on a certain level - are certainly aware what is going on, because you as dreamer are present in the dream.

[514]

Cittapala: What I meant was - presumably - most of my dreams I've had while I've been here are to do with places and even experiences I've had some years ago; nothing to do with Il Convento and things of that nature.

S: Well, maybe you've got a backlog of things to sort out. Maybe what ... doing in a tidy way, it goes by association. You are working on this great pool of experiences and impressions all the time - now on this bit, now on that bit; something you have experienced during the day today sparks off some sort of recollection deep down of something you experienced years ago. Maybe your dreams therefore relate to that and do a bit more sorting out. I don't think it's neat and tidy so that what you experienced today you sort out tonight, etc. I don't think it's like that.

And this would seem, I think, to be one aspect of the dream process. It doesn't necessarily

exhaust that process. Perhaps you have an independent life on the dream level, with its own independent experiences also; the two get mixed up together. And then, of course, archetypal experiences sometimes.

Anyway, let's close on that note.

Day 24 Tape 26, Side 1

Subhuti: We finished off Perfect Samadhi and in fact finished up the whole Path. We've got one small question. Is the Eightfold Path used universally by all Buddhist schools? Is it a central teaching?

S: It is certainly used by all Buddhist schools, but I won't say that it is necessarily used as a central teaching. In the Theravada countries, it is certainly used as a central teaching, whether they understand it fully or not; but in the Mahayana countries very often - almost always, one might say - the Path of the six paramitas takes a central place. This is not to say that the Eightfold Path is unknown or ignored; it certainly is known. But the tendency is that it's regarded as belonging to, or expressive of, the Hinayana Path, the Hinayana approach. So the really central position in Mahayana countries like Tibet, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and so on is given to the path of the six or the ten paramitas. The Eightfold Path is regarded as pertaining to the path of the arhants or the arhant ideal, whereas of course the path of the six paramitas is regarded as pertaining to the path and the ideal of the Bodhisattva.

I have shown in the Survey that the path of the Bodhisattva, [515] the path of the six or the ten paramitas, can in fact be more or less reduced to the path of sila, samadhi, prajna and therefore of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Prasannasiddhi: You said that in all the Mahayana countries - and you included Tibet - so Tibet is thought of as a Mahayana rather than a Vajrayana [country]?

S: Yes, in the sense that it does follow the Bodhisattva Ideal, and inasmuch as Vajrayana can be regarded as included in Mahayana. If one divides the whole Buddhist world into areas, Hinayana and Mahayana, Tibet comes into the Mahayana path.

Prasannasiddhi: This is what is normally done in the Buddhist world?

S: Yes. They usually think in terms of Hinayana and Mahayana, or Hinayana and Mahayana countries; or Theravada and Mahayana countries. Not in terms of Hinayana countries, Mahayana countries and Vajrayana countries.

Subhuti: We were enumerating the 37 bodhipakkhiya dharmas, and we came to the four bases of psychic power. And I must admit I don't find them very easy to understand.

S: No, I haven't been able to find any satisfactory explanation of them, so I have had to fall back upon my own devices. I have explained them in one of my unpublished writings, to which I can refer you back at Padmaloka. In fact, in this said unpublished writing, which I am not under the impression that I will publish at present, I have dealt with all these 37 bodhipakshika or bodhipakkhiya dhamma. From the orthodox point of view - perhaps I should mention that this writing I have referred to is a continuation of the series of which The

Three Jewels is Part I, Buddhist Canonical Literature ... is Part II, and this is Part III, which never got finished, on the sects and schools of Buddhism. I have only done about 100 pages and I think I will never be finished.

But what I have done is I have dealt with these bodhipaksa dharmas. They are regarded as constituting - this is in very late doctrinal developments - the path of the pratyekabuddha. If one regards the Noble Eightfold Path as constituting the path of the arhant, then the cultivation of the bodhipaksa dharmas constitutes the path of the pratyekabuddha; and of course the cultivation of the six or the ten paramitas constitutes the path [516] of the samyaksambuddha, that is to say the would be samyaksambuddha, i.e. the Bodhisattva.

So I have given, as far as I remember, a systematic account of these bodhipaksa dharmas, including the four ...s.

Subhuti: That's it.

Devamitra: I don't know whether you want to go into this, but I have a question from my own personal study. Could I possibly ... ?

S: If it isn't completely above the heads of everybody else.

Devamitra: Oh no. From the Maharahulavada Sutta. In the course of the sutta, the Buddha exhorts Rahula to develop various what is translated as 'mind developments', and these mind developments include the four brahma viharas, the mindfulness of breathing, contemplation of impermanence and contemplation of what is foul.

S: Asubha, presumably?

Devamitra: Presumably, yes. But there are also five mind developments referring to the five elements, and I wondered whether there were meditation practices where you feel your way into individual elements, or whether this has just been upheld as a simile.

S: No, as far as I recollect, it would be upheld as a simile: that you should develop an attitude which is like that of the earth - that is to say, a bearing or putting up with everything, being patient; etc. etc.

Devamitra: That was my question.

S: Those similes occur quite often in the Pali Canon and ... Buddhist literature generally.

Devamitra: It just seemed curious that it should be classified in a list of definite meditation practices.

S: Well, what does one mean by a meditation practice? One develops a very concentrated attitude in a particular respect; so if one did think very seriously of developing this ... earth attitude, pondered deeply on it and really tried to practise it, really tried to develop that and embody that, no doubt it would [517] be tantamount to a meditation practice. These are not easy things to do if one takes them seriously.

Subhuti: Is this the same as the ten kasina practices?

S: No, kasinas are different.

Subhuti: Some of the kasinas are the discs of colour, but then it talks about the earth device, the water device, the air device, the space device. What are those?

S: Nobody in the Theravada world seems to know any more, but I think they refer to something like the stupa visualization, not to say even the Six Element Practice itself.

Lama Govinda opines somewhere that they represent a relic, which the Theravadins haven't any longer understood, of meditation on the cakras within the body, which of course are associated with elements. He is of this opinion. That may not be accepted by everybody, but he has put forward this view. For instance, in the lowest - if you take, for instance - well, you can take a set of four, five or seven cakras, but the lowest one is usually called, in the ... system, the svadisthana, and the earth element is to be meditated on there, in that centre. And the bija mantra of earth is to be recited and visualized as in that centre. So Lama Govinda is of the opinion that meditation on the elements represents a relic, no longer understood, of this kind of practice within the Theravada tradition.

Subhuti: It does seem in general, reading through the Pali Canon, that there are all sorts of passages with lists that are quite obscure. It's difficult to know whether they are obscure because the translator just hasn't understood them, or whether perhaps the meaning has gone out of them. Is there any general - ?

S: I think it's both, because the translator has not understood them, very often, because nobody in the Theravada world understands them; so he or she has not been able to tap any source of information in these cases. Quite apart from which, many of these things refer to actual practices which can only be understood beyond a certain point as a result of experience. I have said for many, many years that the content of the Pali Canon is much richer than generally supposed, and the Theravadins seem to have made a very small selection out of the total material and concentrated on that. Quite a lot of important teachings, both theoretical and practical, have simply [518] been overlooked, neglected, and in some cases their meaning no longer understood. So it's as though you have to comb through the Pali Canon, preferably consulting the original texts, at least from time to time, and just finding out, just discovering what is really there. And some of the things that have fallen into desuetude may well be quite useful for us in the West.

Subhuti: Is there an attempt to explain all the different lists and teachings within the Pali Canon? - that purports to explain them, in the commentaries?

S: It would seem that, by the time the commentaries were written or compiled, the understanding of quite a lot of the teachings had already been lost. Only too often concerned with scholastic elaboration. That is not to say they are not sometimes useful, even very useful, but they don't always help us very much when it comes to more practical matters.

Any further points?

Silaratna: You mentioned the four pratyekabuddhas. Does that doctrine arise from the

Mahayana tradition or from the Theravada particularly or - ?

S: I think this is one of those topics on which I spoken at least five or six times. I've got rather tired of this pratyekabuddha. There is so much roundabout explanation required to make any sort of sense of the ideal. I will just briefly summarize the main points. You will really have to collate my various remarks on various occasions, especially in the course of study retreats.

The term pratyekabuddha seems originally, in the days of the Buddha, to have been used to refer to a sort of ascetic who led a solitary meditative life and didn't want much to do with anybody. Later on, the pratyekabuddha was regarded as going in the same direction as the arhant, but going even further. The arhant had a teacher but no disciples; the pratyekabuddha didn't even have a teacher. He was as solitary as that; he really was on a solitary path.

The Sarvastivadins, and of course the Mahayanists to some extent, regarded the arhant and the pratyekabuddha and the Bodhisattva as following three distinct paths; but of course in the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra it was proclaimed, allegedly by the Buddha, that these three paths, these three yanas, all [519] merged into one, which was the buddhayana or bodhisattvayana. Whether the pratyekabuddha of the later Hinayana and early Mahayana, like the arhant, really ever represented a viable ideal, that is another matter. One never hears of people adopting the pratyekabuddha ideal; one never hears of them striving to be pratyekabuddhas. In any case, the Buddha's teaching is extant, so in a sense one has a teacher; in that sense one can't be a pratyekabuddha.

But it would seem to be a more extreme development of the arhant ideal, the later, one-sided arhant ideal, and not to correspond very closely to the realities of spiritual life. It just represents that tendency of extreme spiritual individualism which was not the original arhant ideal of the Buddha's day; which tendency the Mahayana was very much concerned to discourage. That's the matter in a nutshell.

If you take the pratyekabuddha ideal as represented in some sources, it is almost self-contradictory, almost nonsensical - that the pratyekabuddha is a very selfish person who only cares for himself, but of course he is Enlightened, even more Enlightened than an arhant. That would seem to be really quite impossible. It's a sort of fictitious ideal, one might say, if one considers it as an ideal at all. It's a sort of almost dramatization of a tendency which one has to beware of at every stage of the spiritual life.

Ratnaprabha: Can I ask you for some advice about a general interest issue? It's to do with whether you think it's a good idea to learn things by heart - I'm talking about Buddhist texts - and whether you can make any suggestions for short texts that it would be useful to learn by heart.

S: Well, you could learn a lot of texts by heart! I think it is certainly good to learn texts by heart; and then, of course, when you are lying awake at night, unable to sleep, you can just recite them over to yourself. I am just trying to think whether you are all still young enough to go into learning things by heart, because the younger you are the easier it becomes. After a certain age - I won't determine what that age is - it does become very difficult.

I remember when I was in my teens I learned quite big chunks of poetry by heart quite easily. I read certain things twice - that was enough. They stuck, and I can repeat them to myself

now. That is quite useful. Because then you can just reflect on the meaning of them, without needing to look at the book.

[520]

So, yes, if one can learn texts by heart I think this is very, very good. You mentioned short ones; I don't know what you regard as short. Perhaps just two or three pages you regard as short. But yes, learn key texts; learn texts the meaning of which is concentrated, like Hakuin's Song of Meditation or Song of Enlightenment as it's also translated. It shouldn't be very difficult to learn even the whole Diamond Sutra by heart, as many Far Eastern Buddhists do; I think all Zen monks in the Far East know or at least used to know the Diamond Sutra by heart. It's not a very lengthy text at all; lots of repetitions.

I think the things which one learns by heart should be definitely either very, very profound things that need constant reflection upon, or very inspiring. And of course if you don't want to forget them, you should repeat them regularly. I remember Dharo Rimpoché telling me that as a novice he used to have to learn so many pages of text a day and he would be tested in the evening. I forget what the number was - at least 20 pages a day he had to learn, every day for years on end. But he did confess when he knew me that certain texts, since he hadn't repeated them for years, he couldn't remember very well; he couldn't just reel them off as he could when he was a boy. He stressed that one needed to repeat them from time to time.

The Dhammapada says: 'Non-repetition is a corrupter of the sacred texts', doesn't it? - or a rustler (?) of the sacred texts. The ... says, rather, a correction; presumably the ...

Devamitra: I think a fairly easy way of memorizing lengthy passages if you are not used to it is to record it on a tape recorder and then listen over it, and you find that the more times you listen to it, you begin to anticipate the words. I really recommend that if you want to learn a text by heart, even if you have never attempted that sort of thing before.

S: Some people, of course, are better at this sort of thing than others. Even in the Buddha's day there was a monk who was unable to remember even a single verse; so the Buddha gave him half a verse to learn by heart because he couldn't even remember a whole verse. I don't know whether there is anybody like that around.

Silabhadra: Did he get Enlightened?

S: I believe so, they usually (Laughter)...

[521]

Ratnaprabha: So Hakuin's Song of Meditation and The Diamond Sutra are two in particular.

S: Yes, and also things of the nature of hymns, say to Avalokitesvara or Tara. These are all worth learning by heart. Or anything that takes one's fancy, anything that one does feel is profound and awe-inspiring. Learn it by heart. The Mangalasutta. Since you will be learning these things from translation, if you possibly can select a translation which is in decent English and doesn't constantly offend your literary sense as you recite it. Preferably a verse translation of a text which is itself in verse.

But another text which occurred to me - maybe at least the first two chapters of the

Ratnagunasamcayagatha, the Verses on the Accumulation of Precious Qualities.

Ratnaketu: There's the small thing which Asvajit said, summing up the Buddha's ...

S: Oh yes, about the pratityasamutpada. There are chapters of the Dhammapada that one can learn. Especially perhaps those three that I translated here last year, that is to say the Buddhavagga, the Maggavagga and the Sukkhavagga, representing the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha respectively. The Buddhavagga obviously represents the Buddha, the Maggavagga, the Chapter of the Path, obviously represents the Dharma, and the Sukkhavagga or the Chapter of Happiness obviously represents the Sangha - at least the Sangha on retreat.

Devamitra: But those three sections of the Dhammapada have not been released...

S: I think they have not.

Any further points?

Vessantara: You were talking a day or two ago about the last stage of the Six Element Practice, and giving up the limited consciousness to... Talking to some people, it seemed quite difficult to get much feeling for that.

S: That isn't really surprising.

Vessantara: Is there an image one could use which would ...?

[522]

S: An image; well, please avoid the image of the dewdrop slipping into the shining sea. It's not really quite that. Perhaps the best way one can think - though this does not altogether avoid the dewdrop and shining sea image - but it has a certain relative validity, a provisional validity. One has to think in terms of the limited, the narrower consciousness merging in something higher, wider, broader, less restricted. But ultimately one has to think in terms of the subject-object distinction itself dissolving into a non-dual consciousness, or what Gampopa describes, I think, as 'a non-dual Shine' (with a capital S), which one cannot but envisage originally as an object, though quite in a sense wrongly, quite illegitimately.

But I think what one has to think in terms of is of generating a momentum. Don't bother too much about the conceptual content of the practice. It's the sort of momentum that one generates, the feeling that one generates, of just giving back, giving up, on ever higher and subtler levels. You should try to keep that momentum going, rising to that sixth state without asking yourself too many theoretical questions about the nature of consciousness and what is being surrendered back to what at this level, or what is being merged in what. It is more a question of keeping going the momentum that you already have generated in the lower stages of the practice. Not stopping to ponder philosophical problems; that one might do some other time.

Harshaprabha: Does generating a momentum have anything to do with the time one should spend on doing the practice?

S: Well, clearly it's not unconnected with it because you just do need time to build up a head

of steam. Some people may require five minutes, others may require an hour. When we do the practice together it is standardized; it may be too long for some people, not long enough for others. When one practises by oneself ordinarily one regulates one's time, the amount of time you spend on each stage of the practice, accordingly.

People are like motor cars, some move off more quickly from a stationary position than others.

Amoghacitta: Is there a meditation practice where you systematically dissolve as it were the five senses, reflect that one day they will cease and just as it were dissolve yourself that way?

S: Well, the recollection of death could include this, [523] because one presumably recollects the whole practice of dissolution. It is generally said that certain senses disappear first: I think it is the sense of sight disappears first, then - I'm not sure which comes next - I think it is probably hearing, and then taste and smell, and then touch last of all. So one can reflect upon the progressive disappearance of the senses or sense-consciousnesses as part of one's recollection of death; a sort of giving oneself a foretaste of the death experience.

But it's much the same with regard to meditation; if one gets into deep meditation first of all you are not seeing anything, you've closed your eyes anyway; and then you don't even hear anything, you may not hear sounds outside. And taste and smell will be suspended. Touch is probably the last to go. So that in a way reflects the process of physical dissolution.

Anyway, leaving aside details, now that everybody has gone through the whole series, gone through all eight lectures, are people left with a sort of overview of the whole Path? Do they feel they have got that clearly into view? - that they have a pretty good idea what the Noble Eightfold Path is, what it's all about, at least sufficiently for practical purposes, including maybe explaining it to others?

Voices: Hm.

Ratnaprabha: You mentioned earlier that the Noble Eightfold Path seemed to the Mahayana as being a teaching relevant to the arhant ideal, and that the paramitas is the path that is relevant to the Bodhisattva ideal. Is it possible to imbue the Eightfold Path, do you think, with more of a Bodhisattva, less of a self-regarding, spirit? Does it necessarily have that, do you think?

S: I don't think it necessarily has that. It is more a question of seeing, to begin with, in a sense contrary to later tradition, that the arhant ideal and the Bodhisattva Ideal are not as contradictory as has sometimes been thought. If the ideals are not contradictory the paths are not contradictory. One who aspired to be a Bodhisattva could certainly not neglect the Eightfold Path; he would be very ill-advised to neglect it.

In a sense, in Mahayana countries, the Eightfold Path is neglected, but in a sense it isn't, because the items which are contained under those eight categories will reappear within [524] other contexts, even within the context of the Bodhisattva path, the path of the six paramitas itself.

Devamitra: But there is one aspect which in a way would be a bit obscured, because in the

Eightfold Path you've got a definite focus on livelihood, and there is no obvious or direct reference to that in the paramitas.

S: That's true; in the same way in the paramitas you've got a direct reference to kshanti, which is not found in the Eightfold Path. So they have some special emphases, but broadly speaking they are concerned with the same path.

Devamitra: Does Right Livelihood receive emphasis in any other well-known formulation of the Path, because I have not come across it anywhere else?

S: I don't think it does.

Anyway, is that all? No particular reflections on the Eightfold Path as a whole?

Cittapala: I was just wondering whether the mundane path - could you consider it more as a path as opposed to the Transcendental section of it, which you describe more as a sort of flower?

S: Yes, I think that is true, especially if one sees it in terms of sila, samadhi, prajna, then it is definitely more consecutive, and to the extent that it is more consecutive it is more of a path. When you reach Perfect Vision, then of course it is as though that is the first stage, if you like - though the word stage is not quite appropriate here - of the Transcendental Path, which then extends its influence, that experience, that realization, extends its influence into different aspects of your life, of your being, just like the opening of so many petals. So to that extent the mundane path is more of a path than is the Transcendental Path.

Gunapala: When the Transcendental Path arises from Perfect Vision, does the transformation process of the Transcendental Path, is it the same, does Perfect Vision have to transform all the other limbs as it were, like Perfect Emotion?

S: Well, yes certainly.

Gunapala: So that there is a process taking place again [525] in the same way as the lower path?

S: Yes, it is a process, but it is a process of [break in recording]... you might say.

Gunapala: Just take time for Perfect Vision to ...

S: - to sort of percolate through all these different aspects, all these different levels. In a sense you are already there, in a sense you are Enlightened, but it takes time for the Enlightenment experience to work its way through every aspect of your being. And it may not do this in a regular order. In the case of the mundane path, you cannot perfect samadhi before you have perfected sila; you cannot perfect prajna before you have perfected samadhi. But on the level of the so-called Transcendental Path, having attained Perfect Vision you can turn your attention more to Right Speech, you can turn your attention more to Right Livelihood, you can perfect them; you don't have to perfect them necessarily in a particular order; though it would seem that Perfect Samadhi would represent the consummation of that entire perfecting process.

So it is very much on this level a question of angas - limbs, members or shoots; not so much a question of steps or stages. So to that extent the mundane Noble Eightfold Path is more of a path.

Tape 26, Side 2

- I spoke of the mundane path as being like a stalk and the Transcendental Path as being like a flower. I spoke also of these two ways of looking at the spiritual life, advancing, so to speak, along a straight line or going up a mountainside, and on the other hand unfolding from a centre. But obviously you can't afford to think in terms of unfolding from a centre until you've got a centre to unfold from. It mustn't be a theoretical unfolding, it must be a real unfolding.

Ratnaprabha: Does this idea of the Enlightenment experience having to percolate through the different aspects of one's life have any relation to the pairs of individuals mentioned in the Tiratana Vandana? One of them, for example, is attaining the path of Stream Entry and knowing the fruits of Stream Entry?

S: Not really, because the one experience is said to follow instantaneously upon the other. The process of transformation clearly is not instantaneous.

[526]

Amoghavajra: What's the significance of the distinction between ...?

S: That is another of those questions I have gone into three or four times. I have pointed out that it is analogous to the distinction in mundane terms between karma and karma vipaka: you perform the action, there is the result which you experience. So the division into path and fruit of these four persons corresponds to their becoming that kind of person, that kind of Transcendental person, and then their experiencing what they have become in the form of a fruit, so to speak, which comes to them. It is as though you become something, and then you experience what you have become; one could put it in that way. It is a rather scholastic, perhaps unnecessary, and in any case rather late distinction. When I say late, I mean occurring in later ... strata of the Pali Canon.

Anyway, is that all? Because if it is, and inasmuch as you have worked your way through the whole volume perhaps you deserve 20 minutes' holiday (Laughter). All right then.

Spellchecked and put into house style Shantavira, November 1998