General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhisthana Dharma Team

The Ariyapariyesana Sutta Seminar

Held at Padmaloka in July-August 1976

Those present: Urgyen Sangharakshita, Padmapani, Padmaraja, Sagaramati, Vessantara, Alan Angel, Ian Anderson, Mark Barrett, Roy Campbell, Kim Catala, Mike Chivers, Peter Cowen, Pat Dunlop, Dominic Kennedy, John Rooney, Graham Steven, Mike Thomson.

(The entire sutta (MN26) is read out from The Middle Length Sayings, trans. I.B. Horner, Pali Text Society)

Sangharakshita: Well, any general impressions of this sutta? I take it some of you haven't read it or heard it before, but how does it strike you just hearing it read? What sort of impression does it make on you? What sort of feeling do you get?

Padmaraja: The impact of what is being said is lost by the archaic language. The archaic English. I really don't think it's something (unclear) translated these things.

___: There are a lot of contradictions.

S: Of course there are also the repetitions. You could hardly imagine the Buddha speaking in that sort of way, even though it does sound much less awkward in Pali than in English. But no doubt the repetitions were elaborated just for mnemonic purposes and to help the monks remember the Buddha's words more easily, and also perhaps to reflect upon them and meditate upon them. The suttas weren't intended originally for reading; they were meant to be recited congregationally. So no doubt if one had written the sutta, if one had written an account of what happened, then one would have written it in a much more condensed and direct sort of way, which no doubt would have had a much stronger impact on the reader, though perhaps it is not only a question of translating the text into less archaic English but also it would be boiling the whole thing down so that you just get that more direct impact. We do get that more direct impact with works, with Pali texts, which seem to belong to an earlier phase of development, that is to say works like the Sutta Nipata and the Udana and the Itivuttaka. That is one of their very great advantages. Has anyone noticed this? Any other general impressions?

___: It seems a bit strange that when the Buddha was enlightened the two persons that he chose to tell died within a couple of days of one another. It seems a bit odd.

S: Well perhaps it's used to illustrate the fact that so near but yet so far. Just missed it.

___: Is there any sort of reason for that?

S: Well no reason is given. Perhaps it did simply happen that way. (pause) Any [2] particular impression about the Buddha himself? After all, the sutta is the Buddha's sort of autobiography in a condensed form.

Vessantara: Determination and self-confidence.

S: Determination and self-confidence mainly.

Vessantara: Especially in the passages with Uddaka and Kalama. He's saying they have energy, I too have energy.

S: All right let's go through it paragraph by paragraph: 'Thus have I heard.' I take it you know who is supposed to be speaking. You notice that these words, 'Thus have I heard' occur at the beginning of every [sic] sutta, but what do they mean? Who has heard? Who is speaking?

___: Ananda.

S: It's Ananda. So how come it's Ananda who's speaking? When is he speaking?

___: (unclear)

S: According to tradition he's speaking after the Buddha's death, after the Buddha's parinirvana, and he is rehearsing to the gathering of the other disciples what he remembers of the Buddha's teaching. For the last twenty-five years of his life Ananda was his constant companion and the Buddha used to repeat to him whatever teaching he had given to others in Ananda's absence, and of course Ananda was present on so many occasions when the Buddha did teach. So Ananda accumulated an enormous number of teachings, he had a very retentive memory. So after the Buddha's death he was requested to repeat, to recite, whatever he knew, whatever he remembered, to the other disciples, and they learned from him adding, no doubt, their own recollections too. So Ananda is supposed to be speaking: 'Thus have I heard: At one time the Lord was staying near Savatthi in the Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's monastery.' So Savatthi or Sravasti was the capital of the kingdom of Kosala and the Buddha had two residences there. One was in the Jeta Grove, a residence built for him by Anathapindika, and the other was a place called 'the house with the peaked gable', you could say, which had been built by a wealthy female lay-supporter. So one of the residences was just outside one end of the city, the other just outside the other end. In secluded spots away from the noise and the bustle of the city but accessible. The Buddha himself and the monks were near enough to the city to be able to go for alms easily, and the two residences were near enough to the city for it to be possible for people to go off to see the Buddha and the monks. So on this occasion the Buddha was staying near Sravasti in the Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's - 'monastery' it's translated but I've refrained from using that word - I've been saying 'residence'. It is arama in Pali, which is more like a rest place, it's a place where you just stay or you repose. It may be just a temporary shelter. We mustn't imagine anything very grand, you mustn't imagine [3] an enormous monastery like those of Tibet in later days. It was probably more like a very simple bungalow or chalet or something of that kind. 'Then the Lord, having dressed early, taking his bowl and robe, entered Savatthi for almsfood.' It probably would be eight or nine in the morning. The monks used to go into the city or the town or the village for alms just at about the time when people would have finished preparing the morning meal.

Usually people would eat at about nine or ten in the morning and then they'd go and work in the fields or attend to other business. So the monks had to catch them just at the right time. So when the Buddha had gone 'a number of monks approached the venerable Ananda.' Apparently he'd been left behind - 'Having approached, they spoke thus to the venerable Ananda: 'It is long since we, reverend Ananda, heard a talk on dhamma face to face with the Lord. It is good if we, reverend Ananda, got a chance of hearing a talk on dhamma face to face with the Lord.' So what does one gather from this little exchange?

___: That already the Sangha's quite big.

S: The Sangha's quite big, yes. These monks have also been staying at Savatthi apparently, but it's a long time since they had an opportunity of hearing the Dhamma, hearing a talk on the Dhamma face to face with the Lord. You notice this expression 'face to face'. No doubt Ananda could have repeated to them many things - Ananda could have taught them from his own recollection all the teachings that the Buddha had given, but they seem to attach great importance to hearing a talk on the Dhamma face to face with the Lord. They don't even say 'from the Buddha' but 'face to face'. They make that point, even they emphasize it. Why do you think that is?

___: Personal contact.

S: Personal contact. It's not just a question of the words of the Dharma, not even a question of the ideas, not even a question of the teaching. It's 'from the Buddha', directly from the Buddha, face to face. In that way they get something that is very difficult for words repeated to transmit. So 'it is good if we, reverend Ananda, got a chance of hearing a talk on dhamma face to face with the Lord.' And then Ananda says, 'Well then, the venerable ones should go to the hermitage of brahman Rammaka, and probably you would get a chance of hearing a talk on dhamma face to face with the Lord.' Ananda already has started laying his plan but he doesn't make any promise. He says probably. Why do you think he doesn't make any promise?

___: You can't really legislate for a Buddha.

S: You can't legislate; not only legislate, you can't predict. A Buddha may do anything. He can't give any undertaking on the Buddha's behalf, as it were, close as he is. The best he can say, or the most he can say, is 'probably you would get a chance of hearing a talk on dhamma face to face with the Lord.' He's going to do his best. He's going to try but he can't guarantee anything. He's making no promises. At best he can say 'probably'. 'Yes, your reverence, these monks answered the venerable Ananda in assent. Then the Lord, having [4] walked for alms in Savatthi, returning from the quest for alms, after the meal, said to the venerable Ananda: 'We will go along Ananda and approach the Eastern Park, the palace of Migara's mother, for the day-sojourn.' So what happens? The Buddha having collected alms in Savatthi returns to Anathapindika's residence, eats there the food that he has collected, after he'd sat a little while, digested it, he suggests to Ananda that they spend the remainder of the day quietly in the other residence outside the other end of the town. That will give them a little walk, a little exercise. They'll spend the day there quietly. The translator says the palace of Migara's mother - it's a storeyed building, sometimes translated as a building with peaks or gables, and Ananda or course agrees. "Very well, Lord,' the venerable Ananda answered in assent. Then the Lord together with the venerable Ananda approached the Eastern Park, the palace of Migara's mother, for the day-sojourn. Then the Lord, emerging from seclusion towards evening, said to the venerable Ananda, 'We will go along Ananda and approach the Eastern Porch to bathe our limbs'. 'Very well, Lord', the venerable Ananda answered the Lord in assent. Then the Lord, together with the venerable Ananda, approached the Eastern Porch to bathe their limbs. When he had bathed his limbs at the Eastern Porch and had come out of the water, he stood in a single robe drying his limbs. Then the venerable Ananda spoke thus to the Lord,' So what sort of picture do you get from this little introduction so far of the Buddha's day, of the monk's day, the way in which they passed their time? They apparently led a very simple life. They get

up reasonably early in the morning. Presumably they meditate for a while and then they go into the nearby city to beg, as we would say, to collect food, to collect alms. And they come back to wherever they are staying, they eat whatever they have collected, rest a little while, and then they go to some quiet and solitary place to spend the remainder of the day quietly. We are not told what they do, we are not told what the Buddha did or what Ananda did during the day's sojourn. Perhaps they meditated, perhaps they just sat quietly, perhaps they walked up and down, but they passed the day very peacefully, very gently, and then towards evening - perhaps it's been a hot day - the Buddha suggests to Ananda that they go and bathe, presumably in a tank or pond, and then they bathe and when the Buddha has finished bathing, when he's drying his limbs, Ananda thinks, well, this is a suitable opportunity, we've got now the evening before us and he says, 'Lord this hermitage of the brahman Rammaka is not far; the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka is lovely, Lord; the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka is beautiful, Lord. It were good, Lord, if out of compassion the Lord were to approach the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka.' The Lord consented by becoming silent. Then the Lord approached the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka.'

So what sort of impression do you get from this? It's almost as though Ananda knows the Buddha likes to spend his time in peaceful, attractive places so he describes the hermitage of brahman Rammaka and suggests that the Buddha goes there. The Buddha agrees by remaining silent. 'Then the Lord approached the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka. At that time a number of monks came to be sitting down and talking dhamma in the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka. Then the Lord stood outside the porch waiting for the talk to finish.' Do you notice this little touch? What does it suggest about the Buddha?

___: Perhaps he was inquisitive of what they were talking about. (laughter)[5]

S: I wasn't thinking about that. So 'waiting for the talk to finish'. It suggests politeness doesn't it? Not wishing to interrupt. Even the Buddha was very polite, well mannered you may say. 'Then the Lord, knowing that the talk had finished, coughed and knocked on the bar of the door; those monks opened the door to the Lord. Then the Lord, having entered the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka, sat down on the appointed seat. As he was sitting down the Lord said to the monks: 'As you were sitting down just now what was your talk about, monks? What was your talk that was interrupted?' 'Lord, our talk that was interrupted was about the Lord himself; then he arrived.'

You notice the text says a number of monks came to be sitting down and talking dhamma in the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka but they tell the Buddha that they were talking about the Buddha himself. Do you think there's an contradiction?

Voices: No.

S: No why not?

___: In a way the Buddha's an embodiment of the Dharma.

S: Hmm, the Buddha says in another text 'he who sees me sees the Dharma'. So what sort of talk about the Buddha do you think it might have been? Would it have been what the Buddha liked for breakfast or something like that? What sort of talk would it have been?

___: About his qualities.

S: About his qualities. They would have been talking about the Buddha as Buddha. Talking about the Buddha as Buddha one may say is talking about the Dharma. Then the Buddha says, 'It were good, monks, that when young men of family such as you who have gone forth from home into homelessness out of faith are gathered together that you talk about dhamma. When you are gathered together, monks, there are two things to be done: either talk about dhamma or the ariyan silence.'

___: What about this going forth from home into homelessness? Out of faith. Do you know anything about that? Would that have something to do with the fact that it had been very difficult for anybody to leave home because of their responsibilities being passed down to them and so he just leaves and just sort of goes away from the whole thing.

S: It does seem that by the Buddha's time there had grown up this practice, this custom if you like, of people, especially young men, just leaving home and going forth and wandering about. There seems to have been quite a movement of this sort in India, especially in north-eastern India in particular by the time of the Buddha, and the Buddha himself of course went forth in this way as we shall see later on. And this practice or this custom of going forth suggests a number of things. First of all it suggests that society was rich [6] enough to be able to support a large number of non-producing members - that's the first point, and secondly that people were willing to support them, ready to support them. In fact we gather from the text that people felt it to be very meritorious to support these people who had gone forth from home into homelessness because they went forth from home into homelessness on what we would nowadays call perhaps a spiritual quest, a spiritual search. They were looking for something above and beyond a home life and a domestic horizon. In the Sutta Nipata the Buddha is represented as reflecting before leaving home that the household life is a stuffy life. The life as one who has gone forth is free as the open air and thinking and feeling this he went forth. We talked about this quite a bit on the last study retreat because this passage occurs in the Sutta Nipata in that chapter which we were studying. So there seemed to have been a very strong feeling of this sort in the Buddha's day among quite a number of - especially - young men, though some young women too apparently we gather later on. That the householder's life was a very limited, constricted, even stuffy life and that the life of one who'd gone forth and become a wanderer was much freer in comparison, represented the expanded horizon. So many of those who subsequently became followers or disciples of the Buddha were people who like the Buddha himself originally had gone forth - who'd cut themselves off from all worldly ties, had no domestic responsibilities, no social responsibilities, no civic responsibilities, who were free, who were available, and they devoted themselves entirely to spiritual practices of various kinds, spiritual work of various kinds, and the Buddha is referring to such people. He says, 'It were good monks that when young men of family such as you who have gone forth from home into homelessness out of faith are gathered together that you talk about dhamma.' You've gone forth from home into homelessness out of faith in higher things. You've not gone forth for the sake of an easy life, you've not gone forth for the sake of food and clothing. you've gone forth out of faith, out of faith in some higher reality, some truth, some ultimate purpose of life or ultimate purpose to life, so it's appropriate that when you gather together you do one of two things; you either occupy yourself with talking about the Dharma, the truth, the teaching, the principles, the reality, or you observe the ariyan silence, which means you meditate together. Observing the ariyan silence refers to the practice, according to the commentary, refers to the experience, of

the second dhyana. So why do you think the experience of the second dhyana is equated with the observance of the ariyan silence and vice-versa?

Sagaramati: No discursive thought.

S: No discursive thought. No mental chatter. It's not enough to keep silent physically, verbally - the mind must keep silent. There must be no mental chatter. So you're only really quiet, only really silent, when the flow of thoughts ceases. So that is the true ariyan silence. Not just ordinary silence, not just the silence of the lips and the tongue but the silence of the mind, the silence of discursive mental activity - that is the ariyan silence. So either talk about the Dharma or remain completely silent, silent in thought as well as silent in speech. So this is appropriate for those who've gone forth out of faith for the sake of some higher ideals. So this whole subject of the going forth is very important indeed and as I said we talked about it quite a bit on the last study retreat. [7]

What do you think it corresponds to nowadays? Does it correspond to anything nowadays, anything in our own experience, this going forth? Mind you it's not just a mental, not just a psychological or spiritual, going forth. It's a literal going forth. So does it correspond to anything in our own experience do you think? Is it still a valid procedure for us do you think? It's a going forth from home into homelessness, so one has also to enquire what is meant by home. What is home? What does home represent? Only then can one understand what homelessness represents. So what does going forth from home represent? Take it first of all in the most ordinary obvious sense.

Peter: Going from a sheltered existence.

S: Going from a sheltered existence - but just that? Any particular kind of sheltered existence? What's wrong with a sheltered existence?

Peter: Leaving your parents' home.

S: It's leaving your parents. Don't forget going forth, leaving home for the ancient Indian as for the modern Indian was probably a much bigger experience, a much more important step than it is even for us, at least for some of us, nowadays. He went forth from his whole big joint family. There was mother and father, maybe grandfather, grandmother, maybe aunts and uncles with their wives and husbands, their children, all his cousins. He might have his own wife or wives, his own children, servants, kinsfolk - a whole vast joint family, and all his life so far he's been used to that shelter, that security, that companionship. It was a very well knit, very warm sort of group. He was very much involved with it, and in it, but no doubt in the course of years he'd come to feel very sort of enclosed and very confined. Always dealing with this particular small group of people and dealing with them in a very limited, a very narrow, a very confined sort of way and no doubt he'd come to feel the whole situation as more and more enclosing, more and more stuffy, so maybe then he would feel almost so he couldn't breathe. He just had to get out into the open air, just leave it all. He'd just get fed up with that whole kind of way of life so he'd go forth. So no doubt there's quite a bit of this for quite a few of us nowadays, but not quite to that extreme extent that the ancient Indian experiences. Do you see this? But still quite enough to make us feel no doubt constricted and confined and make us feel that we want to go forth. But can't we look at it in another way, not just in this ordinary obvious literal way? What else does home represent?

Peter: Our own ideas.

S: Our own ideas. Our own conditioned ideas especially, our own conditioned mental state. It represents that too.

___: It's like going forth almost into the unknown.

S: Yes, it represents the known. That in which we've settled down. It represents the old. [8] It represents the past. It represents the familiar. So one has to go forth from all of this. Someone made the point on the other study retreat that it's very difficult for you to be a new person in an old situation so that, if you want to change, you have to go forth into a new situation. That is to say unless the situation in which you are is like a, say, retreat situation deliberately structured to assist change, but home situations aren't usually like that. In fact one might define a sort of home situation or a home as an environment, a situation, which encourages you to remain as you are, because you are treated as you were, you're not allowed to grow up, you're not allowed to change, you're not allowed to develop, and this is why it is so restricting and why you have to go forth. You probably notice this - those who have gone forth in this literal sense - whenever you go home it may well be that your parents and brothers and sisters and other friends and relations don't realize you've changed, a bit at least, they don't realize it's a slightly new you that is coming home, and they try to treat you or to behave towards you as though you hadn't changed at all, as though you were just like you used to be. In fact they'd like you to be just like you used to be in many cases. Mother and father might like you to be that nice little boy that you used to be - or even that naughty little boy - provided you don't change, provided you stay just like that, just as you were. So sometimes it's very difficult to change and develop remaining in that sort of situation where it's almost insisted that you should be as you were and not change, not develop, not grow. So the going forth becomes necessary from that sort of situation. It can be any sort of domestic situation. It can be a job too.

So home is any situation that does not permit you to grow, which in fact encourages you not to grow. That's home. And once you have gone forth remember why you have gone forth. With what purpose, with what ideals.

Then the Buddha speaks. 'These, monks, are the two quests: the ariyan quest and the unariyan quest.' The word for quest is 'esana' which means something like 'will', 'desire' but in a very strong and positive sense. Search, quest - it is again a bit archaic isn't it. So you feel that? It's more like a search, a seeking. The ariyan and the unariyan. Here ariyan means 'noble', even spiritual, and unariyan means ignoble, unspiritual, worldly. So what do you notice about the talk that the Buddha proceeds to give? What do you notice about the way in which it opens once the Buddha has commended the monks and reminded them that when they're gathered together there are only two things to be done; either talk about Dharma or ariyan silence? He plunges straight into the subject and how does he open his talk, in what sort of way?

___: It's direct.

S: It's direct.

Sagaramati: There are only two things you can do really.

S: Yes. It's uncompromising. It presents the two great radical alternatives. He confronts the monks, as it were, with a choice. He doesn't say, 'Oh there's only one path and we're all on it. It doesn't really matter what you do. It all comes out right in the end.'[9] He says, no, 'These, monks, are the two quests: the ariyan quest and the unariyan quest.' Uncompromising duality, as it were, at the beginning. Here you are, as it were, standing and there are two paths before you going in opposite directions. You can't follow both. You've got to follow either the one or the other, so which one is it going to be? Are you going to embark on the ariyan quest or on the unariyan quest? So this is a very sort of challenging approach. I think it's very important to think in these terms at the beginning of one's spiritual life. You have to think in terms of choice, you have to think in terms of decision. Do you see this?

___: Will you say it again?

S: Well unless there's any actual problem it seems as though nothing more needs to be said. It seems very clear. It's as though you decide to evolve or you decide not to evolve.

Peter: Couldn't one say you've either left home or you haven't left home?

S: Yes you could.

Sagaramati: But surely you (must) decide to not (evolve) in a way.

S: In effect you do.

Sagaramati: If you're not even aware of evolution. It's like if you think about before you came in contact with Buddhism or just the idea of growth you were looking for something but you'd no idea what it was.

S: Yes, but in effect you're deciding not to evolve if you close your eyes to all the opportunities that you have or even to the thoughts that pass through your own mind. You just brush them aside. Even the sort of dissatisfaction that comes up sometimes, you just sort of suppress it. So in that sense you decide you're not going to do anything about it. You're not going to try, you're not going to evolve, and this happens as soon as you reach years of discretion. By the time you're fifteen or sixteen you become aware that these alternatives in some form or other are present. I think probably when you're very young you're very aware of this - that you can go either in this direction or in that, but you smother that over or you're persuaded by other people to smother it over, but you very often do know that there are these alternatives, there is a choice before you. I think the important point that emerges here is that the spiritual life has to be seen as something quite different from the worldly life at the beginning. This is the important point here. You can't confuse the two. You can't try to say that there isn't a difference or that it doesn't really matter very much one way or the other which you follow, that it all comes to the same thing in the long run. It also means that you have to take an active decision - you can't just let things go on happening. If you do that, if you don't take that active decision and you don't take the decision to embark on the ariyan quest, [10] it means you are in fact embarking on the unariyan quest. Drift is the unariyan quest also.

In the Dhammapada there's a verse where the Buddha says 'One path, O monks, leads to worldly gain. Quite another path leads to nirvana.' Do you see this as something that very

often people don't realize or don't think? That there are very definitely two paths as it were between which a choice has to be made?

___: People very often see it as not a choice of two paths, but you have this kind of choice of maybe doing something different from everybody else. This choice of maybe doing something a bit funny like evolving. Not a clear cut thing.

S: It is reasonably clear cut. It is different from what everybody else is doing. It's at least a more individual thing.

Sagaramati: I can remember in a mitra study group somebody accused us of being spiritual elitists because we didn't have (unclear). No we're not the same as people outside in the street because they're not interested in the spiritual life. We are and (unclear).

S: Why do you think people are so sensitive to this question of what they regard as elitism or spiritual elitism? I used to hear this sort of accusation when I was around London. The sort of impression that was given was that if people had accused you of being elitist, well you were absolutely finished, you had just to withdraw or collapse or whatever, but why is this? What does this signify? What does it mean? Why do people level this sort of charge? What is elitism anyway?

Peter: They don't want to think there's anybody better than them. Lack of respect for hierarchy and a (vision) that one exists.

Padmapani: (unclear) slogan like 'it's all one.' You hear about or you read about it a lot. There's just a lot of it about. It's like a sort of pseudo-philosophy. It's not based on any (deeper thoughts), this idea of everything is all one - you don't have to do anything, you don't have to strive - a sort of Utopia.

S: But how do you refute this? How do you deal with it when you're accused of spiritual elitism, or how did you?

Sagaramati: I just used terms like evolution, higher evolution, lower evolution, in terms of ... somebody actually walked down the street and he said well why are you different from them? And I said well because I'm not concerned with what he's actually concerned with.

S: Well you're different one could say because you choose to be different.

Padmapani: I think a lot of it depends on circumstances when the person comes up. If you are very positive and you're full of energy you say, oh yes I go along to the Centre, why [11] don't you come along? And the person might just come along, but if they're obviously hostile then that approach isn't going to work.

Sagaramati: But this is somebody who'd been coming along for ages, a mitra. The impression I got wasn't so much (unclear) on the other (unclear) was something about sentimentality, a sort of sentimental feeling about the world and it's all right really. That sort of feeling is actually tightened by saying, well, it's not all right.

S: Yes, I think the root of the difficulty is the basic reason for which or on account of which

the people who are accused of being a spiritual elite have become a spiritual elite. In other words the basis or part of the basis is a rejection of those values which that particular person who is objecting considers worthwhile, and he feels no doubt uneasy because of that, insecure because of that, and he wants to get back at you and therefore levels this charge of your being elitist - that being a popular pejorative sort of word.

Sagaramati: He was quite clever. Everyone else in the group agreed that there was this distinction between the two paths. He was the only one who didn't, therefore he was the only one who was an individual.

S: Well, an individual is not just a person who reacts. You don't necessarily become an individual by disagreeing with others. You may be, but not necessarily so. You're not necessarily not an individual because you happen to agree with others. The individual doesn't have to disagree. People can be non-individual but at the same time be differing violently among themselves, disagreeing violently among themselves. So agreement and disagreement by themselves mean nothing. An individual can agree or disagree and a non-individual can agree or disagree, but the first will agree or disagree creatively and the other will agree or disagree reactively. But one will have to find a way of meeting this charge of elitism. I think it's going to come up if anything more and more, especially as we have an Order and certain things are left in the hands of Order members, and some people seem especially annoyed about the fact that Order members wear, for instance, kesas and even consider it meaning that Order members consider themselves superior in a negative sort of way, and that therefore they constitute an elite, again in a negative sort of way. So I think one has to face this sort of issue quite squarely and just say, well, the whole basis of your thinking is wrong; I disagree with it; we agree that there is a difference between the committed and the uncommitted, those who have made a positive choice as we see it and those who just haven't yet done that and don't want to do it; we believe we are different; we'd rather not be different in a sense - we'd rather you all became like us. So the best way, if you really want to do away with this elite, is just for you also to become like us. An elite, one could say, in the real pejorative sense, is a body of people who have an exclusive attitude towards others and try to preserve their own privileges and keep others out, but we are ready to welcome people in - in fact we'd love to welcome everybody in. So we're not an elite in that sense of trying to keep others out and trying to monopolize certain things for ourselves. This is what an elite usually means.[12]

Vessantara: I think it's interesting that Sagaramati's participant in this discussion was a mitra because I think there are two groups of people who usually come out with this kind of statement. One is people who are right on the edges of the Movement and just come along and don't know much about things, and the other seems to be people who would quite like to join the Order but somehow aren't ready and maybe have asked and have been refused, and it's kind of sour grapes, and they don't feel that part of your definition about being open to everybody because they asked and we said no.

S: Yes, in other words they can't accept the fact that they're not ready. It's quite important to make this distinction that there is such a thing as an elite but we're not an elite because we're ready to welcome everybody we possibly can in. We'd like the Order to expand until it became conterminous with the total population of the globe - this is what we'd like - certainly the total adult population. So it's up to you. You're quite welcome to join, one can say - of course you have to fulfil the necessary conditions (laughter) there is that - but in principle the gates stand wide open so there's no question of an elite. An elite is a body of people that try to

preserve positions, status, privileges, facilities, power for themselves, and we certainly don't wish to do that and don't do that. This is the reason why we have the FWBO: simply to help us to come into contact with more people so that we can share whatever we have to share and enable others to come in. We are making the approach by having classes, by having centres, so how can anyone say that we're elitist? If we were elitist we'd have kept Buddhism to ourselves and not told anyone about it, but this isn't what we're trying to do. We're trying to tell as many people as possible about it, trying to get as many people as possible on to this path, on to the path of the ariyan quest. How can we possibly be elitist? That's not the way that elites behave. So this is the sort of line of argument.

Alan: But that seems to presuppose that there aren't other groups outside the Friends which are on the ariyan path, saying that the Western Buddhist Order expands and encompasses the whole globe.

S: Well then we have to ask ourselves a question quite honestly and say as far as this country is concerned, well, are there other groups? We have to be quite sort of frank and open about it. Within my personal experience I'd say no, and that was why I started the Friends. I wasn't satisfied with what we had. I was very very dissatisfied, quite unhappy with it or with them.

Alan: But personally I do see an elitist attitude within the Order towards other groups.

S: Elitist in the sense I've described? Of wanting to keep something to oneself?

Alan: I don't know. I feel this. Maybe it's all my projection but I feel there's something unclear. There are other groups coming into the country, other Buddhist groups, and they tend to be sort of...[13]

S: Well no, I think one must be discriminating. One can't deal with groups, one has to deal with individuals. If one finds that one is coming into contact with a committed individual from anywhere else well certainly be in contact with that person, but not with a group as such, and distinguish between individuals and don't be misled by titles, don't be misled by position, which is what usually happens. Just sort of look and see, well, does that person appear committed? Does that person appear to be on the spiritual path? Not just be impressed by all the literature that he's put out in somebody's name, which is what usually happens. And this I think is where we must be so careful - so many times you would have been carried away in a quite unhealthy unskilful way, and this we must avoid. So many people, including many people in the Friends, are quite unable to look at someone and see for themselves with their own eyes what is there. They see only the yellow robe, or they see the red robe or they see the black hat, they read all the wonderful literature, they read all about the miracles that he's worked allegedly, and they see all that. They don't see HIM, so they're not in a position to form any judgement about that person or receive any true impression about that person. So this I think is what we must be so careful of. Just take people as they are. A few years ago in the Friends we suffered quite a lot from this sort of thing. As soon as some guru was announced coming from the East, or some roshi or some lama, everybody would be quite disturbed. 'Well, am I doing the right practice? Maybe I'd better go off and have a go at that.' And in this way they didn't very often get on with their own practice. They developed doubts about it, uncertainty about it. So this certainly isn't a good thing. Now we don't have very much of this. So I think we have to adopt a quite common sense attitude, at the same time a spiritual attitude, and just consider individuals. This is our principle: if we come in contact

with certain individuals that we feel are on the spiritual path as we see that, well sure, we welcome them, we receive, them but not just because they say that they're Buddhists; that just isn't enough any more. If you simply say you are Buddhist that means you've got a group label. This is what it means in the case of most Buddhists coming from the East. They've just got that particular group label. This is what I feel personally nowadays. I don't feel I've got anything in common with someone just because he calls himself Buddhist. I've met so many thousands of people over the last thirty years who call themselves Buddhists with whom I've nothing in common at all. The fact that they call themselves Buddhists is nothing at all to me. They just belong to a Buddhist group or tribe or country or sect but they're not on the spiritual path, they're not trying to follow the spiritual path. They've no idea there's a spiritual path. They've not committed themselves to the spiritual path. They just SAY that they're Buddhists, so why should I have anything to do with them just because they say that they're Buddhists, or why should we have anything to do with them just because they say that they're Buddhists, a Buddhist group, or Buddhist sect or Buddhist school? That's not enough. To be a Buddhist is not enough. You have to follow the spiritual path. I've had so much of this in my time in India, I got so thoroughly fed up with it I just don't compromise any more. If someone comes knocking at my door and says, 'I am a Buddhist,' I'm not going to take him in, I'm going to have to look at him. What sort of man is he? Is he following the spiritual path? Is he an individual? Is he trying to evolve? He can come with all sorts of prizes and certificates and traditions, the abbot of this or the abbot of that - it doesn't mean a thing. I've met many an abbot [14] in my time. (laughter) Otherwise we just become a sort of ethnic religion again. This is what I'm protesting against. Do you see the point?

Alan: But the hardest thing to see in other people and in ourselves is what is the spiritual path. You say there's an ariyan quest and an unariyan quest and it's very simple, but in a sense it's very very difficult to see which is which.

S: It is difficult. I think the only sort of practical thing or practically helpful thing one can say is don't take it for granted that someone is on the spiritual path just because they say that they're Buddhist. At least don't be as simple-minded at that. I mean when I went to the East originally, I was very simple-minded, but I was gradually disillusioned, I hope in a positive sort of way, but the fact that people say that they're Buddhist or the fact that a certain group calls itself a Buddhist group isn't enough. We don't automatically accept them or want anything to do with them just for that reason. On the other hand you might get very good people coming along or you might come into contact with very good people who don't call themselves Buddhist or who might even call themselves something else but whom you can feel, well, they are on the spiritual path, so one must recognize and accept that fact too. For example, if you think there are supposed to be a thousand million people in the world who are Buddhist - that's what the statistics tell us, statistics of religions - that there are a thousand million Buddhists, well we deduct a few because of China, because of Tibet, because of Cambodia, well, say five hundred million Buddhists. Five hundred million Buddhists in the world. If you had five hundred million Buddhists in the world the world would be paradise! It would be the Pure Land! Five hundred million people following the spiritual path! Five hundred million committed people! But this is what we're asked to believe, as it were. So we just have to look more carefully, look more closely. The fact that someone says that he's a Buddhist, or a group calls itself Buddhist, a society calls itself Buddhist, an institution calls itself Buddhist, simply isn't enough. We have really to see whether they are on the same path as ourselves. I mean if they call themselves Buddhist they're in contact with the tradition, but you can be in contact with the tradition in a very external way and just not be a Buddhist at

all. I've had repeated disillusionments in the East, well in the West too come to that, all through my career, people who say that they're Buddhist but don't seem really to be Buddhist at all as I understand the term, so I just refuse to go by labels any longer. I sometimes think it isn't a very good thing that we have to call ourselves Buddhists but I don't see any alternative. We like to acknowledge the fact that we are grateful to the Buddha from whom the whole tradition comes down, and when we say that we're Buddhist, well, that's what we're trying to convey, that we belong to that spiritual tradition which is traceable back to Gotama the Buddha. That's where our inspiration comes from, but in view of some of the people who go around calling themselves Buddhist sometimes I wish I didn't have to call myself a Buddhist because I'm looking at facts and realities and not labels. Otherwise, as I said, we are turning the Dharma, or turning a universal religion to use that term, into an ethnic one and just going by conventional labels and descriptions. I think we can't do that, otherwise we're finished. But this may even appear as elitism, that we think that we're the real Buddhists, well in a sense we do. In relation to some people [15] who call themselves Buddhist anyway. I think we must be quite frank about it and quite blunt about this. There is so much in the East and also in the West of institutional Buddhism, organized Buddhism. It's okay at a certain level but it doesn't really have much to do with spiritual life and individual spiritual development and you can go out to the East and visit all sorts of famous Buddhist institutions and meet all sorts of famous Buddhist people but you're completely out of contact with anything spiritual. It's all ecclesiastical, it's all scholarship, it's all academical, it's all political, it's all tied up with the establishment, it's the sort of Buddhist equivalent of the church of England here and about as inspiring as that in some cases. So we mustn't be misled by that word 'Buddhist'. I think we can very usefully translate into Buddhist terms Kirkegaard's attack on Christendom. I don't know if you know about this? He said - I'll just sort of paraphrase - there's a little work of his called 'Attack on Christendom'. He says in the old days when Christianity started you had Christians and you had non-Christians, and Christians followed a certain way of life and they were a minority and the majority didn't follow a Christian way of life, but he says now things have changed, things have become very much better. Everybody has become Christian. You've not just got this little band of Christians, everybody is Christian, you've got Christian cooks, Christian bankers, Christian politicians, Christian soldiers. Originally Christianity taught non-violence but never mind about that. Things have improved, now we've got Christian soldiers too, Christian politicians. He said Christianity taught chastity but you have Christ and prostitutes now. Never mind; everybody's Christian, the whole country is Christian, the whole nation is Christian, but we must beware of that sort of thing. I don't think Buddhism goes to the extreme that Christianity does in this respect, but the principle is the same. Buddhism's got a history of two thousand five hundred years. It's become as it were the state religion in some countries. It's become established, then it's become the orthodoxy in a rather narrow sense in some cases. In some cases it's become hereditary; you're a monk because your father was a monk, you're a lama because your father was a lama. In Japan they've got hereditary Buddhist archbishops in different sects. Is this really Buddhism? We have to be quite frank about this; that not everything that passes as Buddhism in the Buddhist East is in fact Buddhism in the sense of pertaining to the spiritual path and the spiritual life. So you don't necessarily have spiritual community or spiritual communion with people who call themselves Buddhist. When I was in the East, when I was in India, many a time I very much felt a lack of this among Buddhists. It just wasn't there; the possibility wasn't there; they weren't interested in what I was interested in, they were interested in other things in many cases, though luckily there were a few individuals, very highly developed individuals, who were otherwise - but they were a minority. So this is a bit of a digression, but the point is quite important. So by virtue of the fact that we're following the spiritual path inspired, as it

were, by the Buddha and the whole spiritual tradition that the Buddha inaugurated, and inspired also by the great teachers of that tradition, it doesn't mean that we're part and parcel of the Buddhist world in an ecclesiastical-cum-political sense. If you were to go along to some international gathering of Buddhists you'd find yourself in a completely different world to the Friends, and you might even be a bit horrified. I think (we've got to be) quite clear about this. Do you see what I'm getting at? Otherwise we just gradually cease to be a [16] spiritual movement if we're not mindful of this. We just become a branch of the international ecclesiastical - admittedly Buddhist - establishment. Anyway let's see what sort of description the Buddha gives of the ariyan quest and the unariyan quest.

'And what, monks, is the unariyan quest? As to this, monks, someone, liable to birth because of self, seeks what is likewise liable to birth; being liable to ageing because of self, seeks what is likewise liable to ageing; being liable to decay because of self ... being liable to dying because of self ... being liable to sorrow because of self ... being liable to stain because of self, seeks what is likewise liable to stain.'

So if one wants to summarize this or put this in a nutshell, it's the conditioned in pursuit of the conditioned. If you are conditioned and you go in search of that which, like yourself, is conditioned, that is the unariyan quest. But there's an interesting little phrase here. The Buddha says, 'as to this, monks, someone liable to birth because of self.' So what do you think is meant by that? 'Liable to birth because of self' or 'liable to ageing because of self', 'liable to decay because of self'?

___: Believing in an ego entity.

S: Believing in an ego entity. Yes, that is the root of the whole evil as it were. 'And what, monks, would you say is liable to birth? Sons and wife, monks, are liable to birth, women-slaves and men-slaves ... goats and sheep ... cocks and swine ... elephants, cows, horses ... mares ... gold and silver.' Why do you think the Buddha mentions these things particularly. Why doesn't he mention say the sun and the moon? Why doesn't he mention the mountains and the trees?

Sagaramati: You can't possess them.

S: Yes, he mentions things that you can actually possess or which people like to possess. So the suggestion is that one goes in quest of these things to appropriate them, to gain possession of them, to make them one's own. Again because of self. Where there's an 'I' there will be a 'mine'. So the unariyan quest is the impermanent in pursuit of the impermanent, the conditioned in pursuit of the conditioned, the mortal in pursuit of the mortal. In other words the reactive mind is operating and therefore the wheel is turning over and over again, round and round. So he says what is liable to ageing - the same things. You notice sons comes first. Why do you think that is?

Peter: They were more important in those days.

S: They were more important in those days but why? Why was your son so important?

___: Because it handed down the (unclear)

S: Your son is youth.[17]

___: He supported you in your old age.

S: Also that. Many primitive peoples and the ancient Indians included believed that your son was your self reborn sort of quite literally - a chip off the old block - the continuation of you, and also there was the orthodox Vedic belief than unless you had a son to perform after your death the after-death ceremony you would not go to heaven. So there was a religious reason for having a son. Your salvation virtually dependent upon your having a son to perform those ceremonies. So this is why if your wife was without issue you immediately took another wife so that you could be sure of getting a son.

Padmapani: Wouldn't you say that that still holds. That that is where the unconscious urge might be to (unclear)

S: Well it certainly holds good in India today in orthodox Hindu circles, but even apart from that, yes, maybe one of the reasons why people want children and why men in particular want sons is the continuation of their own existence. In this connection I remember Muhammad Ali was once asked by a reporter, a woman reporter, why he hadn't married a white girl - because he was supposed to be a supporter of anti-racism, an opponent of racism - so the woman reporter asked him, well, in that case why didn't you marry a white girl, why have you married a black girl, so he said quite indignantly, 'I didn't want to marry a white girl. I wanted to have a son who would look like me!' So this is very much as it were the sort of masculine outlook, you could even say the masculine ego - to want to have a son that looks like you, that is like you, that continues you, is an extension of you.

Peter: Saint Francis of Assisi never wanted to have a woman sexually after his conversion, but he always wanted to have sons, he must be a father.

S: This is probably quite a deep-rooted desire in many people, but sort of largely unacknowledged perhaps nowadays. Maybe it is something you don't feel when you're very young, but you start feeling it as you get a bit older. Maybe you become a bit conscious that you are mortal and you'd like to sort of hand on, hand over to your son. It assumes something to hand on, something to hand over doesn't it? People with property or with a very ancient name, very ancient family traditions, are very keen on handing it all on, handing it over to their son. If you haven't got anything then the question doesn't come up does it? So sons and wife, their women slaves and men slaves. All the simple properties of a preindustrial society - goats and sheep, cocks and swine, elephants, cows horses, mares, gold and silver - so all these are conditioned things. So the unariyan quest is man, himself being conditioned, going in quest of all these conditioned things.

'These attachments, monks, are liable to stain; yet this man, enslaved, infatuated, addicted, being liable to stain because of self, seeks what is likewise liable to stain. This, monks, is the unariyan quest.' You notice these very strong terms - enslaved, infatuated, addicted. Do you think there's any slight difference of connotation between these three [18] terms? What does being enslaved to or by conditioned things suggest, that you're enslaved by them?

___: You want them but almost against your will.

S: Yes.

Peter: You don't want them to enslave, you don't want (unclear)

S: They control you. If you are enslaved by them instead of you using them they are using you. You're not the master any more. As when we say 'man is a prisoner of his own property.'

Padmapani: So in actual fact the material objects are all right in themselves.

S: Well, the material objects are neither all right nor not all right. Those terms just don't apply to them at all. The material objects are there; you can use them wisely, you can use them unwisely, or you can use them not at all.

Padmapani: It's what gets stuck on to it, attached to it.

S: It's like the saying about drinking. First of all the man has a drink. Then the drink has the man and the drink has a drink. (laughter) So the drink becomes the master. The three stages, three steps. So 'enslaved', then 'infatuated'; what does that suggest? When you're infatuated with something.

___: Intoxicated.

S: Intoxicated. It suggests that. What is intoxicated? What happens when you are intoxicated?

Peter: You lose your reason.

S: You lose your reason. Infatuation suggests something a bit different though. It's the same word actually in Pali: majja. Infatuated also suggests a great overvaluation of the object. You think far too highly of the object, far more highly than is required. Like when you're infatuated with a person, you overvalue that person; that person becomes everything as it were. 'Addicted'. What does addicted suggest?

Peter: You can't do without it.

S: You can't do without it. It's become a bad habit. So enslaved, infatuated, addicted; very strong expressions. So for someone who is himself mortal to go in pursuit of material things which are also mortal, and to be enslaved by those material things, to be infatuated [19] by them, addicted to them. This is the unariyan quest, this is the unariyan life, the ignoble life, and this is one alternative.

Sagaramati: Why did he just stop at five then? These terms could be applied to all sorts of mental objects.

S: I think the society in which the Buddha was operating, certainly the monks that he was addressing, were relatively unsophisticated. Material attachments were there but mental attachments were, as it were, beyond their experience. You do find this with quite simple people, especially those living in the country. The attachments are so sort of solidly on to the material things [that] once they've got over that they are unattached. They're not attached to opinions and ideas and so on in the way that more sort of intellectually sophisticated sort of

people are. Have you noticed that?

___: That comes out with centres like Cornwall. Only to a very slight degree - people who come along there. To a degree they've got over their family which seems to be the big thing down there but they don't seem too concerned about other ideas and things.

S: Also the fact is that in the Buddha's time these things very much made up your life. You were very much into those things. There was not much in the way of learning or culture or education or entertainment or distraction. There you were, at home with your sons, your wife or wives, your cattle, your homestead, your horses and dogs and sheep and whatnot. So once you were able to give all those things up, well, your mind was virtually clean. Maybe some vestiges of attachment that you had to get over, especially when you started meditating, but otherwise once you've gone forth and left it behind you've wiped the slate pretty clean.

Padmapani: It implies that when it says: either talk about the Dharma or remain in the ariyan silence. If one is in the second dhyana there would be no discursive thought anyway.

S: Yes, you wouldn't even be thinking about those things.

Sagaramati: Surely people would have (unclear). There must have been some urge (unclear).

S: Well, sure, there was the Brahminical tradition, but even in the case of the Brahmin it's as though if something is more definite and concrete it's more easy to give it up. In a way when we read about the Kassapa brothers throwing their Brahminical ritual implements into the river and cutting off their long braided locks and throwing them also into the river. Throwing their pots and pans into the river, throwing their sacrificial vessels into the river. So when things are present in this very sort of concrete, definite form in a way it's more easy to give them all up.

Padmapani: Isn't it also pointed to that they were far more positive emotionally than what people in the West are.[20]

S: I think so.

Padmapani: Presumably if you are like that you can probably give those things up really.

S: Yes. I think not exactly more emotional, but their emotions sort of flowed more freely and as it were more outwardly expressed, more objectified. If you wanted sons you had sons, if you wanted a wife or wives you had a wife or wives. If you wanted ten wives you had ten wives. If you wanted a hundred cows you had a hundred cows. There it all was before you, as it were, all very tangible. It wasn't even money in the bank. It was these very concrete material things. There your attachments were. You could see your attachments as it were in front of you. We, I think, have got much more subtle attachments, but later on in India, during the Mahayana period of course, more subtle attachments did develop, more subtle views, so Buddhist philosophy as we call it developed to counteract all that. But it seems that very often in the Buddha's day people were so simple-minded in a very positive and healthy sense that he did not need to go very deeply into very subtle, or what we would regard as philosophical, matters.

Graham: I wonder if that could be applied in this day and age with this attachment to material goods, whether it couldn't happen again in the West in that way.

S: I think if you've extricated yourself from a materialistic existence you've taken quite a big step. But I think apart from that, or in addition to that, I'm sure there are some people in the West even who are simple-minded in that original sort of sense. I've certainly met a few in the States, quite unsophisticated, simple people who don't sort of think or argue much and just take things very directly and act upon them quite promptly. Even in England you do meet such people.

Sagaramati: If you meet people like that should you encourage them to think?

S: No you shouldn't. If they're not into reading don't suggest that they read. It doesn't matter, they don't need it. All they need is a few simple practices, positive company, spiritual fellowship, and they're made, they're away. You don't need to bother them with other things, don't even need to bother them with the Abhidharma, they'll get on all right without it. (laughter) The Abhidharma did develop later on when monks had become very sophisticated and had very subtle minds and were asking all sorts of awkward questions, and they had all the tradition in front of them as it were: 'The Buddha said this on such and such occasion, and that on such and such occasion, and on another occasion he said something else. Now those three things don't quite fit, so we shall have a theory that will make them fit - there must be an explanation that will do justice to them all.' In this way the Abhidharma started it seems. This is one aspect of the Abhidharma at least: 'Here the Buddha said there were three of such and such, but there he said there were five of such and such. How do you reconcile this?' In that way they developed their subtle intelligence [21] system. The whole vast Abhidharma eventually evolved, so many scores of abstruse volumes, which as a commentator says are a feast of delight to the learned. (laughter) A very tough nut for others to crack.

All right, let's go on. So the Buddha has made it very clear what is this unariyan quest, the Ariyapariyesana: it's the mortal going in search of the mortal, the mortal in pursuit of the mortal, the perishable in pursuit of the perishable, not only in pursuit of it but becoming enslaved by it, infatuated by it and addicted to it. But then he says, 'And what, monks, is the ariyan quest? As to this, monks, someone, being liable to birth because of self, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to birth, seeks the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana; being liable to ageing because of self, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to ageing, seeks the unageing, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana...' and so on.

So the ariyan quest is the mortal in search of the immortal, the conditioned in pursuit of the unconditioned, the born in pursuit of the unborn and so on.

___: Does that imply the first noble truth? Through suffering one may...

S: In a sense it does, because it's implied in the words 'being liable to birth because of self, having known the peril of what is likewise liable to birth'. So what is this peril, this danger, fear? So why should that danger or fear arise? Why should there be peril in something which is liable to birth?

___: Because it's liable to death.

S: Because it's liable to death. You can't keep it for ever. So if you depend upon it as something fixed and stable and permanent, then you are in peril, you are in danger. And you notice the epithets for the unconditioned - 'the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds', anuttarayogakema, nibbana. It's the undying, also anutta. So the Buddha places before the monks in this very radical form these two divergent paths. In the first case there is the mortal in pursuit of the mortal. In the second the mortal in pursuit of the immortal. In the first the conditioned in pursuit of the conditioned, in the second the conditioned in pursuit of the unconditioned. Does this sort of way of looking at things seem very real to us nowadays or is there any other better, more accessible or more intelligible way that we could put it? Or does this suffice?

Sagaramati: I think it suffices if you are used to these terms...

S: If not, supposing you were trying to put this sort of point of view, or these alternatives, across to someone who was relatively new and didn't know anything about Buddhism, or thought in more secular terms. What would one say?

Sagaramati: Talk about happiness.

S: Could one put it in terms of happiness? In other words the unariyan quest is going in search of things which will give you a certain amount of pleasure [22] but no real happiness, mainly on account of their transitory nature, and the noble quest is going in quest of those things which will give you real and lasting happiness. One could put it in that way. How would one then describe those two quests?

___: The blindly acceptable and the actual.

S: Or you could contrast the search for pleasure with the quest for happiness, but do you think people are actually looking for happiness?

Sagaramati: Security.

S: Do people ever come along to any centre and say well I'm looking for happiness? They don't actually. Sometimes they come along looking for peace of mind. I think most people don't dare to hope for happiness nowadays. They'd be quite satisfied to get a degree of peace of mind through meditation. Also I think in the minds of most people there isn't any residue of a tradition to the effect that there is an absolute, there is an unconditioned, there is something beyond. (unclear) as it were positive nature of its own towards which your efforts can be or could be directed. Most people don't have that sort of idea, do they? Or they may have it in just a crudely theistic form which doesn't help them, which they've probably discarded. You wouldn't speak in terms of either of going in search of the world, the flesh, and the devil or else going in search of god. You wouldn't speak in those terms would you? In the gospels of course Christ speaks in terms of the love of the world and the love of god - there is a sort of parallel, leaving aside the theistic element. This whole sort of antithesis, the worldly and the spiritual, the mundane and the transcendental, conditioned and unconditioned, is quite foreign to people's usual way of thinking, isn't it? So how is one going to put this across, that there are two ways?

Padmapani: Maybe one could put it across that one was following a heroic path or quest. A

bit like the holy grail in Christian terms.

S: So what would you put in place of the holy grail? What would be your symbol and your concept? What are you going in quest of?

___: Freedom?

S: Yes, one could put the antithesis in terms of bondage and freedom and raise the question of what is real freedom, what is bondage?

Graham: Freedom is doing maybe what you always wanted to do in a positive sense.

S: One can of course put the matter in quite other terms as I've done sometimes in the past: developing either the reactive mind or the creative mind. But there's no object here, you see? It's just two different kinds of process. Could one speak of an object of the reactive mind or an object of the creative mind? Could one do that? Or is it [23] necessary to do that?

Sagaramati: I don't think it is.

S: No, I don't think it is. One can put the alternatives before people in that way. You can either develop your reactive mind or your creative mind. You can either react or you can respond creatively. In the first case you're just going round and round in the old cycle and never make any progress, never achieve happiness. In the other you'll go up the ascending rings of the spiral, you'll feel more and more creative, your energies will be liberated, and you'll feel more and more happy. People perhaps won't inquire where does that lead us; they'll be quite happy and quite content with the process itself probably, which is again quite Buddhistic because it isn't necessary to posit a sort of finite goal out there. The process, you can say, continues indefinitely, you can go up and up - a new nirvana every day.

Padmapani: Could you reconcile these two, the heroic path and the creative path because there is a parallel with the hero but somehow it doesn't seem synonymous with the hero being necessarily creative. I can't sort of see that.

S: But then what is a hero? You think of a hero as conquering rather than producing, don't you?

Padmapani: I see a hero as setting out, questing.

S: Well, in creating you set out, you start out, with your raw material and you gradually mould it into shape. Very often the material is your own mind. (laughter) No, you're moulding, not hacking - shaping, not cutting. But in whatsoever terms we present them it is important to present to people these two alternatives and to point out the possibility, even the necessity, of choice. Otherwise there is in fact no progress at all. There's no movement, no movement forward. It's not even a question of a choice now at this particular point in time and then you've made your choice and that's that. A choice confronts you every minute of the day and this is one of the reasons why I think the antithesis of reactive mind and creative mind is quite useful, because you can say that at every instant of the day certain experiences are (?) you. You find yourself in certain situation; you can either react or you can respond creatively. That choice is before you all the time. Someone says something to you, something

displeasing, something harsh; you can either react or you can respond creatively or you encounter a disappointment. You want to go out for a walk and it starts raining; you can either allow yourself to feel irritated and annoyed and then upset and depressed or you can say, 'oh, never mind, it's raining, I'll just take the opportunity of having a read, it's just as good if not better than going for a walk.' That's the creative response, So every moment with regard to every experience, every situation, these two possibilities disclose themselves and you have, as it were, a choice to make. But if you have to put it in terms of 'Should I go in quest of the mortal [24] or should I go in quest of the immortal in this situation?' it doesn't quite fit perhaps. It seems a bit more artificial. It's all right for life as a whole, it gives you a whole sort of orientation, but you can't quite apply it in the same way I think from day to day and from instance to instance.

All right then, the Buddha goes on, having described these two quests, the ariyan and the unariyan: 'And I too, monks, before awakening, while I was still the bodhisatta, not fully awakened.' The Buddha is using 'bodhisatta' in the original sense, that is, one bent upon bodhi, one who was still questing for the immortal and the unconditioned. '...being liable to birth because of self, sought what was likewise liable to birth; being liable to ageing because of self...' etc. So the Buddha makes it clear that to begin with he was no better than anybody else. He was an ordinary man, an average man, in this respect. But he being mortal went in pursuit of those things which were mortal. That he too tended to become enslaved, infatuated, and addicted. 'Then it occurred to me, monks: 'Why do I, liable to birth because of self, seek what is likewise liable to birth?' etc. 'Suppose that I, although being liable to birth because of self, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to birth, should seek the unborn, the uttermost security from bonds - nibbana?' So how does that thought arise? That's the very, very interesting point. He simply says, 'then it occurred to me'. So why do you think this thought occurs to anybody? The Buddha represents it in this particular text as occurring quite spontaneously, as it were. There's no mention of the four sights, which apparently don't really belong to the historical life of the Buddha. Why does this thought arise, 'suppose that I being liable to birth because of self,... etc... should seek the unborn'?

___: A flash of insight.

S: But why this flash of insight?

Padmapani: Because it's in the nature of ultimate reality that you will have those conditions in the samsaric conditions.

S: You mean in a sense of that potential is there?

Padmapani: Yes, I mean it will come from that condition.

S: In what way?

Padmapani: Well the conditions will arise in relationship with... (unclear)

S: But there you are, or there the Buddha was, with his son, his wife, his parents, singing girls, and dancing girls, we are told in other texts, his palace or his mansion at least, his social position, his wealth, his expectations. There he was a mortal in pursuit of the mortal, but suddenly, one day, he thinks, 'Why should I not go in pursuit of the immortal?' So how does

this come about?

___: (unclear) anybody who has all this (mortal) stuff, as much as possible[25]

S: He's not experienced any satisfaction in it. There's that also.

Sagaramati: You have to really experience what we would call the conditioned?... (unclear)

S: Well of course you are experiencing the conditioned all the time.

Sagaramati:... (unclear)...

S: You could even say that if you really see the conditioned as conditioned, you begin to see the unconditioned. The unconditioned isn't, despite the Buddha's language here, isn't a thing apart from, or separate from, the conditioned. If you see the conditioned, to that extent or to the extent that you see, that is the unconditioned. So the Buddha says, 'Why do I, liable to birth because of self, seek what is likewise liable to birth?' He actually saw the situation in which he was. He saw what he was in fact doing that here am I a mortal in pursuit of mortal things, 'Here am I, a conditioned being, in pursuit of other conditioned beings and conditioned things.' Usually, people don't see that do they?

Padmapani: He was sort of mindful of that.,

S: He became aware of his situation. He became aware of what he was doing. In a way he became aware of the foolishness of it, the ridiculousness of it. You could say that.

Padmapani: There's also this point that he had also become creative.

S: You cease to be slave of the situation. In a way you're stepping aside from it. You're stepping back from it. You're looking at it. So you're beginning to disentangle yourself, you're beginning to be free from it, free of it. Usually, we may say, people don't realize - or we don't realize - the situation in which we are, and our awakening begins when we see the situation in which we are. We see what is actually happening. It's like the man who wakes up in the morning and says, well, 'Good god! Here I am; I'm thirty five years of age and what have I done with my life? I've done absolutely nothing. In the last ten years I've done the same thing year after year after year. I've just not got anywhere at all.' He wakes up and feels like that one morning maybe. He realizes his position. So if you realize your position, well, almost spontaneously - I was going to say automatically - you are going to do something about it. So if you wake up to the fact that, well, look, I'm the conditioned in pursuit of the conditioned, I'm the unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable, (laughter) you wake up to the sort of ridiculousness of it or even to the horror of it. You just can't go on like that any more. So the instant that you see your conditionedness you have a sort of glimpse of your unconditionedness. So to see yourself as the conditioned in pursuit of the conditioned is already to start in pursuit of the unconditioned.

Padmapani: Wasn't the first question you asked, 'Why does that arise?'[26]

S: Yes. I've answered it now.

Padmapani: I don't get that.

S: What I'm saying is when you wake up to the fact that you are conditioned and are, or have been, in pursuit of the conditioned - when you step back from that, when you see that situation, then already you are in pursuit of the unconditioned.

Padmapani: What wakes you up?

S: It can be satiation: the fact that you've steeped yourself in these things, they've not given you satisfaction, you want something more. Or it can be in Mahayanistic terms, that within you there is this element or reflection of the unconditioned which will never be satisfied with the conditioned, and when you've had enough of the conditioned or when you've had a particularly unpleasant experience of the conditioned you wake up to the truth of your situation. Then that element, or that reflection, whatever you like to call it, starts coming into play, starts as it were asserting itself.

Padmapani: Could one say - on a Mahayanistic outlook again - that this thing of heaping up merit, couldn't merit be heaped up in a situation? Conditions will arise where you could break through into the situation like that? Would you say that was so?

S: Yes. Probably, or at least, the heaping up of merit would help. If for instance you've been kind, generous, helpful and that had conduced to a certain purity and clarity of mind, surely - yes - that would play its part in due course.

Padmapani: I was just wondering if that could be one of the primary causes for the awakening of that...

S: It can certainly be a contributory cause but not I think the primary cause. The primary cause is the fact that you see your situation as it really is. You see yourself as you really are. The fact that you can see also means that you can do something about it. Your seeing as it were is the passive side, your doing something about it is the active side. And what can you do if you see you are the conditioned in pursuit of the conditioned? And you're seeing it so clearly you can't do that any more but at the same time there is an active counterpart of your seeing. You've got to do something. You can only go from the conditioned to the unconditioned then. I'm putting it in a sort of chemically pure form, the process, but it may be very mixed, not to say muddy, and it may be extended over a period of some years even. Sometimes it happens just like that on the spot.

Padmapani: Right. You could be enlightened if you woke up to the fact and it gave you such a jolt.

S: Well this has sometimes happened. So you see your situation. You see it so clearly [27] that you cannot but do something about it. So the Buddha in this case saw that he was a conditioned being in pursuit of the conditioned and it seemed so absurd, so ridiculous, in a manner of speaking, because different people see an experience in different ways. It might be just so amusing, so laughable, like some of the Zen masters: we're told that when they become enlightened they let out a great laugh. They say, 'Well, how ridiculous, how foolish I was, how stupid, how silly. What a great big joke. I was looking for (unclear) but I had it within me all the time, ha ha ha.' (laughter) He's roaring with laughter about it, at his own

foolishness, his absurdity. So this sort of clear seeing of where you are at, what your position is, what you're really doing, is very very important, and most of the time we don't know what we're doing. This is of course the infatuation, the intoxication - you don't know what you are doing, and very often this is so. We don't know what we're doing, we don't know what we're doing with our lives, we don't know what we're doing with other people. We get involved, say, with other people, we don't know what effect we're having on them, what effect it's having on us. We just don't know, we're quite blind to it. And one day we might wake up to the fact that we're doing tremendous harm to somebody else, or we're doing tremendous harm to ourselves. Or with regard to our work: 'Why am I doing this foolish repetitive tiresome, boring work for a miserable pittance every week, every month? Why?' We may wake up: 'How absurd! What sort of way of using a human life is this?' We wake up to that fact of some wretched, intolerable situation we've been putting up with for years. You say, 'Why should I put up with it any longer?' because you see the situation so clearly, it seems so absurd, so unnecessary, so foolish, so ridiculous. We just walk out; we can't do anything else. So this seems to be what happened in the Buddha's case. He woke up to what was really happening. Here was he, someone mortal who is going to die one day, who is going to get old, who is going to get sick, and he is spending his whole time running after other things of a similar nature. How ridiculous. He saw this very clearly. Then, of course, the thought arises, or the consciousness of the process arises: 'Suppose that I being liable to birth because of self, etc., should seek the unborn.' But I don't think we must look at this as a sort of thing that the Buddha worked out rationally. It's presented like that but I don't think it could have happened like that. It's much more spontaneous, much more immediate, much more urgent, even though it might have been spread over quite a long period of time. So if you really see your situation you will do something about it, and the doing something about it will be the more active, the more dynamic, aspect of the actual seeing itself. Also when you see somebody is really in need you will do something about it if you really see that person's need. You will want to relieve it. The seeing will have that galvanizing effect upon you. So the first thing is to wake up to what you actually are doing.

Padmapani: So in a way, following the Mahayanistic again, if one woke up to the situation and saw somebody suffering one would be, in a way, doing one of the perfections of the bodhisattvas.

S: Yes and no. I mean there are different levels of practice. There's as it were the [28] ego-based practice, the Dharma-based practice, and the sunyata-based practice of all the perfections. We won't go into that now, that carries us quite a bit beyond this particular text.

Right then. What does the Buddha say? Then the Buddha goes on to say, 'Then I, monks, after a time,' we're not told exactly how long, 'being young, my hair coal-black, possessed of radiant youth, in the prime of my life - although my unwilling parents wept and wailed - having cut off my hair and beard, having put on yellow robes, went forth from home into homelessness.' This is quite interesting. It's usually considered that the Buddha left home at the age of twenty-nine but this particular passage, this particular text, suggests he was younger than that. We saw some texts in the Sutta Nipata which also suggested that the Buddha was younger than that when he left home. So here the Buddha clearly says, 'being young, my hair coal-black, possessed of radiant youth, in the prime of my life,' [which] suggests he was a little younger than twenty-nine, especially Indian. You wouldn't normally describe an Indian, even an ancient Indian, as being in the prime of his life and possessed of radiant youth at twenty-nine, it sounds more like nineteen or twenty doesn't it?

___: Even younger perhaps.

S: Even younger perhaps. More like a sixteen-year-old bodhisattva. 'Although my unwilling parents wept and wailed.' What's noticeable about this?

Peter: No wife.

S: No wife. No doubt there was, but from the Indian view it was the parents that were important. You left home, you left the parental roof - to which of course you'd brought your wife at the time of marriage. So leaving home meant leaving parents even more than leaving wife. You notice the Buddha says 'parents' - presumably it's his foster mother and his father. 'Having cut off my hair and beard, having put on yellow robes, went forth from home into homelessness.' Why did he cut off hair and beard and put on yellow robes?

___: That was the traditional bhikkhu thing to do.

S: Well, there were no bhikkhus in the Buddhist sense in those days, but the wanderers. They distinguished themselves by this sort of dress. Why do you think they did that?

___: To lose his identity, his personality, his ego.

S: Some of course went about naked without any robes of any kind. The Buddha did himself at a later stage, according to another sutta. It's interesting. I was reading yesterday, of all people, Herbert Spencer, and he'd got an essay on dress and manners in about the 1860s. He points out that if you were to go, as in his day, to what we would nowadays call a progressive political meeting, you'd find people in all sorts of strange costumes. He gives quite an amusing description and he especially refers to them at the [29] end of the meeting reaching for their felt hats instead of their black top hats, and he describes the various ways in which these people are dressed. And the point he makes is that all the sort of radical and progressive people tend to dress differently from others. And then he asks why. Spencer has this very inquiring mind. So he says that people who think differently tend to act and behave differently in other spheres too, that they don't only protest against accepted ideas but accepted conventions of every kind, including the conventions of dress. So perhaps you could look at the wanderers in that way. It wasn't robes that they were wearing - get that idea right out of your mind - they didn't put on yellow robes. The whole idea about a robe is completely foreign to this sort of context. They adopted unconventional dress, by which it was known that they were following an unconventional way of life, i.e. the way of life of the samana. The nearest equivalent in modern times is sort of hippie gear. You recognize from the gear that that particular person is leading an unconventional life, at least allegedly. (laughter) For some it means a good allowance from mum and dad, but anyway the idea is the same. The unconventional garb proclaims the unconventional life, the unconventional outlook, so it's just like that with the yellow robe that he puts on. And now I'm a wanderer, I've left home. That's what it means. I'm subsisting on alms, please give me food when I turn up at your door. It's not a robe with all the sort of ecclesiastical connotations of that. Do you see that point?

Pat: In a book called 'The Many Ways of Being' there's a few pages on the Friends and that's one of the things that they mention - dress and hair.

S: What do they say about it?

Pat: They say that people in the Friends tend to have longer hair and dress more scruffily - I think it says - than people in the Buddhist Society. More respectable Buddhists.

S: We're not respectable Buddhists. (laughter) That's quite true. (laughter) I mean Mr Christmas Humphreys used to say in the old days that it was his aim and object in life to make Buddhism respectable in England. So I sometimes used to say that it was my aim and object to make it not respectable. (laughter) You see how careful you must be.

___: In a way he's succeeded though.

S: In a way he's succeeded. Well in a way I've succeeded too. (laughter) He's succeeded only too well in some cases, in certain spheres. So we mustn't think of the Buddha as becoming a monk in the modern sense. Do you see this? He left the conventional life for the unconventional life, though the unconventional life had in a way become a sort of convention in a sense. It's rather as though the hippies had all been accepted. People might not have been very happy with them and be very pleased to support them and look after them and put them up overnight and give them food and money and send them on their way, which usually they weren't willing to do - though a few people were. A few people were [30] sympathetic. Now of course the hippies have disappeared. Where are the hippies of yesteryear? They've all faded away, they're like the snow in summer. Where are they all, Do we see them around any more?

___: They've got married.

___: ... (unclear)... wandering around in a three-piece suit.

S: Is that really so?

Padmapani: Some of them are Order members. (laughter) I'm not going to tell you which ones though.

S: I know anyway. (laughter) I remember seeing them in their long hair and beads and whatnot. We used to have them coming along to Sakura, not only present Order members in some cases but lots of others who didn't stay with us, and some of them wore strings upon strings of beads and had very long hair right down their backs and all sorts of bows and fancy gear, embroidery and all sorts of things. You just don't see them any, more. It was all rather colourful in those days years and years ago. I remember Devaraja - he was a bit hippie-like, and Padmaraja was too. Padmaraja had beautiful (type) hair. (laughter) I don't remember if he had any beads or bangles. But fashions change. It is really amazing.

Padmapani: He's still a padma.

S: He's still a raja. But as I said one must be very careful not to think of the use of the yellow dress as robes. It's translated yellow robes. What sort of suggestion, what sort of connotation, does 'robes' convey?

___: Building some kind of established set-up.

S: Yes. You've got judges robes, you've got barristers' robes, you've got coronation robes, you've got bishops' robes, archbishops' robes. You've got all this. So we have to be so careful,

we've already encountered 'monastery' and we've encountered 'monk', I think, then there's 'robes' and these all convey a completely sort of false impression. There's nothing religious here, nothing religious in the modern Western sense or Christian sense. This is what we must understand. It's a young man leaving home because he's got fed up with home life and finds it very stuffy and confined, and just going out as a wanderer and leading a free, open air sort of life, going from place to place and being looked after by people and thinking in terms of what Balzac calls the quest of the absolute.

Anyway, perhaps we'd better leave it there, but any more general question on the text as we've studied it so far? Do you get any sort of definite impressions or [31] a clear picture of anything?

___: It seems a lot simpler in those times. There wasn't so much sort of complexity.

S: You could also leave. You couldn't be traced. I remember hearing something on the radio some years ago that really shocked me. There was a Salvation Army captain or someone being interviewed and giving a description of the work he did, and his particular work, his particular job, was tracing missing husbands. (laughter) And he said, 'There are thousands of them leave home every year. It's really shocking. They just walk out. They leave their wife and the kids and they go away. But we get most of them. (laughter) We track them down.' In fact the Salvation Army runs a vast agency to rack down missing husbands who...

___: ... track down the Buddha.

S: Yes, right. There was nothing of that sort in those days. No doubt one shouldn't just sort of (retire) from one's true responsibilities and all that but sometimes one feels that it is all a bit too much and you have just got to leave. You've just got to go forth. If you merely go from wife number one to wife number two that's a different matter. That's from the conditioned to the doubly conditioned. It has to be from the conditioned to the unconditioned. But, yes, certainly things seem to have been very much simpler in those days. Everything was reduced, as it were, to the essentials. When you went forth you went forth. You didn't just take a little trip and then come back two days later. You went forth for good. You never came back, not to the old terms anyway.

___: You couldn't really, could you?

S: You couldn't. That's a very interesting point because the Hindu tradition - and I think here it's got, in some ways, the edge over Buddhist tradition - the Hindu tradition, as I've mentioned before, the orthodox tradition that when you go forth finally as a sanyassin you perform your own funeral ceremony. Have you heard me talking about this? I talked about it in a lecture. You know, there is a Hindu cremation ceremony and usually your eldest son takes the lead and sets fire to the funeral pyre. Well, there is a version of this which you perform as a sanyassin and you yourself, as it were, cremate yourself and you throw into the fire your insignia of caste, even your sacred thread and your crown lock. You cast it all into the fire, and your lay dress, and you're considered civilly dead. Under Hindu religious law someone who has become a sadhu, a sanyassin that is, and has performed this ceremony is dead. Even if he comes back he cannot inherit, he cannot share in the property, etc., etc. He just doesn't exist civilly. He is civilly dead.

Peter: So you couldn't bring that person to court.

S: No you couldn't. Public opinion would frown upon anyone assaulting a sanyassin but strictly speaking he wouldn't have any recourse to the courts. Even in the case of Buddhist [32] monks it is the custom or tradition or even the rule that a Buddhist monk does not go to law, because that would mean getting other people into trouble. Strictly speaking, and some bhikkhus observe this, a Buddhist monk shouldn't bear witness in a court case, in case that is the means of somebody being injured in some way or another. Even if it is what the law calls punishment, strictly speaking the bhikkhu is not supposed to bear witness.

___: How does Christmas Humphreys get out of that one?

S: I don't know. I've never tried to discuss it with him. You'd need a pretty good wriggle to get out of that one anyway, on anybody's part. He might just say he's not a bhikkhu, though he does also say - I've heard him say this - that he wears the yellow robe within. But I think one has to be very careful about that sort of statement whoever one is. I must say I personally rather like the Hindu tradition of performing your own cremation ceremony and this ceasing to exist as far as the world is concerned, and the Hindu world recognizes that. You often hear this among ordinary Hindu people. They say, 'Oh. you're a monk, you're a sadhu, these sort of rules don't apply to you,' and they really do act upon that very often, the Hindus, even very orthodox Hindus. They just don't apply the rules of caste or untouchability to those who have, in their tradition, gone forth, or even to others like Buddhist monks. I myself experienced this a few times even in the case of quite orthodox brahmins in South India who knew quite well I was a European and therefore a (unclear) in their eyes, but they said never mind you've become a (unclear), these restrictions don't apply to you any more.

[break in recording]

S: So when we study texts like this, when we read about the Buddha going forth and cutting hair and beard and putting on yellow dress, we're in a very different world from the world of modern, as it were, ecclesiastical established Buddhism, with someone becoming a monk with all that that nowadays implies. This is something that I feel quite strongly about: that we just must be a spiritual movement if necessary, looking directly to the Buddha for inspiration and guidance, especially relying upon these more ancient texts rather than getting involved with the Buddhist world in a more organized sense. In fact I sometimes even go to the extreme of saying the less we have to do with other Buddhist groups the better, but from this sort of point of view, otherwise a sort of pressure is brought on us to conform, and this is not anything that we want. In the States, for instance, there are Buddhist groups that call themselves churches, the Buddhist church of this and the Buddhist church of that, and they've got ministers and so on, and we just don't want anything to do with all that. (pause) It reminds me of what a friend of mine in India used to say sometimes, he used to say, 'My aim is not to become a Buddhist, my aim is to become a Buddha.' Anyway perhaps we should leave it there.

[next session]

S: All right, bottom of page 207. The second sentence. We've seen how the Buddha while he was still the bodhisattva went forth while still young, and despite the protest of his parents went forth from home into homelessness. [33] Then he says, 'I, being gone forth thus, a

questor for whatever is good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path to peace, approached Alara the Kalama; having approached I spoke thus to Alara the Kalama: 'I, reverend Kalama, want to fare the Brahma-faring in this dhamma and discipline'.' In this particular passage just in the course of this sentence, there are several, as it were, technical terms, that is to say terms which were in use at the time of the Buddha which the Buddha also used and to which he gave his own special meaning, at least to some extent. One of those terms is the Brahma-faring - brahmacarya - and the other is Dhammavinaya - Dharma and discipline. What do you think brahmacarya means? Have you got any idea about the meaning of this term? It's translated here Brahma-faring. What is brahma? What does brahma mean? It's a very common term in Pali.

___: Spirit?

S: In a way, yes, it's the Spirit with a capital S, almost like the great spirit of the American Indians. But the word also has a broader meaning, a wider meaning. It means sublime, noble, eminent; and carya means walking, faring, practising, living. So the brahmacarya if we want to translate it in the most general sort of way - and even in the most accurate sort of way - the brahmacarya is really the spiritual life. Sometimes it's rendered into English as the holy life, sometimes it's the godly life - which isn't quite the same, and sometimes as the Brahma-faring. So it's the whole course of the spiritual life, the higher life, the life which is oriented towards a higher spiritual goal. And this was a term very much in use in the Buddha's day which the Buddha himself adopted. Sometimes it was held that by living the brahmacarya, the spiritual life, you attained in this life itself and after death to the world of Brahma, the world of the spirit, but from a later Buddhist point of view this wasn't enough. One had to go even beyond that. The spirit was still within the limits of the samsara, one had to go beyond, even to nirvana, to the purely transcendental. So sometimes the brahmacarya, as it were, loses its original meaning and takes on this extended meaning, this newer meaning, not just the living of the spiritual life up to and including the attainment of the realm of Brahma but up to and including the realization of nirvana. This is why, for instance, when the Buddha addressed his first sixty disciples, he said go and proclaim the brahmacarya, the spiritual life, the holy life, in this second, as it were more distinctly Buddhistic, sense. But at this stage the Buddha or the bodhisattva is using the term brahmacarya in its more original sense, simply as the spiritual life. 'In this dhamma and discipline' - again two terms we get later on in what became Buddhism - the dhamma and the vinaya, dhamma meaning the spiritual principle and the discipline, the vinaya meaning application in life. Later on, vinaya came to mean the monastic law, as it were, the rules governing the life of the monk; but this early stage it simply meant the whole practical side of the spiritual life. So the Buddha approaches Alara the Kalama, who already is a distinguished teacher, and he says 'I want to live the spiritual life in the principle or according to the principles and practice taught by you.' In other words 'I want to become your disciple.'

'This said, monks, Alara the Kalama spoke thus to me: 'Let the venerable one proceed." In Pali the word is viharatu. It also means dwell. It could also mean let [34] him stay here, let the venerable one reside here. 'This dhamma is such that an intelligent man, having soon realized super-knowledge for himself, as learned from his own teacher, may enter on and abide in it. So I, monks, very soon, very quickly, mastered that dhamma. I, monks, as far as mere lip service, mere repetition were concerned, spoke the doctrine of knowledge, and the doctrine of the elders, and I claimed - I as well as others - that 'I know, I see." So [of] what does this consist, that the bodhisattva has at this stage?

___: Theoretical knowledge.

S: Theoretical knowledge. And he says as far as mere lip-service, mere repetitions were concerned spoke the doctrine of knowledge. Presumably Alara the Kalama had embodied his particular teaching, his particular Dhamma vinaya, in a series of verses or aphorisms or points - numbered points - and these the disciples learned by heart and recited and chanted together very much as the Buddhist monks did later on in respect to the Buddha's own teaching. This was a common practice because there were no books. So the Buddha learned the teaching, learned the Dhamma and the vinaya of Alara Kalama in this way. He mastered these verses, mastered these summaries, mastered the words, understood them, attained to a theoretical knowledge, he as well as others: apparently there were other disciples there too. 'Then it occurred to me, monks: But Alara the Kalama does not merely proclaim this dhamma simply out of faith: having realized super-knowledge for myself, entering on it, I am abiding therein. For surely Alara the Kalama proceeds knowing, seeing this dhamma. Then did I, monks, approach Alara the Kalama; having approached, I spoke thus to Alara the Kalama: 'To what extent do you, reverend Kalama, having realized super-knowledge for yourself, entering thereon, proclaim this dhamma?' When this had been said, monks, Alara the Kalama proclaimed the plane of no-thing. Then it occurred to me, monks: 'It is not only Alara the Kalama who has faith; I too have faith.' and so on. So what becomes clear from this? That the Buddha approached Alara Kalama and he asked him whether he had an actual realization of the dhamma and vinaya that he had set forth, and Alara the Kalama apparently said yes, he has a realization of it, he has experienced it, and he set forth the plane of no-thing, he proclaimed the plane of no-thing. Do you know what this is? Have you come across this before? This is the third of the four higher dhyanas. You know about the four lower dhyanas presumably, the four that are illustrated by the four similes of the soap powder and the water and so on. Then there's another set, a second set of four, which are called the arupa dhyanas - the formless states of superconsciousness. The first is the realization or experience of infinite space, then of infinite consciousness, and thirdly experience of a sphere or a state of which one cannot say it's this or that. One can't even say that there is anything there. It's the state or sphere of nothing in particular, or no-thing, no particular thing, and Alara Kalama claims to have reached up to and to have realized this state. This is as far as his teaching goes. From the standpoint of the Buddha after his enlightenment this of course wasn't nearly far enough, as we shall see in a few minutes. Even the bodhisattva wasn't satisfied with these; it didn't go nearly far enough. It was a very noble state, a very elevated state, a very sublime state, but it was still within the samsara, still within the wheel of birth [35] and death and rebirth. It wasn't a permanent state, it wasn't the ultimate, it wasn't the absolute, it wasn't the unconditioned; it was just a more refined and more subtle state of the samsara itself. So, anyway, for the time being Alara the Kalama proclaims the plane of no-thing. 'Then it occurred to me, monks, it is not only Alara the Kalama who has faith; I too have faith. It is not only Alara the Kalama who has energy; I too have energy. It is not only Alara the Kalama who has mindfulness; I too have mindfulness. It is not only Alara the Kalama who has concentration; I too have concentration. It is not only Alara the Kalama who has intuitive wisdom; I too have intuitive wisdom. Suppose now that I should strive for the realization of that dhamma which Alara the Kalama proclaims: 'Having realized super-knowledge for myself, entering on it I am abiding therein." So what does one notice about this little list: I too have faith and so on? Anything particularly familiar about that?

___: The five spiritual faculties.

S: The five spiritual faculties. Do you think it's surprising to find them here?

___: I would have thought so not in the arupa dhyana.

___: That thing about intuitive wisdom is surprising. Even the sphere of no-thing (isn't equivalent to) prajna.

S: Yes, right, because it is a purely samadhi state, a samatha state. So what do you think this suggests?

___: A later...

S: A later reading as it were. No doubt the Buddha at that time reflected in a very general way, well, whatever energy and faith he possesses I too possess. I'm just as intelligent as he is. But the later editors no doubt expressed that in terms of a very familiar formula, and perhaps we do get this quite a bit because the text, as it afterwards became, passes through the hands of many generations of editors, originally monk reciters. It seems it always was the tendency to read back the later formulations into the earlier history of the teaching or the earlier stages of the Buddha's own career, and this list of the five spiritual faculties is a very very important one. Of course you can take it in a much more general sense as well as in a very specifically Buddhist sense. There's faith in the general sense; faith that you can get up to this higher stage of superconsciousness. Energy - well energy operates at all levels, you can have a lower as well as a higher energy. Meditation's the same, mindfulness too. You could have mindfulness operating on so many different levels, and even prajna is not necessarily intuitive wisdom, it can be just ordinary understanding, almost like common sense. So we no doubt are to understand these terms in this context, if we do take them quite literally or take the list quite literally in a very general not specifically Buddhist sense. We're certainly not to understand prajna - intuitive wisdom - in the sense of a direct apprehension [36] of ultimate reality which was the later purely Buddhistic meaning. But leaving aside those matters of detail what do we learn, what do we feel about the Buddha from this passage?

___: That he learned and experienced all from Alara the Kalama that he was able to give him.

S: Yes. That comes really a little later but what we learn before that is that he had a sort of natural self-confidence. What somebody else had done he too could do. Alara Kalama had achieved something; he too could achieve it. He has the same qualifications, the same faith, the same energy, and so on. So we note this characteristic of the Buddha. He didn't doubt himself. He as it were took it for granted that what one human being could attain another human being could attain too, and this strikes quite a Buddhistic note even at that early stage. 'So I, monks, very soon, very quickly, having realized super-knowledge for myself, entering on that dhamma, abided therein. Then I, monks, approached Alara the Kalama; having approached, I spoke thus to Alara the Kalama: 'Is it to this extent that you, reverend Kalama, proclaim this dhamma, entering on it, having realized it by your own super-knowledge?' 'It is to this extent that I, your reverence, proclaim this dhamma, entering on it, having realized it by my own super-knowledge. I too, your reverence, having realized this dhamma by my own super-knowledge, entering on it am abiding in it.' 'It is profitable for us. It is well gotten for us, your reverence, that we see a fellow Brahma-farer such as the venerable one. This dhamma that I, entering on, proclaim, having realized it by my own super-knowledge, is the dhamma that you, entering on, or abiding in, having realized it by your own super-knowledge;

the dhamma that you, entering on, or abiding in, having realized it by your own super-knowledge, is the dhamma that I, entering on, proclaim, having realized it by my own super-knowledge. The dhamma that I know, this is the dhamma that you know. The dhamma that you know, this is the dhamma that I know. As I am, so are you; as you are, so am I. Come now, your reverence, being just the two of us, let us look after this group.' In this way, monks, did Alara the Kalama, being my teacher, set me - the pupil - on the same level as himself and honoured me with the highest honour.' So what does one learn about Alara the Kalama from this?

___: He sees himself as a teacher not as sort of going forward and learning more.

S: Yes. I wasn't thinking of that.

___: More in terms of generosity.

S: Yes, right. He's quite happy to recognize the fact that this young man who has come along to him has already attained whatever he had attained. He doesn't show any sort of jealousy, any sort of competitiveness. In fact he readily acknowledges that the bodhisattva, the future Buddha, is now on the same level as himself and he proposes that together they shall lead that assembly of disciples. So this is a quite noteworthy thing. He's not even himself fully enlightened, but at least he's gone a very long way. He's a man of quite noble mind. A man of a generous mind able to appreciate others. Not jealous and not competitive.[37]

I must say one finds throughout the Pali texts many evidences of the very, as it were, courteous and even very obeying nature of what we can only call the religious life of ancient India in the Buddha's day. Even when people disagree they're very polite to each other. They almost invariably address each other quite courteously even though they may be holding quite different religions doctrinally and might disagree quite strongly. But certain, as it were, etiquette is always observed. 'Then it occurred to me, monks: 'This dhamma does not conduce to disregard nor to dispassion nor to stopping nor to tranquillity nor to super-knowledge nor to awakening nor to nibbana, but only as far as reaching the plane of no-thing.' So I, monks, not getting enough from this dhamma, disregarded and turned away from this dhamma.' So what do you learn about the bodhisattva from that?

Peter: He certainly knows what he's looking for.

S: Well perhaps he doesn't, but he knows when he's satisfied and when he's not satisfied. He has a sense of what he's looking for. He's looking for something more, something beyond even these comparatively lofty planes of the mundane. So we see him, as it were, pressing on. And afterwards the Buddha repeatedly emphasized to his disciples the danger of coming to a halt with a lesser attainment before the goal had been reached and he always used to exalt his disciples: 'press on, press on - you haven't got there yet, there's a long way to go, don't settle down, continue your efforts. Don't be satisfied until you've really reached your goal, just go on, carry on. So we find him exemplifying this in his own early career. This was quite a lofty state and he could well have settled there and would have felt quite pleased that he had attained to the same state, the same level, as his teacher. Not only that, there was the temptation offered him unconsciously, unintentionally, by the teacher when he said stay with me, become my partner, as it were, my equal, my associate, and help me to look after this congregation of followers. So in a way there was a temptation there for the Buddha, for the

bodhisattva, but he didn't succumb to it, he resisted it. He just wasn't interested.

Padmapani: Could you say a bit more about that? What is it that makes people as it were sit on their laurels?

S: Well one can say it's the gravitational pull, but that's just putting words to it. Well ask oneself. When I sit on my laurels why do I do it? If one does it of course. One knows that there's further to go, that you haven't got there yet, maybe you've just got a little achievement. Why do you rest content with that?

Sagaramati: Maybe that's what you wanted.

S: Maybe that is what you wanted. Maybe you've got what you wanted. Presumably it also depends on what you start out by wanting, what you originally go in quest of.

Padmapani: Does that imply like an unconscious urge which has a sort of imperative...[38]

S: It does. In the Mahayana they say that is the Bodhicitta latent within you. Sometimes you settle down because it's such hard work to carry on, and also you can settle down in something quite pleasant, something quite enjoyable. Maybe it's some lofty samadhi state where you just revel in bliss all day, as it were. You think, well, this is all right. Why bother about nirvana? This is just as good. Yogis are said to settle down like that. Or you might start thinking, well I've done enough for this life, I've done quite a good bit. I can carry on next time, let me take it easy for the few years that do remain to me.

Padmapani: Couldn't one think that one actually was enlightened when in actual fact one wasn't?

S: Oh yes indeed, and this is where your teacher comes in because it's the function of the teacher among other things to just abuse you of any such idea that you may have. Yes, you may quite genuinely, quite honestly, think, well, I'm there, I'm enlightened - one genuinely thinks that. But then if he has a teacher or is with a teacher then it's the teacher's responsibility to disabuse him of that idea. Of course it can also be said from another point of view that there is no goal in which you, as it were, quite literally settle down. Even enlightenment isn't a goal of that kind. That's just our way of looking at it because we have this habit of thinking in terms of finite goals that can be reached within a particular period of time. Very likely we have to think like that; there's no other way in which we can think. But as we go on we begin to see that it isn't really quite like that, though that is a quite useful and quite valuable way of thinking of it at least for the time being. Perhaps we can think more correctly in terms of an infinite progression, not infinite regression but infinite progression, the spiral just goes on and on. The circles of the spiral just become wider and wider. There's no need, there's no reason, to stop.

Padmapani: It's a bit like the pyramid. When you get to the point of the pyramid where it crosses over you get infinite space.

S: You mean the inverted pyramid.

Padmapani: The inverted pyramid on top of the pyramid.

S: So that's also a useful way of thinking, you just go on and on. What a wonderful thought. You don't have to stop anywhere. You can just go on progressing all the time. As soon as you get to nirvana then another nirvana is beckoning beyond. (laughter)

___: When you were saying about somebody thinking they were enlightened and that the teacher had to tell them that they're not. For the teacher to be able to say that, then presumably he would be in a higher stage of development than the disciple, in which case surely the disciple to think that he was enlightened and yet this other guy who was...

S: Well, he might think that whatever the teacher had realized he had realized himself. [39] Sometimes people think that they're enlightened and it doesn't even require an enlightened teacher to see that they're not; anybody can see it. Sometimes people do get this idea, either that they are enlightened or they've realized God, or they're being inspired by God or guided by God. In India you can meet many such people. So the great point here is to carry on, not to settle down in any limited or lesser attainment, not to be ever satisfied with your own progress so far. You can always remember that there's something more to be done. Once you get really far on you won't be able to stop even if you wanted to, but until you reach that point, well, you can stop and settle down at any time thinking you've done enough for the time being or there isn't really much more to it than this, so you might as well settle down. This is a sort of natural human tendency, a natural human failing, just to give up half way, or not even half way.

Padmapani: You can't really apply, then, the eighth bhumi of the bodhisattva to any particular arupa dhyanas could you?

S: Oh no. It's quite different. These are all the path of insight. They're way beyond. They're off at a tangent as it were.

Sagaramati: One of the synonyms for nirvana, I think you've quoted in the 'Survey', is called the bliss of effort.

S: I don't remember that. It's where effort becomes spontaneous.

Sagaramati: The idea that there's still this other effort in you (unclear).

S: One should perhaps think of nirvana or enlightenment not so much in terms of a definite state or point attained, so much as in terms of a certain constancy in the direction of movement, a balance that is constantly being disturbed and constantly maintained, a state of constantly self-restored equilibrium. But anyway, to come back to earth as it were, down to more practical matters, the Buddha even at this stage exemplifies what he used to exhort the monks to do, that is to say, not remain stuck in any lesser attainment, to press on to the next stage, the next highest state, and resist all temptation.

'So I, monks, not getting enough from this dhamma, disregarded and turned away from this dhamma. Then I, monks, a questor for whatever is good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path to peace, approached Uddaka, Rama's son; having approached, I spoke thus to Uddaka, Rama's son: 'I, your reverence, want to fare the Brahma-faring in this dhamma and discipline.' This said, monks, Uddaka, Rama's son, spoke thus to me: 'Let the venerable one proceed; this dhamma is such that an intelligent man, having soon realized super-knowledge

for himself, had learnt from his own teacher, may enter on and abide in it.' So I, monks, very soon, very quickly, mastered that dhamma. I, monks, as far as mere lip service, mere repetition were concerned, spoke the doctrine of knowledge and the doctrine of the elders, and I claimed - I as well as others - that 'I know, I see.' Then it occurred to me, monks: 'But Uddaka, Rama's son, does not merely proclaim this dhamma simply out of faith: Having realized super-knowledge for myself, entering on it, I am abiding in it. For surely Uddaka, Rama's son, proceeds knowing and seeing this dhamma.' Then did I, monks, approach Uddaka, Rama's son; having approached, I spoke thus to Uddaka, Rama's [40] son: To what extent do you, reverend Rama, having realized super-knowledge for yourself, entering thereon proclaim this dhamma?' When this had been said, monks, Uddaka, Rama's son, proclaimed the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.' The next highest. The limit of the mundane. 'Then it occurred to me, monks: 'It is not only Rama who has faith; I too have faith. It is not only Rama who has energy; I too have energy. It is not only Rama who has mindfulness; I too have mindfulness. It is not only Rama who has concentration; I too have concentration. It is not only Rama who has intuitive wisdom; I too have intuitive wisdom. Suppose now that I should strive for the realization of that dhamma which Rama proclaims: 'Having realized super-knowledge for myself, entering on it I am abiding in it?' So I, monks, very soon, very quickly, having realized super-knowledge for myself, entering on that dhamma, abided therein. Then I, monks, approached Uddaka, Rama's son; having approached, I spoke thus to Uddaka, Rama's son: 'Is it to this extent that you, reverend Rama, proclaim this dhamma, entering on it, having realized it by your own super-knowledge?' 'It is to this extent that I, your reverence, proclaim this dhamma, entering on it, having realized it by my own super-knowledge.' 'I too, your reverence, having realized this dhamma by my own super-knowledge, entering on it am abiding in it.' And the same thing happens all over again. Once again the Buddha is invited to help look after the other monks, the other pupils, and again he resists the temptation and again he goes away. He presses on. So then what happens? 'Then I, monks, a questor for whatever is good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path to peace, walking on tour through Maghada in due course arrived at Uruvela, the camp township. There I saw a delightful stretch of land and a lovely woodland grove, and a clear flowing river with a delightful ford, and a village for support nearby. It occurred to me, monks: 'Indeed it is a delightful stretch of land, and the woodland grove is lovely, and the river flows clear with a delightful ford, and there is a village for support nearby. Indeed this does well for the striving of a young man set on striving.' So I, monks, sat down just there thinking: 'Indeed this does well for striving." So the place to which the Buddha has come is the place that we now call Bodh Gaya. At that time it was in the kingdom of Magadha; now it's in the state of Bihar in north-eastern India. You notice that the Buddha says, 'Indeed this does well for the striving of a young man set on striving.' According to generally accepted tradition he's now thirty-five years of age, but again the suggestion seems to be that he is in fact much younger. This is rather curious.

___: Perhaps the writer of the text is actually quite an old man and he saw the Buddha as a young man.

S: It might have something to do with being half way through life. It might be some sort of symbolical significance - thirty five years of age. Though of course the Buddha did live to be eighty.

___: I noticed going back a bit that he says about Rama, about paying mere lip service. It doesn't sound as if he had done before. It seems interesting that he brought out this point that

at first he kind of thinks that he's got this just in theory. Then [41] after he goes on to...

S: Yes. Perhaps that was the method of teaching. That the teacher asked him to learn by heart certain verses, certain sayings, then the meaning was explained, and only then the question of practising them arose. This is still in fact the custom in Buddhist countries. Young monks are given texts to learn by heart, and you learn them by heart, sometimes without even understanding the meaning at all, and then you are taught them. I remember Dhardo Rimpoche telling me once that when he was a young monk he was expected to commit to memory thirteen pages of text per dayn and he had to recite them over to his teacher in the evening. And he said that even now I can go on reciting for quite a long time. He knew a lot by heart and this was the custom in the old Tibet. You learned things by heart, even when printed books are available. So no doubt in this case that was the custom, the tradition. Either Alara the Kalama or Uddaka Ramaputta taught the verses or summaries or lists themselves or an older more experienced disciple did. Once you've got all that by heart then the meaning was explained to you, and having understood the meaning then you might think about practising, but you start by learning by heart. This seems to be the tradition or the custom everywhere. So the same episode that occurred in the case of the first teacher occurs in the case of the second, with similar results, but the whole thing takes place on a slightly higher plane. Instead of the penultimate plane of the mundane the Buddha achieves the ultimate plane of the mundane, but he still hasn't got in touch with the transcendental, so he still feels deeply dissatisfied. So again he wanders off and he is left on his own. If there's no one around to show you the way then you must find it yourself by your own efforts, and this is now what he proceeds to do. Of course he's summarizing his career, we don't know how many weeks or months or years pass before he came to this particular spot. In other discourses, in other Pali texts, the Buddha tells us how he practised fearsome austerities for months on end apparently, or even years, we don't really know. But he doesn't give, he doesn't refer to, those in this particular context. He passes over that period in silence. So eventually he does come to this delightful stretch of land, this lovely woodland grove with a clear flowing river, with a delightful ford and a village for support nearby. That was very important because he needed somewhere where he could go for alms every day. So he felt this is a suitable spot. It's quiet, peaceful, beautiful, there's food available nearby. "Indeed this does well for the striving of a young man set on striving.' So I, monks, sat down just there, thinking: 'Indeed this does well for striving." The Buddha realized that he now had to make a tremendous effort and this was the place to make that effort.

'So I, monks, being liable to birth because of self, having known the peril in what is liable to birth, seeking the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana - won the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana; being liable to ageing because of self, having known the peril in what is liable to ageing, seeking the unageing, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana - won the unageing, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana; being liable to decay because of self, having known the peril in what is liable to decay, seeking the undecaying, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana - won the undecaying, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana; being liable to dying because of self, having known the peril in what is liable to dying, seeking the undying, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana - won the undying, the [42] uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana; being liable to sorrow because of self, having known the peril in what is liable to sorrow, seeking the unsorrowing, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana - won the unsorrowing, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana; being liable to stain because of self, having known the peril in what is liable to stain, seeking the stainless, the

uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana - won the stainless, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbana. Knowledge and vision arose in me: unshakeable is freedom for me, this is the last birth, there is not now again-becoming.'

So what is remarkable about this passage, about the Buddha's description of his attainment? Well it isn't even a description is it. What is it?

Vessantara: It's just a statement that it did happen.

S: It's a statement that it happened, a statement of the facts. It doesn't say anything about experiences he passed through, states or stages. In other texts they do give us a bit of information but here he simply says, 'I attained the unconditioned.' In a way it's as simple as that. Other texts of course do describe the Buddha recollecting his previous abodes, that is to say his previous lives, and then having a sort of vision of other beings dying and being reborn according to their karma, and then seeing the destruction within himself of the asavas - the poisonous fluxes - and, seeing the destruction of those asavas, knowing that enlightenment had been attained. That's a somewhat more elaborate account but here we're given only the bare fact of his attainment. He found what he had been seeking. He found the unconditioned. He found the unageing, the undecaying, the undying, the unsorry, and the stainless. You notice these are all in a way negative terms. The unconditioned is the unconditioned, the opposite of the conditioned, the cessation of the conditioned. There's no positive characterization here. It's beyond words. We can only describe it in terms of what it is not, and what it is not is anything conditioned. We're given just a little information later on. 'It occurred to me, monks: 'This dhamma, won by me is deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, tranquil, excellent, beyond dialectic, subtle, intelligible to the learned.' Do you think it's really the learned? It's (?), those who know - spiritual knowledge is implied here, not learning in the ordinary sense. 'But this is a creation delighting in sensual pleasure, delighted by sensual pleasure, rejoicing in sensual pleasure, so that for a creation delighting in sensual pleasure, rejoicing in sensual pleasure, this were a matter difficult to see. That is to say, causal uprising by way of condition. This too were a matter difficult to see. That is to say, the tranquillizing of all the activities, the renunciation of all attachment, the destruction of craving, dispassion, stopping, nibbana. But if I were to teach dhamma and others were not to understand me, that would be a weariness to me, that would be a vexation to me. Moreover, monks, these verses not heard before in the past spontaneously occurred to me:

This that through many toils I've won -
Enough! why should I make it known?
By folk with lust and hate consumed,
This dhamma is not understood.
Leading on against the stream,
Deep, subtle, difficult to see, delicate,
Unseen 'twill be by passion's slaves
Cloaked in the murk of ignorance.'

So one learns several things from this particular passage. One learns something about knowledge, one learns something about understanding. There are [43] certain conditions. What are those. What is the Buddha saying?

Sagaramati: You've got to have that positive emotional basis.

S: Yes. You can't have just an intellectual understanding of these things. What do you think the word 'dhamma' means here? 'This dhamma won to by me.' It means something like principle, reality, truth, law. 'It's deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, tranquil, excellent, beyond dialectic, subtle, intelligible to the learned. But this is a creation delighting in sensual pleasure, delighted by sensual pleasure, rejoicing in sensual pleasure. So that for a creation delighting in sensual pleasure, delighted by sensual pleasure, rejoicing in sensual pleasure, this were a matter difficult to see.' So why do you think that is. Why can't you see or why can't you understand even though you may be delighting in sensual pleasure, rejoicing in sensual pleasure - why should it make any difference?

Vessantara: The mind is being pulled in different ways.

S: Yes, the mind is constantly being pulled in different ways. There's a lack of objectivity, for want of a better term. There's no steadiness, no concentration, no penetration. Do you ever notice this, or find this, in dealing with people, trying to put something across to them under somewhat unfavourable circumstances? Can you imagine trying to explain to people, say at a party, about nibbana while the party is in full swing. This is how it must have seemed to the Buddha: that here he is having just realized this very sublime, very subtle, very deep and difficult truth; and here is the world, people delighting in all sorts of things, taking pleasure in all sorts of things. How is he going to put this across to them? He sort of shakes his head and he says to himself, it's just not possible, they just won't be able to understand, I just won't be able to communicate this.

Padmapani: I was just wondering what it meant when it says 'that would be a vexation to me' after he'd experienced enlightenment. Vexation would have been ruled out in that sense.

S: Well, maybe we expect a bit too much of the Buddha. Well, there's another passage - leaving this aside - in the Pali texts, where it is related how the Buddha lived a long time somewhere. It must have been, I think, in Sravasti or somewhere like that - and he was constantly being visited by sramanas and brahmanas and merchants and traders and princes and monks and nuns - there were nuns around by that time apparently - upasakas, upasikas ... and he became annoyed and vexed with the constant stream of visitors and he decided just to leave it all and go into the forest. So he went off into the forest one morning without telling anyone, without even telling his personal attendant, he just disappeared. [Udana vi.5, tr.] So what is one to make of that? One's idea is that a Buddha ought to be able to put up with anything indefinitely, he ought not to be vexed and troubled and annoyed, but that is what the text says. So what is one to make of that?

Peter: He makes himself too readily available. He's taken for granted by them.[44]

S: The text doesn't say that. The text here says 'that would be a vexation to me.'

___: (?) in the human sphere he's still susceptible to human emotions.

S: Yes, one could say that, but human emotions in the sense of unskilful mental states?

Padmapani: He's realized nibbana but he's still got this rupa body. He's still in the nirmanakaya. Although he's sort of cut them off, he's still got that karma volition there. They're still there.

S: What has he cut off and what is still there? (laughter) According to tradition, by virtue of his realization of nibbana there's no craving, there's no hatred, no anger, and no delusion. That's all cut off. So what is left that is making him annoyed. Why are these terms used? Well they're perhaps used metaphorically. He goes away.

Sagaramati: Wouldn't it be something like vipaka? Karma's the active side and there's the result of karma.

S: It can't be a vipaka because a vipaka is something you passively experience as a result of karmas of the past, but here is a karma. He is deciding, as it were, not to do this, not to do that, because it will be a vexation to him. Do you think it's a vexation on the ordinary sense?

___: Could it be because he realized it's not the best thing for them.

S: It doesn't say that though. That would all be sort of interpretation.

Peter: I suppose it's the same thing as though he'd got a fly on him and he'd whisk it off naturally. That sort of thing. Just a natural thing to do with the body. An itch and he scratches it just naturally. It's just the natural thing to do. That sort of thing. A purely human thing.

S: But he wouldn't do it just automatically because he's fully mindful.

___: Just before he attained enlightenment he went through the battle with Mara and this could, in a sense, be just a hangover from that. (laughter)

S: Yes, there is that. This raises the question of does one attain enlightenment just at a particular moment, as it were? Is it just a sort of fixed state? Maybe he hasn't finished with Mara yet. Maybe one could look at it this way: here is another temptation. I have put forward this view before myself: that we mustn't think of the Buddha under his bodhi tree attaining enlightenment just at one particular point in time, even one particular watch [45] of the night. Some of the texts speak of him sitting under that tree and under other trees over a period of four, some say seven, weeks. So it is as though there is this tremendous process going on, something was happening, and perhaps it didn't just happen like that at one instant. Maybe the process was going on for several weeks and different things were happening to the Buddha on different levels in different aspects of his being, and maybe it's one of these that we are being told about now. The temptation to keep it to himself. So maybe this is still the enlightenment process going on. I'm inclined to look at it like that, though that doesn't explain the other incident that I mentioned. We'll come to that in a minute. But here we see that there is, as it were, an absence of compassion. Where is his compassion? He's supposed to be a Buddha, supposed to be enlightened, supposed to be possessed of wisdom therefore of compassion, but the compassion isn't yet apparent. So it seems likely the process is still going on. The whole thing hasn't worked itself out yet fully on all levels of his being, all aspects. Do you see the point?

Padmapani: It makes it sound like at this stage, although he's a Buddha, he's like a pratyekabuddha, not a fully enlightened Buddha...

S: But maybe there is further to go. 'In such wise, as I was pondering, monks, my mind inclined to little effort and not to teaching dhamma. Then, monks, it occurred to Brahma

Sahampati who knew with his mind the reasoning in my mind: 'Alas, the world is lost, alas, the world is destroyed, inasmuch as the mind of the Tathagata, the perfected one, the fully awakened one, inclines to little effort and not to teaching dhamma.' Then, monks, as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm, or might bend back his outstretched arm, even so did Brahma Sahampati, vanishing from the Brahma-world, become manifest before me. Then, monks, Brahma Sahampati, having arranged his upper robe over one shoulder, having saluted me with joined palms, spoke thus to me: 'Lord, let the Lord teach dhamma, let the well-farer teach dhamma; there are beings with little dust in their eyes who, not hearing dhamma, are decaying, but if they are learners of dhamma they will grow.' Thus spoke Brahma Sahampati to me, monks.' So who is Brahma Sahampati? How is one to take him. Is one to take him literally as a god appearing out of the sky, out of the heavens? Or is he not perhaps a sort of representative of the mundane appearing before the Buddha? The Buddha sees he's a sort of spokesman for the world. Maybe he represents a sort of train of thought passing through the Buddha's mind: 'Well, there is the world there. The world needs help, I should teach.' So maybe the enlightenment process is continuing, and compassion for the world, for those who need the dhamma, begins to well up in the Buddha's enlightened or enlightening mind. Perhaps we can look at it like that. This seems more reasonable to me. In other words we're dealing with a vast and mysterious processes going on in the Buddha's own mind during that four or seven week period when he became enlightened, not just at one moment in that period but over the whole period more likely.

___: It's like an archetypal quality.

S: 'Thus spoke Brahma Sahampati to me, monks; having said this, he further spoke thus:

'There [46] has appeared in Magadha before thee
An unclean dhamma by minds with stains devised.
Open this door of deathlessness; let them hear
Dhamma awakened to by the stainless one.

As on a crag or crest of mountain standing
A man might watch the people all around,
E'en so do thou, O Wisdom fair, ascending,
O Seer of all, the terraced heights of truth,
Look down, from grief released, upon the peoples
Sunken in grief, oppressed with birth and age.

Arise thou hero! Conqueror in the battle!
Thou leader of the caravan, without a debt!
Walk in the world. Let the Blessed One
Teach dhamma; they who learn will grow.'

So very likely this represents a series of thoughts passing through the mind of the Buddha. In any case something happened, something appeared, whether a thought or a person or an archetype, and there was a response from the Buddha, the compassion welled up, the compassion appeared. Another aspect of the total enlightenment experience disclosed itself and was experienced by the Buddha. Do you see that?

Padmapani: It does seem to imply a process doesn't it? 'Teach dhamma: they who learn will

grow.' He's going through a process himself and when he sees beings in a state like this he notices.

S: You remember what I said about the path of vision and the path of transformation in the context of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path, those lectures? So that perhaps is relevant here, in fact very relevant here. I mean you attain perfect vision, you attain enlightenment as it were, but then what happens? It has to make its way through, it has to transform your whole psychophysical organism, and that takes time. That's the path of transformation as distinct from the path of vision. So here perhaps there is a path of transformation going on. The Buddha is experiencing that path of transformation, and one aspect of that path of transformation is the experience of compassion for the world.

There are a few other points that we ought to take note of. The Buddha further characterizes this dhamma that he had discovered. This dhamma that he has, that has been won to by him. He characterizes it as 'a matter difficult to see', that is to say, causal uprising by way of conditioning. So what does that suggest? What is this causal arising by way of conditioning?

___: Pratitya samutpada.

S: Pratitya samutpada. It's as though the Buddha's realization of that dhamma had a twofold aspect. There's the realization of the unconditioned and there's also the realization of the true nature of the conditioned. He sees that everything that arises, arises in dependence on conditions; everything that ceases, ceases when those conditions are removed. And if one looks at it in terms of the full, all-inclusive statement, he sees the two kinds of conditionality, there's the cyclical and the spiral, in both of which there is no rising in dependence upon conditions. But in this context he doesn't go into that in detail.

What about that other incident I mentioned where the Buddha goes off into the forest on his own feeling troubled, vexed, and annoyed by all this rush of people to see him? What do you [47] make of that? Compassion was there because he had been staying in that place for quite a long time. He'd been seeing them, meeting them, teaching them, talking to them. But I mention this, I dwell upon it, because people have got their own ideas about Buddha, haven't they? They think a Buddha must be completely impassive and be able to put up with anything for any length of time. And they mean, not to speak of Buddhas, that they even expect it from one another sometimes. So what does this signify?

Sagaramati: But he's an individual in a sense. He's still a real individual.

S: He's not, as it were, completely at their disposal. He wants to enjoy his own Buddhahood sometimes. No doubt he is as it were enjoying it at the back of his mind even while he's talking to people, but it's as though even a Buddha sometimes wants to be able to enjoy, wants to be free to enjoy, his own Buddhahood totally without being distracted by other things. It seems something like that.

Padmaraja: But is not his teaching a way of enjoying it, an expression of it?

S: Apparently not. Not just indefinitely. Not forever and ever and ever as it were. Apparently not.

Vessantara: Presumably it might be different if all those people who were coming were really open, receptive disciples.

S: Yes, but according to some people if he was a real Buddha that wouldn't bother him, he'd be able to put up with all that rather indefinitely. That his mind was above it all.

Vessantara: His mind is presumably above the idea that he should sit there through all this.

S: Right yes. It's as though a Buddha too has his rights.

___: I remember in the texts it says when the Buddha, before he enters into his parinirvana, he's enlightened, he goes into different (trance) stages and they're deeper states of absorption, so presumably maybe he just wants to get into a deeper state of absorption in the forest and then come back and teach.

S: But why should he want to do that?

___: He enjoys it.

S: Right. But I mentioned this particular incident, and we also talk about this, because it seems to go against the sort of things that we take for granted about Buddhas.

Vessantara: It makes Buddhas more attractive figures somehow.[48]

S: It's as though a Buddha sometimes needs time just to be a Buddha. So off he went into the forest and he stayed there, I believe for some weeks or months.

Pat: What was the reaction of the people that he left behind?

S: I don't remember that. The Buddha did the same thing on another occasion when his disciples, that is the monks, were quarrelling and he couldn't reconcile them, so he left them in disgust to their own devices and again went off into the forest. That of course brought them to their senses. That was the result of that particular case, but in this other one I don't remember.

___: Perhaps he thought that people who he'd been instructing needed time to let the information they'd got sink down.

S: That is also possible, but the text does not tell us that. The text says he was (unclear). We must be careful not to explain the text away and sort of really face up to the words of the text. It's not the sort of thing, by the way, that the monks would invent about the Buddha.

Padmapani: It's not in their interest.

S: It's not in their interest in a way. Usually when monks or latter day disciples invent things then it seems very much to the teacher's or founder's credit, not sort of little human touches like this which make it clear that he is still a human individual. So it's very very unlikely that the monks thought up these things afterwards. It's a wonder, in fact, that little touches like this survived at all, but there are quite a few in the Pali canon, like the Buddha's famous mistake

about teaching the meditation on death to some of his disciples. Do you remember about that? So in a way that's very reassuring. A Buddha doesn't have to be infallible in that sort of way. Do you remember that incident or does anyone not know about it? That the Buddha, after the enlightenment, he once had some disciples and he taught them the meditation on death. Then he went away for a while leaving them practising and when he came back he found that they'd all committed suicide because the meditation on death had depressed them so much. So what does that convey? Someone might say, well, the Buddha - after all he was the Buddha - ought to have known.

___: (unclear) ... people the results of their actions.

S: But doesn't a Buddha know the results of peoples' actions?

___: He can teach, but what people do with his teaching is down to them, not to him.

S: I don't think you can get out of it quite as easily as that because he ought to give the teaching which is suited to them, to their character, temperament, stage of development, and which is going to help them.

Padmapani: It seems to imply he has the knowledge of it but he doesn't have the skilful means.[49]

S: He doesn't quite have the skilful means in a way, and he had to learn. It suggests that. He surely didn't intend that they'd commit suicide, he didn't intend that they should get depressed. It also suggests of course that human beings are totally unpredictable. (laughter) That even a Buddha can't know what any given human being is going to do. In other words the human individual possesses complete freedom. So even a Buddha is not omniscient, he can't provide for all possible contingencies in advance. That is not the function of enlightenment, not the function of the enlightened mind.

Padmapani: I don't want to put a spanner in it Bhante, but did you say that maybe the Buddha, because he couldn't understand, because he could see that there was Buddha nature in everyone, and there was that unpredictability.

S: The text suggests that he was rather surprised when he came back. So if though it was Buddha nature you could argue that everyone was therefore predictable. Buddha nature doesn't have to be either predictable or unpredictable. It's just Buddha nature. But anyway I referred to these episodes just to, as it were, question a little, or even challenge, some of people's usual conceptions about the Buddha. For after all these are passages from the Pali canon and they're no doubt as authentic as anything in the Pali canon, so what is one to make of them? How do they affect one's view of the Buddha? It suggests that an enlightened human being is still a human being. This is all it really suggests, not in the sense of any weakness or in the sense of there being present any craving or anger or delusion, but certain, as it were, imperfections, though not spiritual imperfections, inherent in the human state itself, even when that particular human being is an enlightened human being and that one is not therefore in that sense to expect too much. You're not to expect that if you stick a pin into a Buddha he won't feel any pain. Of course he'll feel pain. He may not react with anger but he will feel pain, he's not beyond pain. We know from other texts that the Buddha did suffer pain in his old age but he controlled it, mindful and self-possessed, but he did experience the pain. So

perhaps in connection with all the people coming to see him he experienced discomfort. Perhaps he had to sit for hours and hours on end. He got stiff, he got tired. No change in the enlightened mind. The enlightened mind was still there, still enlightened. But what about the psychophysical organism? That needed a rest, that got fed up, that got tired.

___: I think that's what I meant earlier on.

Peter: There's that time when he was teaching and he got tired and just lay down and had Ananda carry on teaching for him. (laughter)

S: 'Buddhas ought not to get tired.' But the Buddha in his lifetime is not just an enlightened mind hovering around. That enlightened mind is having to function through an ordinary, imperfect though still strong and healthy, human, psychophysical organism which has its limitations. I use the word imperfections, maybe that is not an appropriate word, it has its limitations. As a human being the Buddha has his limitations though he's still the Buddha, he's still enlightened. So you shouldn't expect him not to have those human limitations.[50] But often we sort of pseudo-idealize the Buddha in that sort of way. You don't expect the Buddha to become angry, but a Buddha may become tired. It's not the Buddha nature that has become tired. His mind is not tired, but the psychophysical organism through which that enlightened mind is functioning as far as you are concerned certainly will become tired and need a rest. While the information, the intellectual information which is at the disposal of that enlightened mind may not be complete, so the enlightened mind functioning through that mind with insufficient information may make a mistake, but it is still the enlightened mind.

Peter: It's a funny incident that I was talking about. You've got the townspeople on one side, the monks on the other, and he just went to sleep in between and Ananda was left talking to them. It was ever so funny when I read it.

S: Well in India you can do this. I remember myself when I'd been addressing big public meetings among the ex-Untouchables I had a little nap behind the backs of the other speakers whilst somebody else was holding forth. These meetings go on for hours and hours - and not only a little nap, I'd disappear and have a cup of tea at intervals. You can do that in India and nobody minds. I think it's very important to realize that the Buddha was an enlightened human being and not try to make the Buddha into a sort of figure of impossible perfection in the wrong sort of way. This is a category - 'enlightened human being' - with which we're just not familiar in the West. So fully enlightened, yes, but fully human at the same time. So this is one of the great advantages of the Pali canon. We do get these little human touches which help us to realize that the Buddha was an enlightened human being. Again you get a wrong impression from Buddhist art. I mean wrong from the historical point of view. If you look at some examples of Buddhist art, especially modern ones, you get the impression that the Buddha walked around always freshly shaven with beautifully laundered yellow robes, neatly pressed - it's quite clear - with a glossy black bowl. But probably he didn't look like that at all. He was probably ragged and unkempt with a week's growth of beard because they shaved and cut their hair every two weeks - not every day, every two weeks - full moon and new moon days. So the Buddha looked probably rather disreputable, like a present day sadhu or maybe a sort of religious tramp.

Otherwise in modern Buddhist art you get this immaculately dressed figure who sort of glides around in his yellow robe, not only with a beautifully laundered robe but he's also beautifully

manicured and his face smooth and rosy as though he uses Lux toilet soap all the time. (laughter) This is quite misleading. Do you see what I'm getting at? If you're thinking in terms of the archetypal Buddha, the Buddha out of space, out of time, the Buddha of the Mahayana, the ideal Buddha - that is quite different. But don't mix him up with the human and historical Buddha. The ideal Buddha is implicit in the human and historical Buddha. That particular Buddha figure, the Buddha as represented in Mahayana Buddhist art or Buddhist art generally, that is an embodiment of the enlightened mind; it doesn't represent the human and historical Buddha as he appeared when he was actually walking the roads of India. He looked quite different from that you may be quite sure. If you got to know him, yes, you could see that there was something there, but one isn't to imagine him walking the roads of India as it were on a sort of little cloud in his beautiful robes and all that sort of thing.[51]

Some of the Chinese Buddhist art tried to show him as he very likely did look, sort of realistic but at the same time with a very deeply spiritual feeling. It would be very very difficult to achieve that. It's rather like this pseudo-religious art you get in the west. You see pictures of Christ working these miracles, his lovely flowing robe and his beautiful glossy beard and his lovely long chestnut coloured hair, and he looks so kindly and so well washed and so well scrubbed. He probably didn't look like that at all; he looked quite ragged and disreputable in his dirty old sort of Arab robe. It was probably much more like that. In Buddhist art you don't even see any dust on the Buddha's feet though he's been walking miles and miles.

___: You really just have to take things like pictures of Sakyamuni as the same way as you would say a Tara.

S: Yes really.

___: You don't really have green people floating around, do you?

S: Yes, even representations which are allegedly of Sakyamuni himself don't aim at reproducing the features or the appearance of the original historical Buddha. It is an ideal Buddha and in a way quite rightly, because it is, one could say, the ideal Buddha, even the eternal Buddha, who is the object of faith and devotion and going for refuge primarily. That is the Buddha nature or the Buddha mind or the embodiment of that in human form, but we mustn't confuse the two levels, as it were, and think of the human and historical Gotama the Buddha in those sort of terms. The human and historical Buddha has realized that, yes, he's realized that, and was realizing it presumably all the time, but it wasn't embodied in him in that particular way in Buddhist art. So I think these little human passages are quite useful because they prevent us from thinking of the human and historical Buddha as a sort of Buddha archetype just happening to float around north-eastern India in 500 BCE. There are incidents, there are passages, in the Pali canon where people fail to recognize the Buddha, but if he had all those thirty-two signs and eighty-four minor signs you could not help recognizing him. But apparently people didn't recognize him. There were stories of disciples of the Buddha wandering and just happening to put up with the Buddha, as he turned out to be, overnight in some shed and not knowing who it was. They'd never met him. They just took him for some wanderer. It was only in the morning when they got talking that, well, 'that is the Buddha whose disciple I am,' but he hadn't been recognized the night before. You might think how could you fail to recognize the Buddha? Such wisdom, such compassion, such energy, but no (?) apparently sometimes at least he looked just like any other wanderer until you got to know him, until you got talking with him. Again it's rather like thinking of Christ

walking around Galilee wearing his halo - so he'd be immediately recognized - well look there's Jesus, that's the one with the halo, (laughter) floating just a few inches above the ground not getting his nice white robe dirty.

'And then I, monks, having understood Brahma's entreaty, out of compassion surveyed the world with the eye of an Awakened One.' It's as though the enlightenment experience is continuing. He is an awakened one, he is a Buddha and now with the eye of a [52] Buddha he looks out over the world. So how can he help feeling compassion. It's the natural response. 'As I, monks, was surveying the world with the eye of an Awakened One, I saw beings with little dust in their eyes, with much dust in their eyes, with acute faculties, with dull faculties, of good dispositions, of bad dispositions, docile, indocile, few seeing from fear sins and the world beyond.' He doesn't see them all as equal. He doesn't see them all as the same. 'Even as in a pond of blue lotuses or in a pond of red lotuses or in a pond of white lotuses, a few red and blue and white lotuses are born in the water, grow in the water, do not rise above the water but thrive while altogether immersed; a few blue or red or white lotuses are born in the water, grow in the water, and reach the surface of the water; a few blue or red or white lotuses are born in the water, grow in the water, and stand rising out of the water, undefiled by the water; even so did I, monks, surveying the world with the eye of an Awakened One, seeing beings with little dust in their eyes, with much dust in their eyes, with acute faculties, with dull faculties, of good dispositions, of bad dispositions, docile, indocile, few seeing from fear sins and the world beyond. Then I, monks, addressed Brahma Sahampati in verses.' It's very interesting the way the Buddha sees the mass of humanity as in different stages of growth, different stages of development, just like the bed of lotuses of different colours. This is a very very important passage in a way - because it emphasizes that the Buddha and Buddhism sees beings in terms of growth and development - stages of growth, stages of development - sees beings as essentially living and growing things.

Padmapani: In a way he would see that as an evolutionary process.

S: In a way yes. (pause) There's one or two points I should have mentioned earlier on. That first verse of the Buddha. He describes this dhamma as 'not understood, leading on against the stream, deep, subtle, difficult to see, delicate.' The dhamma is described as leading on against the stream and what is that stream? Why is the dhamma said to lead on against it?

Peter: The stream of conditioned life.

S: It's the stream of conditioned life, and the dhamma goes against that. This is something very important to understand. When you follow the dhamma you, as it were, go against the grain of things. You're going in the opposite direction from everybody else. You're the odd man out or, as they say in the army, you're the only man in step. (laughter) If someone asks you what it's like to be a Buddhist say, well, being a Buddhist means being the only man in step. But do you actually find this? As you try to follow the dhamma, try to lead a spiritual life, try to lead a Buddhist life, that you're going against the stream, against things around you, against your family, against your friends. Do you actually find this? Against yourself of course above all - your old conditioned self. Do you find this or do you feel this?

Padmapani: Yes and no in a way. Yes in the sense that outside the sangha you find that there are things that are definitely against you. (?one gets into them). But inside the [53] sangha you can relate to people following similar ideas.

S: So It's important to realize that if you start following the dhamma you're not going to have it easy, not so far as the world outside is concerned. You'll be going against that world, going in the opposite direction, against the stream. But luckily you'll be going against the stream in company with quite a few others who are also going against the stream. So as you go against the stream together, well, you can have a good time together, you'll have a spiritual fellowship together. But don't make the mistake of thinking that people in the world outside, or the world in general, will be happy and pleased that you are leading a spiritual life. No! You're going against them! They won't be able to understand perhaps, much less still appreciate it.

Padmaraja: It goes against everything we're brought up to believe in Christianity really, doesn't it?

S: In what way?

Padmaraja: By entering the spiritual path you're actually going against...

S: But though actually mentioning Christianity that fact was there in the early days of Christianity. Christ said to his disciples: you are to expect persecution, that world will hate you. And he said this quite clearly, but it has been rather toned down since.

So what does the Buddha say? 'Then I, monks, addressed Brahma Sahampati in verses:

'Opened for those who hear are the doors of the Deathless, Brahma,' the deathless being nirvana. 'Let them give forth their faith.' This is variously interpreted, let them give up their faith in the old bad ways or let them release their faith now in my teaching. 'Thinking of useless fatigue, Brahma, I have not preached dhamma sublime and excellent for men.

'Then, monks, Brahma Sahampati, thinking: 'The opportunity was made by me for the Lord to teach dhamma,' having greeted me, keeping his right side towards me, vanished then and there.' Any further point about that whole episode? Look at the way that Brahma Sahampati addresses the Buddha,

'Arise thou hero! Conqueror in battle!
Thou leader of the caravan without a debt!
Walk in the world. Let the Blessed One
Teach dhamma; they who learn will grow.'

Well, if Brahma Sahampati and his request represents a train of thought passing through the Buddha's own mind, the Buddha might well have said to himself, as it were, well, look, this isn't very heroic, not wanting to make an effort. I'm supposed to be a Ksatriya by birth; all right, let me be a hero, let me make that effort even though no one wants to listen. I'll just be like a hero in the battle. I'll conquer, I'll succeed, however great the difficulty. He might have felt like that or started feeling like that.

Alan: You were saying about enlightenment being a progressive thing, and that maybe you thought that you'd got there not teaching the dhamma and then something...

S: Yes, maybe you could say that the enlightenment is to begin with, as it were, not exactly [54] in the head but it is a sort of, as it were, intellectual vision. It's seen in that sort of way at

first. Then it may be moved down to the heart. He starts feeling, the compassion comes up. Then the will, when he starts doing something about it. He decides to go forth - one could look at it like that - decides to go forth and teach, that is. So that all the different aspects of his being, all the different aspects of his personality, are being touched one by one by that germinal enlightenment experience.

Padmapani: It reminds me very much of the Tibetan teachings. You have the om, the ah, and the hum. The enlightenment experience is at the top, the om, and it comes down and rests in the heart.

S: Right, yes. And also the mudras which express it right down to the very fingertips.

___: What does it mean by arranging the robe over one shoulder?

S: This is a sign of respect, baring one's shoulder is a traditional sign of respect. Like I'm wearing the robe. You could sort of have the other bit over the shoulder, but that's considered disrespectful in front of a teacher or superior, so you uncover that shoulder and then you can actually do salutation. Bhikkhus, when they perform their puja, their vandana, they don't keep their shoulder covered even if they come into the temple wearing both shoulders covered; they uncover this shoulder at the time of chanting the puja and vandana.

___: It's a bit like baring your head.

S: A bit like that, yes. Baring your shoulder. I mean logically why should you take your hat off? Or why should you bare your shoulder? But it's just the custom. It's come to express or indicate respect, reverence, therefore one does so. In itself it's as it were meaningless. In some religions they keep their hats ON in church or in the synagogue. The Jews cover their heads, Muslims cover their heads for prayer. Christians uncover. It's just convention. It's the feeling that is important, whether you get the feeling out of wearing your hat or not wearing your hat or covering your shoulder or not covering your shoulder. It doesn't really matter. It's the feeling that is important. In India - in south-east Asia - going to the temple you take your shoes off, but not in Tibet. It's too cold there, Tibetans don't have that custom. They adopt it when they go to India but they don't follow it in Tibet,

___: Do any monks wear white robes?

S: Not so far as I know, though there are some people who do wear white in Japan but who are not bhikkhus in a technical sense. The Kagyupas wear white but again not bhikkhus or not as bhikkhus in the technical sense. They signify something different. Broadly speaking all bhikkhus or their equivalent, at least on ceremonial occasions, wear yellow or orange or [55] saffron. The red robes of the Tibetans are NOT monastic robes. We think of them as monastic robes but they're not. Upasakas wear those red robes, those upasakas who live in the monasteries, but on ceremonial occasions each (drapa) who is a gelong, that is, a bhikkhu, has a yellow robe which is put on over the red robes for ceremonial occasions. But the red robe is not the bhikkhu robe strictly speaking. The same with the Chinese: they wear black or blue for ordinary purposes but on ceremonial occasions the big yellow robe goes over that. Anyway, these are all quite minor relatively unimportant points. I'm sure the Buddha wouldn't have bothered. The Buddha's robe was sort of khaki coloured. (laughter) What is this yellow robe? What is khaki? Khaki is dust coloured. Why do you wear khaki in the army? What was

the original reason?

___: Camouflage.

S: Camouflage. So you just as it were colour that particular cloth earth colour so that you're indistinguishable from the earth. So the bhikkhu's yellow robe is coloured with earth, with (geruwa). It's used still by Hindu sadhus - geruwamati - orange earth, I've used it myself. You dig it up somewhere and you crumble it into a bucket of water, you add a little alum which fixes the dye, and you dip your robe in it. It doesn't last all that long but it comes out a sort of muddy earth colour, that's the original colour, not this beautiful bright chemical yellow or orange. That's all much later. So it was a sort of khaki colour, in fact, what the Buddha had. They discoloured their robes just to make themselves look different from other people and what was the simplest way of discolouring? Well, by using some orange-brown earth - geruwa. You didn't get beautiful (coal tar) dyes in those days. So again we must sort of project ourselves back into those days by our active imagination and try to see what things were really like. Don't imagine the Buddha wearing a bright yellow robe like the Sinhalese wear, or a sort of salmon pink one like the Thais wear. He went around wearing a robe more or less sort of khaki coloured you could say, a slightly orange sort of khaki with the same sort of principle behind it. The earth colour - the colour of the earth. Some say it was a reminder that dust you are and to dust you go back, that sort of reminder. Others say it was a bit flame coloured to remind you of the funeral pyre at the end of your days. Again there was another custom that is referred to in the Pali texts: when a man was being taken to execution he was dressed in that colour. It was the colour of the dress of a condemned criminal on his way to execution. So again there is the suggestion that you must realize that you are like a condemned criminal on the way to execution. In other words you may die any minute, so again the geruwa coloured robe is supposed to remind you of that. These are different explanations which are given of the colour but probably the original reason for that sort of colour was it was the simplest and easiest dye to get hold of and to discolour your dress, not your robe, made it different from everybody else's so you stood out or stood apart from others. You were not as other people, you did not conform in dress even as you did not conform in your whole way of life and your whole mental and spiritual outlook. You were different and you proclaimed the fact quite proudly. You were the odd man out. The only man in step.[56]

Padmapani: It must have been quite hard to be seen sometimes as well. Quite easily camouflaged so you could just get on with your practice. (laughter)

S: As long as you sat in a dusty field.

Padmapani: I suppose in one way you could also stay your execution because you were protected from the tigers who might not see you. (laughter)

S: It sounds a bit optimistic to me. You might as well paint yourself with stripes and hope he'd think it was another tiger. (laughter) Though of course if he did think it was another tiger you might have an even more difficult time. (laughter) Tigers are sometimes a bit more competitive where other tigers are concerned than if you were human beings even.

All right, let's carry on. 'Then it occurred to me, monks: 'Now, to whom should I first teach this dhamma? Who will understand this dhamma quickly?' Then it occurred to me, monks: 'Indeed this Alara the Kalama is learned, experienced, wise, and for a long time has had little

dust in his eyes. Suppose that I were to teach dhamma first to Alara the Kalama; he will understand this dhamma quickly.' So what does that show us about the Buddha?

Peter: He still remembers his old friends.

S: He still remembers his old friends. He's very grateful. Alara the Kalama did his best for him.

___: He seems to have remembered Alara the Kalama who wasn't as developed as the other man.

S: But he was his first teacher.

___: But logically if there's somebody else who's got to the fourth dhyana state or arupa dhyana...

S: Well, perhaps he hoped originally that he'd see them all one by one, and he was taking them in chronological order, and again there is this point that he was the first teacher, and sometimes one has a sort of special feeling for the first teacher because he was the first - even though not necessarily the most developed - because he put you on the path, or it was with him that you had your first - your original - contact, so he has a certain importance for you. Like the first Order member that you meet: he may not be the best, he may not be the brightest, he may not be the greatest, but he's at least the first and he didn't put you off - well not all that much anyway. (laughter) So we learn the Buddha remembered old friends, he was grateful. 'Then devatas having approached me, spoke thus: 'Lord, Alara the Kalama passed away seven days ago." This figure seven as though a symbolical period as it were. 'So knowledge and vision arose in me that Alara the Kalama had passed away seven [57] days ago. Then it occurred to me, monks: 'Alara the Kalama has suffered a great loss. For if he had heard this dhamma, he would have understood it quickly.' Then it occurred to me, monks: 'Now, to whom could I first teach this dhamma? Who will understand this dhamma quickly?' Then it occurred to me, monks: 'This Uddaka, Rama's son, is learned, experienced, wise, and for a long time has had little dust in his eyes. Suppose that I were to teach dhamma first to Uddaka, Rama's son? He will understand this dhamma quickly.' Then, monks, devatas, having approached me, spoke thus: 'Lord, Uddaka, Rama's son, passed away last night.' So knowledge and vision arose in me that Uddaka, Rama's son, had passed away last night. Then it occurred to me, monks: Uddaka, Rama's son, has suffered a great loss. For if he had heard this dhamma, he would have understood it quickly.' They were so near. They were right on the edge, as it were, of the conditioned, ready to approach the unconditioned. They hadn't been able to make it by their own efforts. They hadn't been able to discover it for themselves, but the Buddha was confident that if he could only meet them and point it out they would be able to take that last step or those last two steps and realize the truth. 'Then it occurred to me, monks: 'Uddaka, Rama's son, has suffered a great loss. For if he had heard this dhamma he would have understood it quickly.' Then it occurred to me, monks: 'Now to whom could I first teach this dhamma? Who will understand this dhamma quickly? Then it occurred to me, monks: 'This group of five monks who waited on me when I was self-resolute in striving, were very helpful. Suppose that I were to teach dhamma first to this group of five monks?' Again what do we learn about the Buddha? The same thing, he remembers old friends, he's grateful for help received. They waited upon him. We're not told about this earlier on. The Buddha passed over all that entirely as we remember but now he refers to it. The group of

five monks - the (pancavagyabhikkhu). 'Then it occurred to me, monks: 'But where is the group of five monks staying at present?' Then, monks, I saw with deva-vision, purified and surpassing that of men, the group of five monks staying near Benares at Isipatana in the deer-park.' Why do you think he isn't informed by the devatas on this occasion? On the previous two occasions devatas informed him, then he came to understand for himself.

Peter: They're dead.

S: Yes that seems to be the reason, but these are still alive.

Padmapani: Are they usually connected in that sense?

S: Not necessarily.

___: Can supernormal vision go to places where people who are dead go because...

S: According to Buddhist tradition, yes, you can know by supernormal vision if someone is still in this world or not.

___: With Alara and the other person somewhere, some other world.[58]

S: Presumably, yes, to those particular planes corresponding to their attainment, planes at the summit of the formless world. So there they would experience the results of their lofty meditations but would not be able to make any further progress until they were reborn on earth. This is the traditional Buddhist view.

___: Would it not have been possible for the Buddha to teach them where they are though?

S: Apparently not. Later Buddhist tradition does, for instance, say that the Buddha taught his deceased mother in a heavenly world, and it was supposed to be the Abhidharma that he taught, or at least matrices of the Abhidharma, but apparently here that does not hold good, or we're not told that, or it could be that his mother was in a lower heavenly world. These must have been in a very high world because their attainment was very high. In that very high state they would not be, as it were, accessible, they'd be completely absorbed in that. One could look at it in that way. Looking at it in that way would be in accordance with traditional Buddhist teaching but this particular sutta does seem to strike very strongly the human note doesn't it? They're dead; well that's that. Find someone who's still alive. Find the five monks.

Padmapani: It seems to infer that the ascetics were not on such a high level as the other two as well.

S: Yes, they have had very little attainment indeed, maybe none at all, but they'd been helpful to the Buddha. 'Then I, monks, having stayed at Uruvela for as long as I found suiting, set out on tour for Benares. Then, monks, Upaka, a Naked Ascetic, saw me as I was going along the high road between Gaya and the Tree of Awakening.' You still get these naked ascetics in India even today. I've seen a few of them myself. 'Having seen me, he spoke thus: 'Your reverence, your faculties are quite pure, your complexion is very bright, very clear. On account of whom have you, your reverence, gone forth, or who is your teacher, or whose dhamma do you profess?" So clearly something has happened. The Buddha looks different.

His face was bright and Upaka the naked ascetic notices this and he asks him, 'on account of whom have you gone forth?' Whose disciple are you? Who is your teacher? Whose dhamma do you profess? 'When this had been said, I, monks, addressed Upaka, the Naked Ascetic, in verses.' Why do you think verses? Verses of course do come more easily in the Indian languages but even so why verses. Presumably because the Buddha was in a very inspired and exalted mood. The verses just came forth quite naturally. He didn't speak in prose, he spoke in verse, poetry even perhaps.

___: It's more appropriate for his first communication with another human being.

S: Right.

'Victorious over all, omniscient am I,
Among all things undefiled,
Leaving all, through death of craving freed,
By knowing for myself, whom should I point to?'

Point to, that is, as teacher.

'For me there is no teacher,
One like me does not exist,
In the world with its devas
No one equals me.

For I am perfected in the world,
A teacher supreme am I,
I alone am all-awakened,
Become cool am I, nibbana-attained.

To turn the [59]dhamma-wheel
I go to Kasi's city,
Beating the drum of deathlessness
In a world that's blind become.'

So what sort of impression do you get from these verses?

Padmapani: He's really striding out.

S: He's really striding out. He knows exactly what he's doing and what he's going to do. Tremendous self-confidence, no false humility you notice. Some writers on comparative religion, some writers on Buddhism, they just don't like these verses at all. They say the Buddha couldn't possibly have spoken like that. They say it seems so proud, so arrogant, so conceited, proclaiming himself as enlightened and saying that there's no one equal to him and that he's perfect and only he is awakened. So do you agree with that? Do you see it like that? They think the Buddha should be humble and modest and meek and say, well, 'I've gained a little bit, I've understood a little bit but not too much' sort of thing and play his attainments down. What is this false modesty?

___: It's rather a European or even a British view.

S: Yes self-deprecation, self-depreciation. It's quite a different thing from pride and conceit. It's being objective about yourself. If you're enlightened then why shouldn't you say so if you want to say? - If it seems appropriate. If you're good at something, if someone says are you a good carpenter, if you know you're a good carpenter, you say, yes, I am quite good. There's no question of being egoistic about it; you're just stating a plain fact. You can of course be egoistic, but then you're equally egoistic when, thinking that you're quite good you say that you don't think you are. That's even worse in a way because you're still egoistic but you're being hypocritical too. So be objective about oneself. If someone praises you or draws attention to some good quality which you definitely possess, or some skill or talent, don't blush and try to deny it when you know quite well what has been said is true, is correct. That doesn't show that you're really a sort of good person who's so modest and so meek and so humble. Why should you be humble in that sort of way? Being humble means seeing yourself objectively. Where does this come from if it is an English characteristic, this false modesty? You didn't get it among the ancient Greeks did you?

___: Christianity.

S: Christianity. Yes, no doubt.

___: I think society (?) people something like this. People who make big claims for themselves are people who are deluded, therefore you say, well, some people are not deluded by not making claims.

S: Not making big claims, yes.

___: Is the Indian view of the Buddha the same as the western view - that you should be humble?[60]

S: I don't think that that would be the Indian view. It's probably difficult to generalize. I certainly think the Indian would not be taken aback by these sort of verses in quite the same way that the European perhaps would be, maybe for not altogether the right reasons. The Indian is accustomed to hearing people loudly proclaiming themselves as enlightened. He's quite used to it. We're not.

___: Could it also be something to do with that in the same way as you can be unwilling to accept that somebody else is better than you can be unwilling to accept that you yourself are...?

S: Yes. This is still a kind of conditioning isn't it? And also don't forget the Buddha, according to this text at least, hasn't yet spoken to anybody. He's enlightened and here he is striding along the road - I say striding, presumably he strode - to Benares to meet these erstwhile friends and followers of his. He's as it were bursting with his enlightenment, and then he gets this question, 'Who is your teacher?' and it must seem totally absurd. Teacher? I don't have a teacher; I'm enlightened of myself. And he just bursts forth, 'I have no teacher, there's nobody like me in the whole world, in the whole universe, I alone am the fully enlightened one.' So he bursts forth as it were in this quite natural, spontaneous manner. No egotism, no conceit, no arrogance, no false modesty either. Why shouldn't he just state the matter clearly and unambiguously.

___: Does he know that 'I alone am all-awakened'?

S: Well, it depends I think how you take 'alone'. Whether you take it to mean that among all the beings in existence only I am all-awakened or whether you take it as emphasizing the fact that he is enlightened, he is all-awakened, but certainly it is the traditional Buddhist teaching that the Buddha was the only one at that time. Then, later on, when the first sixty disciples became enlightened, the text says, 'and then there were sixty-one arhats in the world.' This is part of the definition of a Buddha: that he becomes enlightened at a time when the path to enlightenment had been lost and when there were no other enlightened beings around. He's the first that once again breaks through and opens up that ancient way, that ancient path, which had been overgrown by the jungle. He's the latest of those pioneers.

Padmapani: I get the impression that they talk very sort of ... they don't sort of chop their words in any way. They're very direct.

S: 'I go to Kasi's city,
Beating the drum of deathlessness
In a world that's blind become.'

The drum of deathlessness, the drum of the immortal as it's sometimes translated. You get this idiom in Pali. Preaching the dhamma is beating the drum of the dhamma or beating the drum of the immortal. 'In a world that's blind become.' In a world which is covered with the darkness of ignorance. And then Upaka says, 'According to what you claim, your reverence, you [61] ought to be a victor of the unending.' It seems to be a sort of technical term like Buddha. And then the Buddha replies,

'Like me, they are victors indeed
Who have won destruction of the cankers,
Vanquished by me are evil things,
Therefore am I, Upaka, a victor.'

It's as though he says, well, if you want to use this term victor, conqueror, you may use it, because I have indeed destroyed the asavas, I have vanquished, I have conquered, all evil things, all unskilful mental states, therefore you truly say that I am a victor. 'When this had been said, monks, Upaka the Naked Ascetic, having said: 'May it be so..." Some render it as 'it may be so'. '...having shaken his head, went off having taken a different road.' So the reaction of the first person that the Buddha met, according to this text after his enlightenment. He doesn't seem impressed at all. 'May it be so,' 'Let it be so,' 'It's as it is. Maybe, who knows. So what?' And, 'having shaken his head, went off having taken a different road.' He's so near to it but he's missed it completely and we never hear of him again. He doesn't reappear in the Buddhist texts, in the Buddhist scriptures. [But see e.g. Samyutta Nikaya i.35., tr.] He missed his great opportunity. He could have been the Buddha's first disciple instead of that he wasn't even the last. He took a different road. [According to the commentaries he does eventually join the sangha and become an arhant, tr.] 'Then I, monks, walking on tour,' This walking on tour is a very sort of archaic idiom. It's just sort of walking about, walking on, 'in due course arrived at Benares, Isipatana, the deer-park and the group of five monks. Monks, the group of five monks saw me coming in the distance, and seeing me they agreed among themselves saying: 'Your reverences, this recluse Gotama is coming, he lives in abundance, he is wavering in his striving, he has reverted to a life of abundance.' Why do they say this?

___: Because when they knew him he was the ascetic then.

S: And they left him when he abandoned the practice of asceticism and started taking solid food. So they regard that as living in abundance. 'He should be neither greeted, nor stood up for, nor should his bowl and robe be received; all the same a seat may be put out, he can sit down if he wants to.' That's the sort of way in which they propose to treat him. 'But as I, monks, gradually approached this group of five monks, so this group of five monks were not able to adhere to their own agreement; having approached me, some received my bowl and robe, some made a seat ready, some brought water for washing the feet, and they addressed me by name and with the epithet 'your reverence'.' So what do you think happened? Why did they not adhere? Why were they unable to adhere to their original resolution?

Peter: He had the same sort of impact on them that he had on Upaka.

S: Yes.

Peter: He was impressed by him. He saw that something had happened.

Padmapani: And even more so. They saw his (countenance) of an enlightened one.

S: Yes, but they didn't recognize that straight away. There's also the force of old habits. [62] He had been as it were their teacher or at least their leader. They'd been accustomed to looking after him and waiting upon him and doing things for him. Maybe force of habit was quite strong too, or maybe there was something just so impressive about him, even though they didn't recognize him as having attained anything spiritually. But his presence, nonetheless, was very very strong, very powerful. They couldn't help showing him respect. 'When this had been said, I, monks, spoke thus to the group of five monks: 'Do not, monks, address a Tathagata by his name or by the epithet 'your reverence'. Monks, the Tathagata is one perfected, a fully Self-awakened One. Give ear, monks, the deathless is found, I instruct, I teach dhamma. Going along in accordance with what is enjoined, having soon realized here and now by your own super-knowledge that supreme goal of the Brahma-faring for the sake of which young men of family rightly go forth from home into homelessness, ye will abide in it.' We mustn't let the rather stilted diction here mislead us. The Buddha is saying don't speak to me like that, don't speak with that lack of respect, I have gained enlightenment, I am the Tathagata, so listen to me. I have found the goal of the holy life, I've found nirvana, I've found enlightenment, found the unconditioned. I shall teach you that so if you practise in accordance with my teaching you will realize this for yourself. We have to imagine perhaps the Buddha speaking very urgently and very earnestly to them, very powerfully. Not with this sort of stilted archaic diction. Maybe speaking very spontaneously. So what happens? 'When this had been said, monks, the group of five monks addressed me thus: 'But you, reverend Gotama, did not come to a state of further-men, to knowledge and vision befitting the ariyans by this conduct, by this course, by the practice of austerities. So how can you now come to a state of further-men, to knowledge and vision befitting the ariyans when you live in abundance and, wavering in your striving, revert to a life of abundance." So they say you couldn't realize the truth when you followed the right way, how do you think you've realized it while you've been following the wrong way? That's their reasoning. So they don't accept his claim; they don't believe him. 'When this had been said, monks, I spoke to the group of five monks thus: 'A Tathagata, monks, does not live in abundance nor, wavering in his striving, does he revert to a life of abundance. The Tathagata, monks, is one perfected, a fully Self-awakened One. Give

ear, monks, the deathless is found, I instruct, I teach dhamma. Going along in accordance with what is enjoined, having soon realized here and now by your own super-knowledge that supreme goal of the Brahma-faring for the sake of which young men of family rightly go forth from home into homelessness, you will abide in it.' And a second time, monks, the group of five monks spoke to me thus: 'But you, reverend Gotama... etc... you will abide in it.' And a third time.... When this had been said, I, monks, spoke thus to the group of five monks: 'Do you allow, monks, that I've ever spoken to you like this before?" You mustn't imagine the Buddha, as it were, getting angry, after all he is enlightened, there's no anger left but he, as it were, gets a bit almost fed up with their scepticism, with their blindness so he puts it to them 'look have I ever spoken to you like this before? In all the time that we were together have I ever said that I was enlightened, that I was the Tathagata?' and then of course they have to admit, 'You haven't.' Then again he says, 'A Tathagata, monks, is a perfected one, a fully Self-awakened One. Give ear, monks, the deathless is found, I instruct, I teach dhamma. Going along in accordance with what is enjoined, having soon realized here and now by your own super-knowledge that supreme goal of the Brahma-faring for the sake of which young men of family rightly go forth from home into homelessness, you will abide in it.' And I, monks, was able to convince the group of five monks.'[63]

[break in recording]

So in the end he succeeds, he gets them to listen to him, but not without a struggle. It wasn't easy. 'Monks, I now exhorted two monks; three monks walked for almsfood.' There were five of them. So the Buddha didn't waste any time. He sent three of them begging for food while he talked with the two remaining ones. 'Whatever the three monks who walked for almsfood brought back, that the group of six lived on. And then, monks, I exhorted three monks; two monks walked for almsfood. Whatever the two monks who walked for almsfood brought back, that the group of six lived on. Then, monks, the group of five monks, being thus exhorted, thus instructed by me, being liable to birth because of self, having known the peril in what is liable to birth,' ... and so on, they too gained enlightenment. You notice the Buddha doesn't say what he taught them in this particular text. Other texts, sometimes later ones, give some account, but here he says simply 'he exhorts them', he instructs them. So what does that suggest? - the fact that the content of the exhortation, the content of the instruction, is not mentioned?

Vessantara: It suggests the power of his personality, that his actual way of teaching is as important as...

S: In a sense it didn't matter what he taught, He might have taught the Four Noble Truths, might have taught the Eightfold Path, as some later texts do in fact say. He might have taught about conditionality, might have taught about anything. In a sense it didn't matter. What was important was that he taught. The enlightened one, the Buddha, taught; he exhorted them, he instructed them, and something of that passed over to them, something of his enlightenment, something of his experience as it were. He really communicated with them, he communicated dhamma, and that had an impact on them, and they in turn, even as he had, realized the unconditioned, won to nibbana.

Padmapani: Does it imply that one by one they were converted?

S: We're not told are we? But presumably. Other texts make it clear that they spent the whole

of the rainy season in this way - three or four months. By this time it was the rainy season and the Buddha, as far as we know from tradition, having gained enlightenment in the month of Vaisaka, that is, April or May, so a couple of months later comes the rainy season and he spent the rainy season with them it seems, talking, discussing, exhorting, expounding, convincing, communicating above all. In a sense there was no such thing as Buddhism at that time, there was only the Buddha. Don't forget the Buddha had to formulate Buddhism as he went along, had to improvise Buddhism. Buddhism is what the Buddha improvises in accordance with the needs of the situation as he comes into contact with people. He hadn't got it all sort of thought out in advance. He sees the truth, yes, but what is the truth? It's not a matter of words, or even a matter of thoughts. It has to be put into words, put into thoughts. 'So knowledge and vision arose in them, Unshakeable is freedom for us. This is the last birth. There is not now again becoming.' Again becoming - punabhava is the term used in Buddhist texts instead of reincarnation. So this is the autobiographical discourse, but the Buddha goes on and directly addresses the monks who'd gathered at the [64] hermitage of Rammaka the brahman hoping to hear dhamma from the Buddha face to face. There's another little point I didn't dwell upon. When the Buddha says to the five, 'Do you allow, monks, that I've ever spoken to you like this before?' What do they say? 'You have not, Lord.' They use the word bhagavan. From that you know they've given in, they've accepted him. They don't say your reverence, or Gotama, any more, it's bhagavan. You notice that in many of the Pali texts, when someone changes to that mode of address it indicates that he's become the Buddha's disciple, he's accepted the Buddha as the Buddha. So then the Buddha goes on, now addressing the bhikkhus directly, the bhikkhus who've gathered there in the hope of hearing dhamma from him. 'Monks, there are to these five strands of sense-pleasures. What are the five? Material shapes cognisable by the eye, alluring, agreeable, pleasant, liked, connected with sense-pleasures, enticing.' Then 'sounds cognisable by the ear,... smells cognisable by the nose,... tastes cognisable by the tongue,... touches cognisable by the body, alluring, agreeable, pleasant, liked, connected with sense-pleasures, enticing. These, monks, are the five strands of sense-pleasures. Monks, those recluses or brahmans who enjoy these five strands of sense-pleasures, enslaved and infatuated by them, addicted to them, not seeing the peril in them, not aware of the escape from them - these should be told: 'You have come to calamity, you have come to misfortune and are ones to be done to by the Evil One as he wills. Monks, it is like a deer living in a forest who might be lying caught on a heap of snares - this may be said of it: 'It has come to calamity, it has come to misfortune, it is one to be done to by the trapper as he wills, for when the trapper comes it will not be able to go away as it wishes.' Even so, monks, those recluses or brahmans are ones to be done to by the Evil One as he wills.' So what is the Buddha talking about here? Is it possible to avoid pleasurable sensations altogether?

___: No.

S: So what should be one's attitude to them?

___: See them as potential traps.

S: See them as potential traps. Be mindful, be aware.

___: It talks about it in the sense (that he would entrap) Mara.

S: Well the evil one, Mara, one could say is just the personification of non-enlightenment, of

ignorance. He'll be overpowered by ignorance. But he uses again these strong terms that he used before in the sutta - enslaved and infatuated and addicted. This might suggest what we might call, or we might describe as, a neurotic enjoyment. Do you think you can distinguish between a healthy enjoyment and a neurotic enjoyment? Do you think that's possible?

___: Yes.

S: Yes. Do you think it's easy to enjoy things healthily rather than neurotically or do you think you have to be rather careful?[65]

Peter: It's like the simile of the drink you gave us, of the man and the drink.

Sagaramati: The tendency is that if you enjoy something healthily you want to repeat that, so the next time you're feeling a little bit empty or a little bit neurotic you tend to go for that which you enjoyed.

S: So how is one to avoid that?

Graham: Maybe to do without them for a certain time.

S: Do without them for a certain time, or be just very mindful all the time. Anyway, it's interesting the Buddha goes on to say, 'Monks, those recluses or brahmans who enjoy these five strands of sense-pleasures, not enslaved, not infatuated by them, not addicted to them, seeing the peril in them, aware of the escape from them - these should be told: You have not come to calamity, you have not come to misfortune, you are not ones to be done to by the Evil One as he wills. Monks, it is like a deer living in a forest who might lie down on a heap of snares but is not caught by it - this may be said of it: It has not come to calamity, it has not come to misfortune, it is not one to be done to by the trapper as he wills, for when the trapper comes it will be able to go away as it wishes. Even so, monks, those recluses or brahmans ... are not ones to be done to by the Evil One as he wills.'

So in this sutta the Buddha seems to recognize the possibility of enjoying the five strands of sense pleasures without being enslaved or infatuated or addicted to them. The possibility of that kind of enjoyment - healthy non-neurotic enjoyment - is recognized. But how do those brahmans and recluses live? 'Seeing the peril in them.' Even in the midst of your enjoyment of them you see the peril of them, the danger of them. 'Aware of the escape from them.' That's also quite important. What do you think that exactly means, that while enjoying them you're aware of the escape from them?

Sagaramati: You must be aware of something higher.

S: Yes, you must be aware of something ... you know even while you're enjoying them, you know, that this isn't in fact enough. There's something far beyond, something more satisfactory. So you can eat your good meal but you don't think your good meal is nirvana. So you can enjoy the five strands of sense pleasure provided you're not infatuated by them, you're not enslaved by them, not addicted to them, provided also you see the peril in them and you're aware of the escape from them. But the Buddha has recognized in principle that a healthy non-neurotic enjoyment of the five sense pleasures is possible. This brings up the question of one's whole attitude to pleasure, of enjoying things or enjoying life. This came up in an

interesting way some time a go when one of our Friends maintained that if you were not yet enlightened but if you were getting on well with your practice, you were meditating tasted the same to you. Would you
properly, you didn't enjoy your food and all food tasted the same to you. Would you agree with that?

___: No.[66]

S: How or why not.

Sagaramati: I'd have thought the opposite. That if you're more aware you'd enjoy things even better.

S: So what did that enjoyment also suggest?

___: You're not attached to...

S: Detachment, yes, but it's sort of paradoxical that you can enjoy things more if you're not attached to them, because if you're attached to them the mind can be so disturbed that you don't even give yourself a chance to enjoy that particular thing properly. It's like a child who's been promised a day out in the country, and he's so excited that when he gets into the country he just can't do anything. He almost sort of collapses with excitement. (laughter) He can't even enjoy himself; just goes a bit berserk. So people with very strong attachments to various sense objects sometimes find themselves in that sort of state. You want it so badly that when you get it you can't even enjoy it. The minute you get it you're terrified of losing it, so how can you enjoy it? If you've got mindfulness and awareness and detachment then you're in a much better position to enjoy that. But it's not just a question of enjoyment, it's enjoying or experiencing pleasure through the five senses. So what place do you think this has got in the spiritual life? Has it got a place at all? Or should you aim at depriving yourself of pleasurable sensations altogether and remaining in a sort of neutral state? Do you think this is possible, desirable, healthy, unhealthy?

___: It's like St Paul's thing of the annihilation of the passions. One could sort of engender a colossal reaction at some stage. It wouldn't really be skilful to do it.

Graham: It could take away your energy.

S: It could take away your energy. In a way, healthy pleasure is somewhat energizing, like when you go out into the garden and draw a deep breath and you smell the smell of the earth, the flowers, trees, grass, and the experience of the sun, and the visual experience of sunlight and colour. It's pleasant, it's pleasurable, and this is stimulating. So pleasure in this sense, then, can have an almost sort of tonic effect upon the system, but one just has to be very careful and watch that you don't become enslaved, you don't become infatuated, and you don't become addicted, and you see the peril in such things. You see the danger, the possibility of enslavement, infatuation, and addiction, and you also keep your eye open for the escape route which is of course meditation and so on, all those higher things which are even more pleasurable in a still more spiritual sense. Then the Buddha says, 'Monks, it is like a deer living in a forest, roaming the forest slopes, who walks confidently, stands confidently, sits down confidently, goes to sleep confidently. What is the reason for this? Monks, it is out of

the trapper's reach. Even so, monks, a monk, aloof from pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, enters on and abides [67] in the first meditation which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness, and is rapturous and joyful. Monks, this monk is called one who has put a darkness round Mara, and having blotted out Mara's vision so that it has no range, goes unseen by the Evil One.' So there are three kinds of monk, three kinds of person. The one who experiences sense pleasures unskilfully and gets caught; the one who experiences skilfully and does not get caught, and the one who does not experience sense pleasures at all, because he's in a higher meditative state of consciousness, and for whom there is no possibility of getting caught. In the case of the second kind of monk he could be caught but he doesn't get caught, but in the case of the third he doesn't even get caught. In the case of the third it's not even possible to get caught, he's out of Mara's range, out of Mara's reach. Not that he's within reach but he can get away. So the first kind is within Mara's reach and can't get away. The second is within Mara's reach but he can get away. The third, he's not even within Mara's reach. He doesn't need to get away. It reminds me of a late Hindu Tantric teaching about the three kinds of spiritual aspirant, three kinds of sadhaka they called them, the diva or divya, the vira, and the pashu. They say spiritual aspirants are of three kinds. Giving them in reverse order, the pashu, the beast-like person, the animal-like person, who is ensnared by the pleasures of the senses, he doesn't make any progress. Then there is the vira, the hero, who lives in the midst of pleasures of the senses enjoying them but is not misled by them; he's truly called heroic. And the third is the divine person who is quite oblivious to pleasures of the senses and doesn't even know that they're there. They just don't exist for him. So this is the divine person. You see the difference? The divya of diva, the divine person. So the beast-like or animal-like, the heroic, and the divine. So the Buddha's three kinds of monk, three kinds of person, are rather like that. The beast-like person can get trapped and is trapped. The heroic person could get trapped but he doesn't get trapped. The divine person couldn't get trapped because as far as he is concerned the trap just doesn't exist. He's so far away from the trap, so much out of reach, he's in another world altogether. The trap just doesn't exist for him.

___: Where did you say that last listing came from?

S: This is a late Hindu Tantric classification.

Graham: It doesn't mean that people can't move up from...

S: Oh no, indeed not. Yes in fact that would be the normal thing to do.

Alan: Does being in the first dhyana put darkness around Mara?

S: Yes, because to enter into the first dhyana you have to get rid of the five hindrances. There's no craving, no anger, no restlessness, no sloth and torpor, no doubt, so you are in the rupaloka. Mara can only function in the kamaloka - the gross Mara. The rupaloka has its own subtle temptations, but in the higher worlds it's not Mara that tempts you, it's the [68] gods, not to mention the goddesses! 'And again, monks, a monk, by allaying initial and discursive thought, his mind subjectively tranquillised and fixed on one point, enters on and abides in the second meditation which is devoid of initial and discursive thought, is born of concentration and is rapturous and joyful.' So he also is not seen by the Evil One, and so on through the dhyanas: the dhyanas of the form world, the dhyanas of the formless world. The monk goes up and up, and in each case the Buddha says: 'Monks, this monk is called one who

has put a darkness round Mara, and having blotted out Mara's vision so that it has no range, goes unseen by the Evil One.' So the Buddha is trying to draw the minds of the monks, at least in the imagination, up and up from level to level, through all the dhyanas: dhyanas of form, formless dhyanas, and right on to nirvana.

And he concludes, 'And again, monks, a monk, by passing quite beyond the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception enters on and abides in the stopping of perception and feeling; and having seen by intuitive wisdom, his cankers,' that is, asavas, 'are utterly destroyed. Monks, this monk is called one who has put a darkness round Mara, and who, having blotted out Mara's vision so that it has no range, goes unseen by the Evil One; he has crossed over the entanglement in the world. He walks confidently, stands confidently, sits down confidently, goes to sleep confidently. What is the reason for this? Monks, he is out of reach of the Evil One.' Thus spoke the Lord. Delighted, these monks rejoiced in what the Lord had said.'

So that's the conclusion of the sutta - the Ariyapariyesana Sutta. It's as though the Buddha first of all describes how he gained the truth, how his first disciples gained the truth, and then he points out to the monks to whom he is speaking, to whom he is telling all this, and this now is how you all are to gain the truth.' He brings it right home to them. And 'delighted, those monks rejoiced in what the Lord had said.' It's a quite short conclusion and evidently it's not been thought necessary to add anything. They rejoice in what the Buddha had said; that's quite enough. They rejoice in what the Buddha says, or rejoice in the dhamma. Rejoice in the texts, rejoice in the scriptures, then you can't go very far wrong. In Pali it's abhinandati, 'they rejoiced exceedingly' - or 'they were exceeding glad' in biblical days, or even 'rejoiced and were exceeding glad.' I think that a more colloquial and more accurate translation would be 'the monks were overjoyed'. It's abhinandati, the monks were overjoyed by what the Buddha has said, were overjoyed at the Buddha's words. (pause)

Well, we've come to the end. We've got a few minutes left. Any query on any part of that sutta, especially what we've done today, or any general impressions now that we've gone through it in detail?

Peter: What is meant by the word stain, in `what, monks, do you say is liable to stain'?

S: It means like impurity. It suggests the klesas, negative emotions. In the case, that is, of sentient beings. Mala, I think, is the word in Pali, from which we get vimala, meaning pure or immaculate, stainless. It's just imperfection. Things wear out, they get old, greasy looking, dusty, dirty, in due course. They lose their freshness. They become stained, soiled. Your mind too becomes like that if you're not careful. You lose your freshness, lose your sparkle, lose your originality.[69]

Graham: Do you think part of this is due to people sometimes wanting to cut off some of their healthy energies, thinking that they're maybe not spiritual?

S: I think there is quite a bit of that in some circles. I mentioned the other day that when I came back from India, when I was giving my lectures I wasn't even supposed to make a joke in a Buddhist context. There's that little story I sometimes tell about the very orthodox Theravada bhikkhu who came to Sanchi in 1952 for the opening of the Sanchi Vihara, and I was there with Lama Govinda. So Lama Govinda was showing me an album of Buddhist

works of art - reproductions of images and pictures and paintings and frescoes - so this very elderly, very orthodox, Theravada bhikkhu happened to be wandering around so Lama Govinda just called him and we showed him this album. So he just turned over a few pages and Lama Govinda asked him what he thought of the pictures. So he said I'm sorry but being a Buddhist monk I'm not allowed to enjoy works of art. (laughter) That is a bit illustrative of this kind of attitude. After all, it was BUDDHIST works of art, it wasn't even secular western works. It was Buddhas and bodhisattvas and so forth. But that was his attitude; that he wasn't allowed to enjoy - he used this word 'allowed' - not allowed to enjoy works of art.

So there's a lot of ambiguity about this enjoyment, but certainly enjoyment in the sense of priti is an essential part of meditation and an essential part of spiritual life. If you're not overflowing with joy there must be something wrong! In fact, we find that in the Buddhist texts there are quite a number of instances where monks say about another monk look he's looking very dull, his complexion has gone yellow, he's looking very down, there must be something wrong, he can't be getting on with his meditation properly... And there's always mention of this: that his complexion has become yellow, he's got a yellowish look or a liverish look or a bilious look. He can't be getting on well with his practice, so they go and ask him what's the matter. He's usually having thoughts of going home, (laughter) reversing his going forth, he's sad, dejected, yellowish looking, having second thoughts about it all. But they know from the fact he's not happy. They don't think, oh well, he must be mulling over his sins and that's good. No, he's thinking of giving up the spiritual life and he's not looking happy, he's not looking bright.

Padmapani: They haven't classified it have they? That this person's yellow, he wants to be going home... (laughter)

S: The idea being if you're really zestful and eager in your spiritual life you're happy. But when you start having doubts and wondering whether you're not wasting your time, you don't look happy, and this affects you totally. You don't look well. This is the more Buddhistic attitude. If you're on the spiritual life you should be really happy and joyful, and you indeed do find that in Buddhist countries, as I mentioned before. The monks, even though they may not always be very highly spiritual or highly advanced, at least they're always happy and cheerful and jolly. At least that, you can say, and always noticeably more happy than the lay people. And monks sometimes draw attention to this, and some of them have said it to me: 'Look at these poor lay people, they're supposed to be wallowing in all the pleasures of life and they're supposed to have all enjoyments and to have this, and to have [70] that which we haven't got, and look at them! They look so miserable, so worried!' And monks are noticeably carefree and happy and joyful like students - even quite elderly monks. It's quite noticeable.

Peter: It's the same in Christian monasteries.

S: Ah right yes. Not with the parish clergy I expect, but certainly the monasteries. Yes, it's in a sense the same way of life. You're free, happy, especially like the early Franciscans were throwing somersaults as they went along the road. (laughter) You don't get the local vicar throwing somersaults. (laughter)

Mike: Could you tell me more about Mara. What is Mara?

S: Mara is the 'Evil One'. There are four kinds of Mara, for your information. There is Mara

who is the personification of the passions; there's Mara who is the personification of death; there's Mara who is the personification of conditioned existence itself, the gravitational pull if you like; and Mara who's an actual entity strolling around: Devaputta Mara - Mara who is the son of a god. That is also believed, that there is an actual, as it were, evil entity prowling around the kamaloka. He can't get any further than that. It's a popular rather than a philosophical conception, but it's a useful way of thinking. If the wrong sort of thought comes into your mind: 'Ah be careful, Mara is at work.' If a fly keeps buzzing around and landing on your head and annoying you, 'Be careful, don't get angry - this is Mara. He's taken the form of a fly, he's trying to get me angry. It's Mara. Watch out!' So it can be quite useful in this sort of way. It's Mara playing his tricks and as soon as you see it's Mara, well you're on your guard, you're less liable to succumb to the temptation. So it is quite a useful way of thinking.

Mara doesn't appear in the Buddhist texts in the same way as the devil - Satan - figures in Christian thought and Christian mythology and even in the Bible. Mara is a rather sort of sorry figure, a rather ridiculous figure. As soon as you know it's Mara he can't do anything at all. As soon as he's unmasked he loses his power. So in many passages in the Pali texts you find the maxim, 'Ah 'tis Mara.' They see and at once he almost thinks away his conflict. So you've only got to see him and he can't do anything. He's not a sort of terrifying and tragic figure as in Christianity. He's a rather pathetic figure, trying to sort of upset the spiritual apple cart, as it were, in his rather bumbling foolish sort of way, but he can't stand up against those really mindful, really watchful bhikkhus. He only finds a way with those who are not mindful, who are not watchful. He's mischievous rather than wicked. He's almost a Puck-like figure, not a fallen archangel. There is a book by Trevor Ling about Mara and the mythology of evil. It's in the Aryatara Order library so you can go and look it up: 'Mara and mythology of evil.' [sic. It's actually called 'Buddhism and the Mythology of Evil,' tr.] That'll be one listed to read.

So any more general impressions of the sutta as a whole now we're right the way through it in detail, some detail at least? What sort of impression does it leave you with?[71]

Pat: I feel that the things that are taught ... there's a muscular energetic feel about it and so maybe I think that the age in this case is more symbolical than actually meant.

S: You mean the Buddha's age?

Pat: There's a young feel about the whole thing.

S: Young energy. Maybe he was young too.

Padmapani: Even twenty-nine's not all that old! (laughter)

S: Especially if you've gained enlightenment.

Pat: The feel I get from it, especially the verses, is energy.

S: Energy, vigour, determination, resolution; also self-confidence. You notice the Buddha says of the monks at the very end, 'He walks confidently, stands confidently, sits down confidently and goes to sleep confidently.' That's the monk who's passed beyond Mara's range, and that was very much the impression that the Buddha himself gave. A tremendous

confidence.

___: I get this feeling of the morning and sparkling streams.

___: I was struck by the strength and the clarity of the thing. It's so sort of strong it's a bit sort of upsetting. It demands action of you. It lays it forth how it is.

S: The Buddha himself clearly demanded action of all those monks who were gathered at that hermitage. It wasn't just a little anecdote or a series of anecdotes about his own earlier days that he was recalling. He was bringing it back to the monks themselves and applying it to them: 'This is what you've got to do, it's not just what I did when I was young, not even what my first disciples did. It's what you too have to do. It's the same path that you've all got to tread. That's why you've become monks, that is why you've gone forth.'

Mike: I'd like to have heard what went through his mind prior to his actual enlightenment, Whether I could understand...

S: What do you mean by prior to just before...?

Mike: Yes, the images he had or something like that, because suddenly he was ... he went over great lengths in the process up to it and then suddenly he came to this beautiful village and then - bang - he was enlightened.[72]

S: There is, of course, a Buddhist text that gives a series of dreams that the Buddha had before his enlightenment. In one dream there are thousands of little tiny red men crawling all over him. He has all sorts of strange dreams. There are I think about eighteen or nineteen dreams. You get them in the Mahavastu and I think you get them in the Jataka book. They may throw some light upon the process.

Sagaramati: I've come across that.

S: Where?

Sagaramati: I think it was the Anguttara Nikaya. Little white things with black heads crawled over his body.

S: There's another very beautiful dream. This one is definitely the Mahavastu. I think it's separate from the whole series of dreams but this is a dream that he had before the enlightenment. He dreamt that birds of different colours flew to him. Do you remember that?

Sagaramati: From the four directions.

S: From the four directions, but they all touched his feet and all flew away the same colour. So what do you think this represented?

Padmapani: It seems something quite solar. The solar light. Everything comes from that solar light and is split up into the spectrum.

Sagaramati: That's going in the other way. The colour's coming into ... like Vairocana in the

centre.

S: Though he interpreted it differently, saying that the four colours represented the four castes of different colours, because caste is (varuna) or colour also. What we call caste they call colour. The four colours, the four varunas. But on touching him, on establishing contact with him, they lost their separate identities - they all became one, caste was transcended.

Padmaraja: The Buddha interprets the dream, does he?

S: As far as I remember, yes.

Sagaramati: We took the readings on Dharmachakra Day at the weekend all from the Mahavastu.

S: We talked quite a bit about the Mahavastu at the last study retreat and we thought it would be good to go through that some time, maybe leaving out all the Jatakas and Avadanas; [73] just that material in it which deals with the life and teaching of the Buddha in this life. There are two copies in the Order library at Aryatara, so two of you could read it at the same time. It's comparatively easy reading. It's very poetic. Anyway, any final point before we conclude?

___: I was just wondering why it would have been that translators of this thing, even though it might have been sixty or so years ago,...

S: It isn't. It's Miss Horner's translation, which is fairly recent.

___: Well, even more reason. Why is it that they are translated as monks and monasteries and things like that?

S: But they're completely out of touch with the Buddhist movement. Miss Horner is a very worthy person, I know her personally, a very good scholar. She's well over eighty by the way, she's about eighty-five or eighty-six but still going strong, but she is living in this sort of sense very much in the past.

___: In which case I was wondering whether there were other points which maybe we wouldn't notice.

S: Well, indeed. For instance in 1956, now you mention it, which is twenty years ago, I wrote an article called 'The Meaning of Orthodoxy in Buddhism'. Quite a lengthy one. Has anyone seen this? No? We'll have to have it reprinted then. In this article which was contributed to a volume published in honour of the Buddhajayanti I took Miss Horner to task for what I considered the misuse of the word 'orthodoxy', and I explained what orthodoxy really meant, and I equated it with perfect vision in the end. Some people, even some friends of mine, were really annoyed that I'd ventured to even very mildly criticize Miss Horner in print. It was just not done apparently. In other words she was the authority, so the same here. She says you're a monk: you're a monk whether you like it or not. If she says you live in a monastery, you live in a monastery, and that's that. (laughter) But most of these people, though good scholars and very worthy individuals, just don't try to come to grips with the texts from the spiritual point of view. They just haven't ever tried, they are not trying to lead a spiritual life. So that whole aspect just doesn't mean anything to them at all. Like 'musing' - that's the classic example. If

you've ever tried to meditate you'd know that it wasn't just musing, wouldn't you? It gives away the game completely if someone translates jyati as 'to muse'. Would you do that even with one's own limited practice of dhyana? Would you translate it that way - 'to muse'? I spent the evening at the centre musing. (laughter) Well, you wouldn't, so, you know, if someone translates that word in that way they have never meditated, they're not in contact with the spiritual life. They never asked why did the Buddha say that? What was he getting at? What bearing has it on the spiritual life? How does that help one to grow? No. It's as though he's just taught not even for the fun of it. They don't stop to think, well, why he taught or what he was [74] getting at when he said certain things. It's just a text. It's just completely irrelevant to life.

___: One wonders why they bother being interested in translating the texts.

S: It's grist for the academic mill. It's a career, it's a reputation, it's a job. They just happened to take up Pali. It could have been marine zoology or something like that. They could have taken to collecting stamps but they just happened to take up Pali. Very often it's for no more reason than that. Or your tutor says to you one day, 'I think you'd better take up Pali, forget about Greek, let it be Pali. Maybe you'd not even thought about Pali or Buddhism before but, all right, you take up Pali because your tutor says so. Maybe he wants to have a student handy who can look up a Pali text of two when he needs it. So he tells you to take up Pali. That's how it usually works.

___: I suppose if that's how you come into contact with Pali, then Buddhist texts having been written in Pali, it just follows that you're going to deal with...

S: Right, and the other thing is someone might try and bring it to life and ask what it really means. This is said to be unscholarly. It's not objective. If you believe in the text that you're studying, you can't be a good scholar because you're not objective. A scholar must be objective. For instance, Vajrabodhi tried to get his translation of my 'Three Jewels' published - his Finnish translation - by a Helsinki publisher. They were quite interested, but when they learned that I was a Buddhist they weren't interested any more. They said they wanted a book written by someone who was objective. So they published one by Alan Watts instead (laughter) because he wasn't a Buddhist, you see? He could be relied upon. Whenever a book on Buddhism is written by a Buddhist obviously it's not reliable because he won't give you a truthful impression about Buddhism, he'll try to make it out to be better than it really is, or something like that. So it's the non-Buddhist who has to be the authority and tell you what Buddhism is really all about, because he can be objective and scientific and approach it from the outside which is the right way to approach it.

___: This means that in the future people in the Friends could make their own translations.

S: Yes. I'm encouraging a few people to take up Pali and Sanskrit. Luvah is doing Sanskrit and getting very well into it now. Even take up Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese. Pali is quite simple really; if you're even a bit good at languages you can master Pali.

___: The structure seems to be very simple.

S: Oh yes, especially texts like the Dhammapada, the Udana, even a lot of the Majjhima Nikaya. If you've just got a little bit of a flair for languages and like languages.[75]

Mike: Haven't you got to translate that word in your mind to an English corresponding...

S: No, in fact you don't do that. The word itself has its meaning. When you read the Pali you don't actually translate back into English. You get the meaning directly. Like when you speak a foreign language, you speak the foreign language. You're not meant to translate it into your own language all the time. After a while at least you're not. There are some things you can say in a foreign language [that] you can't say in English. You have to say them in that language. English hasn't got the equivalents and vice-versa.

Mike: Is Pali just a written language or is it still spoken?

S: Bhikkhus in south-east Asia can speak it, just as Roman Catholic scholars and priests can still speak Latin, but in that sort of way. I mean Pali is used in Theravadin countries very much as Latin is, or was until very recently, used in the Roman Catholic church. Many bhikkhus whom I have known can compose verses in Pali and write letters in Pali. It's not at all uncommon.

Mike: (unclear Pali words)

S: Refuges are Pali, precepts are Pali, vandana is Pali, and all quite simple.

Well I think it's nearly time.

[end of seminar]

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